

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH AVENUE INFANT SCHOOL

Sittingbourne

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118439

Headteacher: Mrs. M. Back

Reporting inspector: Mrs. J. Catlin
21685

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st May 2003

Inspection number: 247897

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 7 years old
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	South Avenue Sittingbourne Kent
Postcode:	ME10 4SU
Telephone number:	01795 472878
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Clark
Date of previous inspection:	18 th June 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21685	Jenny Catlin	Registered inspector	Foundation stage Mathematics Music Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9370	Rosalind Wingrove	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30072	Mike Duggan	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15271	Brian Farley	Team inspector	Science Art and design Physical education Special educational needs	

25203	Robert Cooke	Team inspector	Geography History Design and technology English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

South Avenue Infant school has 167 pupils on roll, which includes 55 reception age children, and is smaller than other schools of this type. The majority of pupils are from a white UK background, although there are some from a range of backgrounds, including eight from Bangladesh. There is one Traveller pupil. Overall, children enter the reception class with below average attainment for their age, although there is a significant minority with well below average attainment. There are some children with above average attainment. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is just over 8 per cent; this is about average nationally. There are seven pupils who speak English as an additional language, three of whom are in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, over 17 per cent, is slightly below average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Over one per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational need; this figure is about average. The school's main aims are to provide a secure and caring environment and to enable children to achieve their full potential.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a caring and supportive school that provides a secure learning environment for its pupils. The management and leadership of the school are sound and pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. The personal development of pupils is good and they enjoy very good relationships with one another and with adults. Many pupils are now achieving well during their time in the school. The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is good. The school's recent progress in improving standards while continuing to provide a caring community, is reflected effectively in the pupils' work and, as a result, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Recent improvements in the standards of reading, mathematics and science.
- Above average standards in design and technology.
- Children are given a good start to their education in the reception classes.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and they behave well.
- Teaching, the planning for the curriculum and the use of assessment have improved.
- There is very strong support for the school from parents.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing across the school.
- The level of challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- The effectiveness of all subject leaders in their role of managing their subjects.
- Opportunities for the deputy headteacher to fulfil her management role.
- The governing body to ensure statutory requirements are met regarding their special educational needs policy.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 2001 when it was judged to have serious weaknesses. It has made good progress since that time and resolved many of the weaknesses identified then. Standards in reading, mathematics and science have improved, although writing remains below the average for pupils of this age. The quality of teaching has improved because teachers have higher expectations of what pupils are able to learn, understand and do. Children in the two reception classes now receive a good start to their education. More time is given to the various subjects of the curriculum and, as a result, there is now an improved balance in pupils' learning. The school's improvement plan now makes clear how it intends to raise standards for higher attaining pupils; this is reflected in teachers' lesson planning

which clearly identifies how work is to be set for pupils of different abilities. The leadership and management of the school have improved, well supported by the local education authority, and are now more effective in raising attainment across the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	C	E	D	E
Writing	E	D	C	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	E

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The above table shows that the pupils' performance in the 2002 national tests in writing matched those found nationally. Results in reading were below the national average and in mathematics they were well below average. When comparing these results with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards in writing were below average, but in reading and mathematics, they were much lower. The trend in results over the last five years is comparable with all schools nationally and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls or those from different backgrounds. Until recently, many pupils in the school had been under-achieving, due to insufficiently high expectations of what they were capable of learning. This applied particularly to the higher attaining pupils. Other contributory factors included weaknesses in the assessment of children on entry to the school. This resulted in the school not recognising that there were a significant number of children entering the school with well below average attainment, with many of these having poor language and social skills. Although the majority, including those with English as an additional language and the one Traveller pupil, are now achieving well, some are not in the school long enough to make up for their below average attainment on entry.

Inspection judgements for the current cohort of Year 2 pupils show that attainment in reading and mathematics is average, although it is below average in writing. Higher attaining pupils are now beginning to be challenged in their learning although this could still be improved. Standards in design and technology are above those expected for pupils of this age, while standards in art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education and science are in line with those normally expected. Standards in religious education match those expected of the locally agreed syllabus. It is likely that the realistic, but challenging, targets for 2003 will be met. The attainment of children at the end of the reception year matches that expected for children of this age in creative, physical and personal development. In literacy, numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world, attainment is below that usually found in many schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. Many pupils are capable of working independently.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well all of the time. They understand that high standards of behaviour are expected and they respond very well to these expectations.
Personal development and	Good. Pupils work and play well together. They relate very well to each

relationships	other and to adults from an early age.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is around the national average; lateness is not a problem and lessons begin on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is also good for children in both reception classes. Teaching is good in English and mathematics. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is developing appropriately. The school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language well. Higher attaining pupils are usually suitably challenged but, on occasions, more could be expected of them. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are usually good. The management of pupils, including those who are challenging, is very good. Teaching assistants enhance pupils' learning. Resources are used well. Lesson planning is considerably improved. Good practices are seen in the use of ongoing assessment. As yet, these are not always consistently implemented. Pupils want to learn, they are interested, concentrate and work hard. They acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding. They usually understand how well they are achieving and what more they need to do to improve further. Overall, pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is constructed carefully to meet the needs of all pupils. Children in the Foundation Stage are given a good start to their education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils receive good support from the teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The provision is good and enables these pupils to achieve at the same rate as their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' personal development is good as is the provision for pupils' moral and social development. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are well cared for and there is good provision made for their general welfare.
How well the school works with parents	Very good. Parents are very supportive and contribute well to their children's achievements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher and her deputy, with support from the local education authority, provide clear educational direction to the school. They are supported by governors and staff who share a commitment to improving standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory duties. There is now a clearer understanding of its role to ensure that the school continues to strive to raise standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has a greater understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Effective use is made of available grants, funds and resources. The governors take into account all possible prices before making a final decision on spending. Staffing levels and resources are satisfactory and classrooms are used well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • Behaviour in the school is good. • Teaching is good. • They are comfortable about approaching the school. • Their child is expected to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • The amount of homework.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views of the school. The minority concerns were not confirmed by the inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the reception classes varies considerably but, overall, is below that expected for children of this age. For a significant minority of children, attainment is well below that expected. From this starting point, the great majority of children, including those with special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. However, many children, by the time they enter Year 1, do not meet expected standards in literacy, numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world. Most children meet these expectations in physical and creative development and many make such good progress in their personal, social and emotional skills that their attainment in this area meets the expectations normally seen. Overall, attainment on entry to Year 1 is below expectations although the few higher attaining children are above this.
2. In the national tests at the age of seven, the average National Curriculum points scores for 2002 show that in comparison with all schools nationally, the school's performance in writing matched that found nationally, standards in reading were below the national average and in mathematics they were well below. When compared with similar schools, standards in writing were below average and in reading and mathematics they were well below the average for these schools. One of the most significant reasons for this below and often well below average attainment by the age of seven, is the proportion of children who enter the school with below and often well below average attainment, with many of these having weak language and numeracy skills. Although the majority are now achieving well, they are not in the school long enough to make up for their below average attainment on entry. There is also evidence, when analysing the results for 2002, that not enough was expected of higher attaining pupils. This had a significant impact on the average points score in these tests. This was particularly noticeable in reading and mathematics and to a lesser degree in writing. Consequently, a well below average number achieved at the higher levels in reading and mathematics and a below average number achieved at the higher level in writing. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. However, boys outperform girls in all three areas.
3. Early indications are that in the 2003 National Curriculum tests, pupils have performed better. Although the test results are not yet available for writing, they are for both reading and mathematics. These show that 92 per cent of pupils attained the expected standards in reading, as did 94 per cent of pupils in mathematics. However, fewer than expected attained the higher level 3 (19 per cent) in these two areas of learning; this is an improvement on both the 2001 and 2002 results. It is likely that attainment in writing will be below average.

4. Inspection findings show that attainment in reading and mathematics, for the current Year 2 pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, is average. However, there are still some higher attaining pupils who could do better. These improvements are due to teaching which is more closely focused on raising attainment and developments in the curriculum. These recent developments are having a favourable impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, which are very positive. There are also detailed tracking and monitoring systems. The school now predicts likely attainment by the end of Year 2 and puts in place systems to enable them to achieve this. There are also greater expectations from the teachers of what these pupils should know and understand by the end of Year 2. Standards in writing are below average and in design and technology standards are above those expected for pupils of this age. Standards in art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education and science are in line with those normally expected for pupils of this age. Standards in religious education match those expected for the locally agreed syllabus.
5. Overall, standards in Year 2 are satisfactory given the pupils' starting points, and the majority of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. Targets set in reading, writing and mathematics for 2003 are challenging yet realistic and initial results indicate that the school will achieve them. When the school's results in earlier years are taken into account, they show that pupils have been achieving below and well below national averages, particularly at the higher level 3. The trends over time in the school's results match those found nationally although many schools are attaining higher standards.
6. The staff and governors are now more analytical in responding to test results and, as a result, are more able to identify where weaknesses in performance exist. This information is then included in the following year's school development plan and action is taken to determine where improvements need to be made to teaching, learning and the curriculum. These initiatives are having a positive effect on the standards seen at the time of inspection.
7. Pupils' standards of literacy, particularly in reading, are usually sufficient to support their learning in subjects across the curriculum although, on occasions, their level of comprehension affects their ability fully to understand problem solving in mathematics lessons. However, the skills learned in literacy lessons are not always used effectively in other subjects, for example, in geography and history. Numeracy skills are used suitably in subjects such as design and technology and science. Computing skills are taught satisfactorily throughout the school and computers are used effectively across the curriculum.
8. The progress that pupils with special educational needs make is good over time. Progress is particularly good in English and mathematics because teachers and teaching assistants provide closely focused support for pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons. This level of support also helps pupils in the development of positive attitudes to learning. Their peers treat them with consideration and respect. The previous inspection reported that, 'pupils with special educational needs make good progress when receiving support,' but 'at other times their needs are not fully met, particularly in English and mathematics.' They, 'often make unsatisfactory progress when working independently.' There has therefore been a good improvement since then.
9. The school has currently identified seven pupils who speak English as an additional language. Three pupils receive weekly support from a visiting specialist and four pupils are being monitored. By the age of seven, these pupils are expected to attain

standards that are in line with those normally expected of pupils of this age. These pupils make good progress in learning English. Across the curriculum, they make progress in accordance with their individual aptitudes. Overall, they make good progress in line with other pupils in the school. There is a high mobility rate among these pupils and consequently their progress is affected by this lack of stability and continuity.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Parents confirm how keen their children are to come to the school and how eager they are to take part in the rich variety of activities provided. Attitudes to work in the classroom are very good. The pupils behave well, listen to their teachers and, when appropriate, to one another. There are very few times when a teacher needs to reprimand her class but when this does happen it is done quietly and has an immediate effect. Classes become silent at a signal. Pupils show their respect and affection for their teachers. Pupils with special educational needs are included in all activities and are often helped by their peers. When required to do so, pupils work well in pairs or small groups. Children in reception were seen to share well, work together as in their "clinic" and "fire engine" and generally not to interfere with the enjoyment of others. When being taught the early stages of reading, they concentrate well and answer questions eagerly. Their experience, however, is often limited and, as yet, they are not very imaginative.
11. The school monitors the personal development and increasing social skills of all its pupils. Circle time and assemblies are used suitably to discuss delicate and worrying issues as well as how children react to one another. Everyone celebrates successes and achievements.
12. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils who speak English as an additional language and between pupils of different religious and cultural backgrounds. They enjoy coming to school, behave well in lessons, work very well and show interest in what they are doing.
13. Older pupils know how to behave well in the classroom, around the school and at lunchtime. They set a good example. In class, they are eager to please their teachers and are helpful. Classrooms are tidied at the end of lessons by many willing helpers. Other small tasks are undertaken and pupils are beginning to be independent and to show some initiative. Children in Year 2 have known tasks to perform such as helping prepare for assemblies. The atmosphere in their classrooms is workmanlike and pupils take pride in their achievements. Teaching assistants play a valuable part in helping the pupils to concentrate, sit properly on the carpet and behave well. A Year 1 class were learning to weave and taking great trouble to achieve the correct results, probably because they were inspired by the excellent, colourful array of different materials provided, that included ribbons, raffia, straws, net and feathers. A Year 2 class had made working cranes from a variety of materials and were pleased to show how successful they had been in getting the cranes to work without toppling over.
14. Pupils are courteous and helpful to visitors. They are friendly with one another, kind to younger children and they play well together. There was no evidence of antisocial behaviour during the inspection and parents confirm that any such problems are dealt with very quickly. Pupils treat school equipment and their books with respect. Behaviour and concentration were good in a sharing assembly although many of the

pupils could not hear clearly what was being said. When they sang or said a prayer, they joined in very well.

15. Attendance is around the national average; lateness is not a problem; lessons usually begin on time and registration time is well used, pupils answering with a polite “good morning” and sometimes in French or Spanish. There have been no exclusions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Across the school the quality of teaching is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching which is an improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching in both literacy and numeracy across the school is at least satisfactory, but within this, there are some strong features.
17. The quality of teaching for children in both reception classes is good with some very good features. The teachers have a clear understanding of how children learn; they plan work carefully to meet the needs of each child. Teachers’ expectations are now higher for most children; their management of children’s behaviour is very good, which results in positive attitudes to learning. They develop children’s understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour very well. The children are actively encouraged to share their work and successes. Children are continuously assessed and this, together with the results of their initial assessments and ongoing testing, forms the basis of a good range of assessment data. This information is used well to set individual targets and inform future teaching plans. This is also an improvement since the last inspection. Good use is made of the teaching assistants and they have regular involvement in assessing and recording children’s progress.
18. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching is good overall. The teachers have a secure command of the subjects to be taught and the planning for lessons specifies the content to be taught to the whole class, to specified groups and to certain individual pupils. Lessons usually incorporate appropriately high expectations and challenge for most pupils. There are effective links with what pupils have already achieved and new learning usually makes progressive demands on them. Relationships are very good and pupils are expected to have high standards of behaviour. Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to their work and most are keen to complete work to an acceptable standard within set time limits. Pupils are, on occasions, given choices about how the work is to be done and this makes a positive contribution to their independent learning skills. Many lessons have a brisk pace. Resources, pupil groupings and adult assistance in these lessons are well managed and are used to promote the learning of specific knowledge or skills and to keep pupils on task.
19. When teaching is satisfactory rather than good, some of the above features are not so well developed, particularly the aspects of providing challenge for higher attaining pupils and ensuring sufficient pace to lessons to ensure all pupils remain on task. The weaknesses in teaching identified at the time of the previous inspection are no longer as evident as they were at that time. There is some good practice in evaluating the success of lessons by teachers. Best practice includes identifying what progress individual pupils have made and how the methods and content for the next lesson need to be adjusted as a result.
20. Overall, teachers have a good understanding of the National Curriculum in most subjects. Teachers throughout the school encourage pupils to take reading books

home and, where homework is set, it is used appropriately to support pupils' learning. A positive aspect of teaching across the school is the very good classroom management and discipline, which most teachers maintain. There is usually a consistent approach to behaviour, which enhances the quality of pupils' learning. A further strength of the good teaching is the sharing of the aims of lessons with the pupils. This enables them to have a clear understanding of what is to be covered during the session and for them to recognise what they have learned. When marking pupils' work, teachers assess the work constructively, although their comments are not always sufficiently diagnostic to help pupils know what they have done well and what they need to work on to improve. There were, however, some good examples of this. There are good quality, long-term, written curriculum plans to provide a framework for teachers' lesson planning, and ensure pupils' make progress in their learning both across and through year groups.

21. Across the school, there is satisfactory development of literacy skills; these are taught effectively, with a specific emphasis on phonic skills. The numeracy sessions are usually well taught and teachers question pupils carefully to check their understanding of the work covered. Overall, the use of teaching assistants to support pupils in their learning is good. However, in a few classes best use is not always made of their skills; this is particularly noticeable in the introductory sessions of lessons.
22. Weaknesses in teaching include a lack of challenge in some lessons, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Lessons are sometimes not exciting or rigorous enough to capture pupils' attention and enthusiasm. All teachers state that pupils have targets in reading and writing. However, it was rare to see these referred to in lessons, although most pupils are clear as to what their targets are. A more consistent approach in referring to pupils' individual targets would ensure that all pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to achieve them. Otherwise, they have limited value in increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own learning.
23. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Where pupils have individual education plans, these are used to ensure that effective strategies are employed to help them reach their learning targets. When appropriate, most teaching assistants provide a good level of support for pupils, particularly in literacy and numeracy. They have access to pupils' individual education plans, know the targets set for them, record their achievements and have effective liaison with teachers and the deputy headteacher who is responsible for this aspect of the school's work. However, on some occasions, teaching assistants are less well deployed when they do no more than sit with pupils in whole class teaching sessions. The very good management of pupils by teachers makes a significant contribution to the good progress made.
24. The teaching of pupils who speak English as an additional language is good and teachers set appropriate work according to the pupils' individual targets and levels of attainment. Appropriate support is given in classrooms with pupils seated in suitable ability groups for most lessons. There is a good level of support from teaching assistants. Class teachers provide appropriate support by circulating and helping individuals during lessons or by targeting particular groups. During question and answer sessions, teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to participate and to develop their speaking and listening skills. As a result, these pupils participate fully in lessons and make good progress. Newly arrived pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make rapid progress in acquiring speaking and listening skills. Those who receive extra support on a weekly basis make steady progress with reading, written work and number.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

25. The curriculum provides the pupils with a good range of broad, balanced and relevant activities. It is constructed well to meet the diverse needs of pupils. There are clear allocations of time for lessons and it is clear within this what the pupils are to be taught and how their success is to be measured. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Part of the school's aim, 'to educate in an atmosphere of happiness, security and confidence each child according to age, aptitude and ability,' is supported well by its work. This is evident in classes where pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. The positive working atmosphere within the school provides a good basis for pupils to become life-long learners and caring members of society. Good planning and effective use of resources enable pupils to work successfully towards their identified targets. This is another appreciable improvement since the last inspection.
26. Judgements in the previous inspection identified a number of areas for improvement, including provision for special educational needs, extra-curricular activities, appropriate allocation of time to specific subjects, especially geography, history, information and communication technology and religious education. All these issues have been addressed thoroughly and successfully. A vigorous review of the curriculum has led to the preparation of a framework which contains guidance and structure, especially regarding planning in year groups, and has helped to raise the expectations and aspirations of the whole school community. Extensive staff training and specific subject consultant input, especially in literacy and information and communication technology, have ensured the effective implementation of these strategies. The curriculum for the children in the reception classes is good and planned well within the areas of learning for this age group, another significant improvement since the last inspection. The constant review of the curriculum, to ensure that good provision is being maintained, is effective. Statutory requirements are met.
27. Personal, social and health education is promoted well throughout the school and is a considerable strength. Regular opportunities for discussions during assemblies and in lessons are used effectively to promote pupils' self-esteem. During the inspection, such examples were observed where pupils were commended for effort, improvement and achievement in a sharing assembly. The sensitive issues of sex education and drugs awareness are dealt with well. These specific issues are addressed during science and religious education lessons and on a regular basis by the school nurse. Good independent learning opportunities are offered to pupils in nearly all classes, especially information and communication technology. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects. The pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, have equal access to all areas of the curriculum which includes extra-curricular activities. This is another considerable improvement since the last inspection when equality of opportunity was unsatisfactory. The requirement for the daily act of collective worship is met.
28. There are policies and programmes of work for all subjects, and the school has adopted the local education authority's Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The planning of work for each subject sets out clearly the standards pupils are expected to reach by the end of Year 2. The school is effective in fostering pupils' intellectual, social, spiritual and physical development, preparing them well for the junior school. Lessons observed illustrating this included a personal, social and health education session where pupils interpreted the 'goods' and 'bads' in a story, and a number of

information and communication technology activities. Good links have been established with the local nursery and junior schools which ensure smooth transition between the sectors.

29. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive their full curriculum entitlement. Three pupils receive additional support once a week. An appropriate focus is given to additional support according to the age and attainment of the pupils concerned. For a pupil in a reception class the support received is mainly play-based, helping him with number and shape recognition. For the two pupils in Year 1 the focus of the extra support is on reading for meaning, word building and the ordering of sentences. For all pupils receiving additional support there is appropriately a significant emphasis on developing skills in English through speaking and listening. Wherever possible the support given is linked to the work the pupil is doing in class.
30. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities which include educational visits to the local shops, library, church and further afield to the seaside in Broadstairs, the Farming World in Faversham and Dover Castle. Many of the pupils attend the Rainbows and after school Care Club which is sometimes held in the school hall.
31. Satisfactory links within the community have been established. For example, a local supermarket organises an annual fireworks display with the proceeds raised going to school funds. Other opportunities to involve the community include offering the school facilities to karate and dance clubs. Regular 'Book Weeks' and visits from local religious groups, visiting artists and senior citizens all help to reinforce community involvement.
32. The school's overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, which is similar to the last inspection. The life of the school reflects all the values of honesty and respect for others and their faiths. This is reinforced strongly through the effective balance of daily teacher-directed activities and the opportunity for independent learning.
33. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. From entry to school, they are given an appropriate range of opportunities to develop insights into the needs and feelings of others. This was demonstrated amply in an assembly where a fantasy story was used to illustrate that though we all look different the important issue is the attitude within our physical being. Pupils are encouraged to reflect sensitively, are taught about the beauty of art, music and the natural world, and feelings. A good example was noted in a Year 2 literacy lesson based around the concern and insecurity of the young birds in the text, 'Owl Babies'. Other examples included reflection and prayers during assembly and a very good Year 2 religious education lesson where the pupils meditated during the burning of incense.
34. The provision for the pupils' moral development is good. It involves all aspects of school life, fully mirrors its aims and is supported well by all members of the school community. All adults work hard to achieve the overall standard of good behaviour observed throughout the school. This strong sense of morality ensures that the pupils distinguish readily between right and wrong. The importance of truthfulness and honesty is established from an early age and is enshrined in the school's code of conduct to which they have contributed. Effective opportunities to discuss moral issues are provided in lessons and assemblies. One such good example was witnessed in a Year 1 information and communication technology lesson where inappropriate behaviour occurred. The teacher and headteacher promptly, carefully

and sensitively explained to the pupil why such behaviour was unacceptable. The pupil soon realised the waywardness of his actions and the matter was resolved swiftly. All the pupils have a strong sense of protection for the environment.

35. Provision for the pupils' social development is good. All adults provide good role models and pupils are treated with unfailing courtesy. From an early age, they are given basic responsibilities, for example clearing tables, tidying books and taking the registers to the office. Social development is also enhanced by educational trips to libraries, castles, farms and the seaside. Initiatives have included sponsored activities to raise money for Red Nose Day charities and a leukaemia project. In nearly all lessons, pupils have the opportunity to work collaboratively and develop good interpersonal skills. Good examples were observed in design and technology, information and communication technology, literacy and science. A particularly good example was noted in a Year 1 literacy lesson, where pupils discussed in groups the characters of the text being studied.
36. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have ample opportunities to explore the area in which they live. In their study of history, they consider life-styles and cultures. For example, younger pupils learn about life now and in the time when their grandparents were young. Classroom displays contain texts and symbols from different world cultures, including artefacts from Christian, Hindu and Jewish faiths. Multi-cultural experiences include African, Swedish, Indian and Israeli musicians and dancers performing at the school. The feasts of Hanukkah, Diwali and Christmas are celebrated annually at the school. Such celebrations help to raise the pupils' awareness of the prevailing cultures in Britain.
37. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are clear, detailed and focus on realistic and specific learning goals that pupils should achieve. The plans provide teachers and teaching assistants with useful guidance. A strength of the provision is that they are computer generated and therefore reduce teachers' time in the administration. Teachers also keep a summary record of pupils' progress and changes in provision. This is an efficient method of analysing individual trends. On occasion, some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for extra help. This allows them to have good quality individual or small group support.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The previous report spoke well of the caring, welcoming atmosphere in the school. The teachers and their assistants know the children and their families very well and make sure that the pupils work in a safe, friendly environment that enables them to make good progress. This is evident from the gradual improvement in standards.
39. Procedures for child protection are good. The headteacher, her deputy and another teacher have all had the necessary training. Other adults in the school have been taught what to do if a child confides in them or they become aware that a child may be at risk of ill treatment, neglect or the onset of ill health. The school works with other agencies in the protection of young children and the headteacher takes part in case conferences when necessary.
40. The school works very closely with parents from the time when the children are accepted on to the school's roll. Children are invited to spend time in class with their future teachers. There are very well attended meetings for parents to meet all the staff, governors and others who work in the school at times, such as the school nurse. Teachers will make home visits if requested. As the pupils progress through the

school and then on to junior school, special attention is given to making this transition a happy one. Although parents no longer bring their children into the classroom in the morning, they know that the teachers will see them immediately if there is a concern to report. When the two classes in each year group are arranged, care is taken to separate pupils if there is a risk that a small group could be disruptive for the rest of the class. However, behaviour and attitudes to school work are very good and are managed well so that there is an atmosphere of wanting to learn and very little need for any sanctions. The pupils are full of energy and enthusiasm and these are used to good effect. Everyone supports the school's behaviour policy and endorses the Statement of Partnership. The staff have received training in behaviour management. No incidents of bullying or antisocial behaviour were noted during the inspection.

41. Parents of children with special educational needs speak highly of the help their children have been given and the good co-operation which they have had from the staff. The school has trained first-aiders, a very good ratio of teaching assistants and a lunchtime supervisor for each class. These supervisors treat any minor injuries. They are being encouraged to lead the children in playground games and are having some training for this. New equipment has been purchased. Good practice is shared with other schools. After lunch, the supervisors take the pupils back to their classes and report any incidents or accidents to their teachers.
42. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support from class teachers and from school and visiting support staff. Their educational and social needs are carefully monitored and actions taken for appropriate support to be given. Care is taken when giving additional support to ensure that no stigma is attached to being targeted for extra support. Support is given in classrooms and pupils are helped in pairs or groups wherever possible.
43. Health and safety monitoring arrangements are good. There are regular inspections of the site and a governor reports any problems to the governing body. There is a different governor in this role now and he has studied the local education authority's manual and is about to go for health and safety training. The governors have also strengthened the security arrangements.
44. Attendance is about the national average but the school is making good efforts to improve on this. Parents are frequently reminded in newsletters that it is important for children to attend regularly so that they may take part in all the activities that the school promotes. Some children have individual attendance targets. Where there are problems with attendance by children from particular families, the headteacher is in contact with the parents and they work closely with the education welfare officer. The school also has good arrangements for encouraging and recording the personal development of its pupils. The headteacher is keen to hear the views of her pupils and, from time to time, Year 2 are asked to complete questionnaires about how they see changes that are being made.
45. The school pays close attention to the early identification of pupils with special educational needs and therefore records concerns when they arise and informs parents. Where pupils have individual education plans these are reviewed each term and new targets carefully set. Good use is therefore made of assessment to track pupils' progress and ensure that the next steps in their learning are appropriate. The school makes effective use of agencies such as speech and language therapy to help with the assessment of pupils' needs.

46. There are good procedures for the assessment and tracking of pupils' performance. This is an improvement on the last inspection when procedures were unsatisfactory. The process of improvement has been helped by a change from mixed age to single age classes. A further improvement is in the assessment of children's attainment on entry to the reception classes. Previously six teachers who had not been trained effectively in administering the tests had completed this. Consequently, the school was working with incorrect results of attainment on entry. This was further confused because the school gave children time to settle in before administering the tests. In the past two years, this situation has been resolved and shows that for 2001 and 2002 attainment on entry was below average with a significant number of children with attainment well below that expected. The school's change to single age classes has given the opportunity for teachers to evaluate work effectively across year groups and to plan together on a weekly basis. Assessment is therefore used effectively to modify teachers' lesson plans. In most lessons, teachers use informal assessment effectively to assess what pupils are doing and to move them on. Good questioning in oral sessions and checking individuals' progress in main parts of lessons were aspects of regular good practice in many lessons observed.
47. The progress of pupils towards age 7 targets in reading, writing, and mathematics is carefully tracked through Years 1 and 2, with targets initially based on information received from reception classes. For pupils in Years 1 and 2, specific targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development are discussed with pupils in October and shared with parents at a parents' evening. Parents and pupils are aware of what the child needs to learn in order to achieve the targets set and are effectively involved in helping their children. Appropriate and regular testing of reading and writing takes place in Years 1 and 2. This, together with a review of the targets in the spring term, is good practice. There is effective tracking of pupils with special educational needs, using separate scales for those who are not expected to achieve National Curriculum levels.
48. In Year 2, assessment processes are effectively used to group pupils for extra support so that they perform as well as possible in the national tests. Parents are appropriately informed about how to help pupils who are expected to achieve the higher level 3. The pupils performance in the national tests is carefully analysed and areas of weakness as well as any gender issues noted. Teachers appropriately use the analysis in planning and addressing areas of weakness in the following year. A visiting support teacher, who liaises closely with the class teachers and school support staff, checks the performance of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
49. While there is good formal assessment practice in all aspects of reading, writing, mathematics, science and information and communication technology, formal assessment and monitoring in most other subjects are planned for but not established. This is an area for development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The relationship between parents and the school is very good. Many parents from outside the catchment area have chosen South Avenue School. At the parents' meeting, in response to questionnaires and in conversation, the great majority expressed satisfaction and full confidence in the work of the school. One parent wrote that "school is a place my daughter loves to go and learn" and another spoke of her child developing a "thirst for knowledge". Parents are pleased with the way that the children behave. They welcome the school's open door policy, find the staff very approachable and know that their views will be taken into account.

51. The information available to parents has improved. It is now very good. Parents feel that they are well informed about the curriculum and have commented upon how useful the recent curriculum meetings have been. These meetings are well attended although the school is encouraging more parents to come along. The school's prospectus is full of useful information and is regularly updated. The governors' annual report to parents also gives good information. However, the governors do not effectively report on the success or otherwise of their policy for special educational needs. Information about forthcoming events is included in letters and newsletters. The Friends of the school are a very active body, raising large sums of money, which are well used in increased security measures and the purchase of new equipment. Events such as discos have a waiting list and parents support opportunities to see their children working in school. Some parents are able to give time to help in school, particularly hearing children read. They hear their children read at home and are keen to know how else they can help support their children's learning, for example, greater information about the topics their children are studying.
52. Parents receive a very good indication of how their children are progressing in their end of year reports. Opportunities are given for parents to discuss these reports with the staff and before that happens, teachers go through the reports with the pupils and discuss targets for the future. These are then relayed to parents. The reports are very specific to each child, telling what they are learning and how they are coping with the lessons. There are other opportunities during the school year for parents to meet with teachers. Every child had a parent or carer attend the most recent meetings.
53. Parents are informed if the school has concerns about their child's lack of progress. Arrangements can be made to meet the co-ordinator for special educational needs and relevant support agency staff. Parents are involved in setting the individual education plans and in monitoring how the children are progressing. They are also invited to reviews of individual education plans or statements. The school gives them access to outside specialists who can help and advise on what these children need to help them to overcome their difficulties. However, they are not fully involved in the reviews and particularly in the target setting process. The school ensures that parents can contact the Parent Partnership Service if they wish.
54. There is very good liaison between visiting support staff, school support staff and class teachers. Informal contacts with parents during the school day and the sharing of pupils' targets and progress on parents' evenings are appropriate.
55. The school is held in high regard by the local community and benefits from visitors who have something to add to the children's education. Overall, the support that parents and the community give to the school is very good and the school, in turn, gives very good support to their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff are satisfactory. The school has received considerable support from the local education authority since the last inspection and, as a result, there is now a clearer focus on the action needed to raise standards, which is shared by staff and governors. The school has in the past, been too lax in its expectations of what pupils should be able to do, know and understand. There existed a corporate view that pupils 'were only young and were doing their best'. This resulted in expectations that were too low and the under-achievement of many pupils.

57. Comparatively recently, the school has established a good assessment system with the potential for raising standards; this is beginning to have an impact, particularly in reading and mathematics. Its aim is to support staff in both tracking pupils' progress and revising school targets to ensure pupils improve on their previous best. It has yet to have a significant impact on raising the pupils' standards in writing or on sufficient and consistent challenge for higher attaining pupils.
58. The provision for special educational needs is good and well managed by the deputy headteacher, although she has a number of other responsibilities and very little release time. This is a good improvement since the last inspection because at that time the provision for these pupils was 'unsatisfactory.' Good use is made of information and communication technology in the management and administration of the provision. Liaison between teachers, teaching assistants and the deputy headteacher is effective and makes a clear contribution to the good progress of pupils. Teaching assistants are well trained, feel valued and are appreciated by teachers and pupils. Although governors are involved in the provision for special educational needs, the school provides them with insufficient statistical information for them to determine the success of their policy. Statutory requirements are not fully met because the governors' annual report to parents does not indicate how successful the implementation of their policy has been or if there have been any changes to it.
59. There are good, effective arrangements for the early identification and support of pupils with English as an additional language. The visiting support teacher keeps careful records. Areas of focus are identified and targets are set for each pupil near the beginning of each term. Progress is reviewed appropriately on a termly basis. The pupils are aware of their own targets and the progress they are making. The support teacher shares her records with the class teacher, other support staff and the deputy headteacher as well as the pupil's parents. Where the pupil also has an individual education plan for special educational needs, copies are also shared. The visiting support teacher records each pupil's progress on a weekly basis. When appropriate, particular attention is paid to the monitoring of pupils in Year 2 as they prepare for standard assessment tests, to ensure they are not disadvantaged by misunderstanding instructions.
60. The system established for monitoring and evaluating teaching is satisfactory and supports the raising of standards across the school. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching coupled with the monitoring of teachers' lesson planning are not always sufficiently focused and rigorous to ensure that all teaching and learning display the same features as the best observed during the inspection week. There is a lack of information in the school's documentation on how issues highlighted as a consequence of the headteacher's monitoring are followed through to ensure success. Additionally, it is not at all clear what role the deputy headteacher has in supporting the school in its efforts in raising of standards across the school. However, there are some distinct strengths in the management of provision for the youngest children and this has improved significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher and her senior management team are responsible for monitoring performance management, which involves observing teachers' work in the classroom. The school's recent progress in improving standards while continuing to provide a caring community is sound and, as a result, the school provides satisfactory value for money.
61. The school improvement plan is sound, reviews the aims of the school, and sets out the long-term strategic view of staff and governors, as well as short- and medium-term priorities. The plan is presented in a clear format with initiatives aimed at improving standards. All teaching staff have the opportunity to make an input to school

development planning and policy development. Funds are allocated to individual priorities appropriately, in consultation with the finance committee of the governing body, and specific staff responsibilities are outlined. There is a suitable time-scale for each priority and initiatives are evaluated against the stated success criteria. Governors and staff are consulted by the headteacher as the plan is being drafted and reviewed and the final plan is presented to the full governing body for ratification. Financial management is satisfactory and effectively supported by the school's administrative staff. There is an above average proportion of the school's budget carried forward from last year. This has been agreed with the local education authority and is earmarked to enable staffing levels to be maintained to cover a possible falling roll, to provide a canopy for the outdoor area for the youngest children and to improve resources. The school makes appropriate efforts to seek best value when purchasing goods and services and all specific grants have been used appropriately for their intended purpose.

62. The governing body is effective in carrying out the majority of its statutory duties. It is clearer about its role to ensure that the pupils in the school receive a good education and that the school continues to strive to raise standards. Nevertheless, there is little evidence in the minutes of meetings that governors are effective in this aspect of their role. It is organised suitably in that appropriate committees have been set up to carry out its statutory duties. There is no curriculum sub-committee although the school has a rolling programme of reviewing subjects and governors receive reports from the headteacher and subject managers during full governing body meetings. However, some of the follow-up discussions are quite brief and lack the detailed discussion usually found in many schools. Consequently, there is a lack of rigour on behalf of the governing body to ensure they have a clear knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Governors have received training in performance management and are fulfilling their statutory duty in terms of performance review of the headteacher. The governors, with support from the local education authority now take a more active role in the management of the school and as a result, are developing a longer term strategic view of the school. The headteacher ensures that governors are suitably informed about the school's work through formal reports at governors' meetings where they are able to raise questions. Many make regular visits to fulfil their management role of monitoring the school's activities.
63. Staffing levels are satisfactory and teachers' individual qualifications and expertise are suitably deployed. There are six full-time class teachers and a further two who work part-time. Many class teachers are relatively new to the school, they have received appropriate induction and the quality of their teaching is good overall with some very good features. This is a further contributory factor to the raising of standards across the school. Class teachers are usually supported well by the teaching assistants although, on a few occasions, this is not effective.
64. The school's accommodation is satisfactory although good use is made of the space to accommodate areas for oral teaching and written work with easy access to information and communication technology equipment. Resources for learning in science and design and technology are good and they are satisfactory for all other subjects. Resources for the youngest children are also satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. In order to build on the recent improvements in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards in writing across the school. (paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 57, 74, 75, 79, 93 and 110)
- (2) Ensure that higher attaining pupils are effectively challenged in their learning thereby enabling them to achieve their full potential. (paragraphs 4, 19, 22, 57, 76, 81, 86, 91, 110 and 126)
- (3) Ensure that all staff are effective in managing their subjects. (paragraphs 49, 94, 101, 107, 113, 124 and 127)
- (4) Clarify the role of the deputy headteacher to enable her to take a greater role in the management of the school. (paragraph 60)
- (5) Ensure that statutory requirements, linked to reporting on the school's special educational needs policy, are met. (paragraph 58)

In addition to the key issues above, the following minor areas for development should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- i. Ensure that all teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning. (paragraphs 21, 23, 63 and 111)
- ii. Increase the amount of curriculum information offered to parents. (paragraph 51)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	18	16	0	0	0
Percentage	0	17	44	39	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	167
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	30

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	30	29	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	27	26
	Girls	26	28	27
	Total	49	55	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (78)	93 (78)	90 (87)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	28	28
	Girls	28	27	27
	Total	55	55	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (79)	93 (87)	93 (87)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
155	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y1

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y1

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	221

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	324,481
Total expenditure	313,416
Expenditure per pupil	1,822
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,879
Balance carried forward to next year	35,944

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	172
Number of questionnaires returned	139

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	43	48	7	1	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	69	28	0	2	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	39	33	24	2	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	44	48	6	1	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	54	35	8	2	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	52	40	5	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	36	41	18	4	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	43	43	8	4	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	52	41	4	1	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	42	50	4	2	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	73	22	2	2	1

The school inadvertently sent this earlier version of the questionnaire to parents.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

66. Provision for children in the early years of their education is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection when it was judged unsatisfactory. Children are admitted full-time in either the September or January before their fifth birthday. An effective programme of meetings and visits prior to starting school ensures they have a confident, happy start to their school life. At the time of the inspection, there were 55 children in the two reception classes. The school provides them with a secure and caring environment, with daily routines firmly established. The programme of activities is well planned based on the recommended areas of learning for this age and fully supports the children's intellectual, physical and social development. More formal work, linked to the literacy and numeracy strategies, is phased in during the term before they enter Year 1. Attainment on entry to the reception classes varies considerably but, overall, is below that expected for children of this age, particularly in early language development, mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. For a significant minority of children, attainment is well below average. From this starting point, the great majority of children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Some children make such good progress in their personal, social and emotional skills that their attainment in this area meets the expectations normally seen. However, although these children make good progress in their speaking and listening skills, some enter Year 1 with attainment below that which could be reasonably expected of children of this age. Overall, attainment on entry to Year 1 is below expectations although the few higher attaining children are above this.
67. Accommodation is satisfactory. The reception classes are reasonably spacious, which allows for the easy movement of children, and provides sufficient quiet areas for them to read books, act out role-play and to make large constructions. Classrooms provide an exciting and stimulating environment, where children's work is given prominence and is effectively displayed. There is a suitable outdoor play area, which allows for the development of children's physical skills. The overall accommodation allows the development of children from the early years of their education through to the full National Curriculum. The quality of teaching is good overall. Assessment of children's attainment is mainly judged against the standards most children are expected to achieve by the end of their reception year.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. Teaching is good and the children's personal and social development is given a high priority, to good effect. Children are happy and content to be in school. They play well together, share resources and take turns. Children work happily on their own and alongside others, as well as in groups. They are interested and responsive, taking part in all the activities provided for them with enjoyment. Free play is planned very effectively and gives children very good opportunities to select and pursue an activity of their own choice. Children show a natural curiosity in all activities, are very interested in visitors to their room and, for example, want to know if they have come to read them a story or to play with them. They choose wisely from activities on offer with the positive encouragement provided by the adults. There is good use of praise from all adults, and children are encouraged to be independent and show this, for example, in dressing themselves and in washing their hands. In whole-class sessions, most children listen with considerable interest to instructions for planned activities by the teachers and respond positively. Many work independently and show concentration

and perseverance in their learning. All staff act as good role models for the children, helping them to form positive relationships and to care about others. They are curious about new learning and are keen to talk both to their friends and to adults about what they are doing. Most children will meet the expected standard in this area of their development and some will exceed this.

Communication, language and literacy

69. Because of good teaching, children are provided with a wide range of activities, which support the development of language and literacy. From the start of their school life, they begin to develop their personal and social skills alongside those for speaking and listening. Staff offer frequent opportunities for children to talk with an adult and actively seek to extend the children's vocabulary. Children learn to listen attentively, follow instructions carefully and develop a growing vocabulary, enabling them to speak with increasing confidence in a variety of situations. The teachers work effectively within the structure of the literacy strategy and their teaching is good. Many children soon develop an understanding that words and pictures carry meaning. They know how books are organised and, with support, recognise some familiar words in simple texts. Good use is made of the literacy strategy to introduce children to phonics, for example, recognising the initial sound of a selection of toys and objects. The development of early reading skills is good with many children recognising words and objects that begin with the letter 'r'. Many recognise other initial letters and use early reading skills such as predicting what the next word is likely to be or getting clues from pictures. Higher attaining children can recognise most letter sounds at the beginning or end of simple words. Most children are aware of the purpose of writing and can write their names. Children are introduced to a cursive-style of writing from an early age. This is effective and some children, with support, quickly develop this style and attempt to write in short sentences. The children make good progress overall although by the time they enter Year 1 a significant minority are unlikely to attain the expected standards in reading and writing. Their skills in speaking and listening have improved and sometimes match those expected for children of this age. Children achieve well in this area of their learning.

Mathematical development

70. Most children make good progress in their mathematical development due to the good quality teaching they receive. They are provided with a good range of practical activities for the development of their mathematical skills and there is good quality direct teaching. Many count numbers up to 20 and are making good progress in reciting number names in order from one to 20 and beyond. The higher attaining children show an appropriate understanding of addition and subtraction when solving problems involving nine objects and can find one more or less than a number up to nine. They gain a good foundation for future mathematics work through play in the 'sand' and with activities involving pattern making. Many work on the computer to differentiate between different shapes and use their early mouse skills to click and drag their chosen shape. There is good development of children's literacy skills. These children are achieving well, although less than 60 per cent are likely to achieve the expected standard by the time they enter Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Most of the children enter the school with some general knowledge and with the benefit of good teaching; some children are likely to achieve the expected standard for this area of learning by the end of the reception year. The children's knowledge and

understanding of the world are developed well through relevant topics about themselves. They know their learning environment well and move confidently and with independence around the different areas on offer to them, both inside and outside the classroom. They talk about where they live and are knowledgeable about how seeds grow into plants. They understand that plants have leaves, flowers and roots. The children know the routine for the day and understand there are different times for daily events. They all enjoy making models using construction apparatus and talk about what they have built. They are familiar with the people in their school who help them and are well supported in investigating their surroundings or finding out things for themselves.

Physical development

72. Teaching is good and children's physical development is in line with that expected for children of this age. Manual dexterity is satisfactorily developed through their play with games and jigsaws, and many opportunities are provided for children to develop their skills of cutting, sticking, and using construction kits. They use modelling materials, pencils and brushes and show a growing ability to manage small items. Fine motor control is well developed in children's use of construction kits. Children use the outdoor space with an awareness of others, and travel around the area without collisions. Their skills of balancing, climbing and riding two- and three-wheeled toys are as expected for their age. Children have satisfactory opportunities to play on wheeled toys, to climb and balance. Physical education is timetabled and planning shows a good range of gymnastic and games activities that promote the larger-scale movements of the children. Already, they have good control over their bodies, have a sense of their own and other people's space and most will achieve the learning goal for this area by the end of their time in reception. There are good links with earlier learning and children handle tools, objects and pencils with growing confidence and skill. Physical skills are well developed through good teaching. Achievement in this area of learning is good and most will attain the early learning goal in this aspect of their learning.

Creative development

73. Teaching is good with children working well towards the expected standards for their age and in some aspects, they are already near to achieving it. They respond enthusiastically in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel. The opportunity to participate in playing musical instruments promotes a range of creative skills, such as describing the sound their chosen instrument makes and making up a simple rhythm. Higher attaining pupils move in time to the beat of the music. All children enjoy singing, recognise familiar songs and number rhymes and sing with enthusiasm. Through role-play, the children develop their own situations spontaneously. This makes a good contribution to their speaking and listening skills. Children are achieving well and most will achieve expected standards in this area of their learning.

ENGLISH

74. Standards in speaking, listening and reading by the end of Year 2 are close to the national average and in writing are below. The main factor contributing to these standards is the high percentage of lower attaining pupils entering the reception classes. Since 1998, the trend in the Year 2 National Curriculum annual reading and writing tests has fluctuated from close to or below the national average. In the 2002 tests, writing results corresponded with all schools nationally but when compared to similar schools they were below.

75. The school recognises the need to raise standards in all classes, especially in reading and writing, and is determined to do so. A thorough audit of the subject has identified extended writing and reading for meaning as areas for immediate development. A good start has been made with challenging but reachable targets being set for each year group. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the pupils' achievement with their progress being tracked, reviewed and recorded on a regular basis. A pleasing feature is the good lesson planning and more effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, which were weaknesses at the time of the last inspection.
76. Overall the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, achieve well in lessons and over time, due mostly to overall good teaching and a willingness on the pupils' behalf to learn.

Speaking and Listening

77. The pupils start in Year 1 with skills in communication, language and literacy below national expectations for their ages. Many of these develop as confident communicators as they get older because of good class organisation and use of effective teaching strategies. By the end of Year 2, for example, higher-attaining pupils demonstrate good listening skills when responding quickly and sensibly to the teachers' questions about the story plot and setting in the book, *'Owl Babies'*. Lower-attaining pupils and some of average ability have more difficulty in explaining their ideas or interpretations, as observed in a Year 1 lesson recapping the story of *'Elmer the Elephant'*. The majority re-tell stories accurately, give reasons why they like school, hobbies or favourite food, and enjoy reciting rhymes. During lessons they read aloud and explain their work while others listen, which enhances confidence and self-esteem, as noted in a Year 2 lesson on evaluating books by the same author. By the end of Year 2, many express confidently their preferences for plots and characters in books, such as *'Little Red Riding Hood'* and *'Mog and the Vee Ee Tee'*. In some classes, on the odd occasion, the pupils' listening skills are not tuned so finely. They are usually keen to contribute their ideas but the rule about signalling their intention to speak is not always firmly established and a minority do not listen consistently well to each other.

Reading

78. Reading is promoted strongly within the school. All the pupils are supported well by a high quality system for reading at home and effective use of support in school, including volunteer helpers. The higher attaining pupils read a good selection of books and express opinions well about stories which they have read, for example *'Wish You Were Here'*. All the pupils use a good range of strategies, such as knowledge of letter sounds, pictures and the content of the story to establish meaning, exemplified well in a Year 1 guided reading session. Most pupils are enthusiastic about books and enjoy reading simple narratives such as *'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'* and *'Elmer the Elephant'*, as observed with another group of Year 1 pupils. Pupils are introduced at an early age to poets, for example John Foster, Robin Miller, Marie Brooks and John Kitching. They distinguish between fiction and non-fiction and know the relevance of index, glossary and blurb in books. All the pupils benefit from group reading sessions and higher attaining pupils discuss plot and characterisation appropriately, as for example some Year 2 pupils did while expressing their enjoyment of *'Owl Babies'*. However, many are still finding it difficult to comprehend fully the plot, themes and story lines in books which they have read, evident in reading sessions with groups of Year 2 pupils.

Writing

79. By the end of Year 2, pupils are beginning to write in a number of different forms, such as lists for menus, clothes they wear and accounts of stories and poems, as well as instructions for, for example, making sandwiches. Year 1 pupils write simple stories re-telling features of narratives such as *'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'*. In their independent writing they begin to express likes and dislikes, for instance, 'I will go to town on my bike' or 'I like the bus'. The higher attaining pupils in Year 2 use imaginative vocabulary well while plotting stories based on *'The Fairground'* and *'Danny Moves House'*. Further examples, plus the use of dialogue, occur frequently in their creative writing, for instance, 'The witch croaked a cackle of glee as she said, "Hello, my young man." "Hello," the young man replied shyly.' Other free story writing includes titles such as *'Little Girl Lost'* and *'Peace At Last'*. They are beginning to learn the basic format of letter writing and examples include 'thank you' scripts to the presenter of a puppet show. The focused and systematic teaching of literacy is evident in examples of extended writing in other subjects such as history, geography and religious education. Spelling skills are developed progressively with good use of appropriate word-banks for all pupils. Although the pupils' writing is usually neat and letters are formed satisfactorily, few consistently join their writing in their everyday work. By the end of Year 2, punctuation is becoming more accurate and words are often chosen carefully, especially by higher attaining pupils, as observed in a lesson on word building and sentence construction. However, the ability of many pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in appropriately extended written form is still below what is expected nationally from this age group, but is improving steadily. During the past four years, boys have out-performed girls in writing, which opposes the national trend. Inspection findings indicate that there is now no significant difference. However, the low percentage of the pupils reaching the higher level 3 is a concern of which the school is aware. Successful strategies, including extra booster classes, have been introduced to address this matter and evidence suggests an improving picture.
80. Literacy is promoted satisfactorily throughout the school. In all classes, literacy is being improved through other subjects, for example the importance of listening to and carrying out instructions in physical education, in writing up science investigations accurately and reading and role-playing scenes from books such as *'Alice in Wonderland'* or *'Where the Wild Things Are'*.
81. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, which is a significant improvement from the previous inspection when some teaching was unsatisfactory. The teachers have worked hard to improve strategies for teaching literacy and have been successful. A particularly good example was noted in a Year 2 lesson on evaluating the settings, similarities and characters in a selection of Judith Kerr's books. In the same lesson, higher-order questioning skills (high focus in school) were used effectively to access and then promote the pupils' understanding. In all the lessons observed, teachers established good routines and generated purposeful working atmospheres. This contributes well to the positive attitudes of pupils, who generally work hard, with interest and enthusiasm to complete their work successfully. As a result, learning is nearly always good. The best teaching combines discussion and explanation, practical work, high expectations and the maintenance of good pace. In most classes, the teachers' close co-operation with teaching assistants has a positive impact on the quality of learning, especially for pupils with special educational needs. A particularly noteworthy instance was recorded in a Year 1 lesson where the teaching assistant's input benefited greatly a group of pupils who were writing a postcard for a specific purpose. Such support for higher attaining pupils is not so apparent. The pupils' work is marked

consistently. It is always positive and occasionally sets clear targets to help pupils improve.

82. Behaviour overall is good in lessons. On the occasions when problems do occur, inappropriate behaviour is dealt with promptly and skilfully by the teachers and teaching assistants. Once they are assigned to a task the pupils concentrate well, but due to underdeveloped writing skills work output is frequently limited, as observed in a Year 2 lesson reviewing the text, 'Owl Babies'. An analysis of pupils' past and present work also supports this judgement. In the good and very good lessons, the pupils frequently work in groups on different tasks, which are matched to their learning needs. This develops well their co-operative and collaborative skills, increases confidence and ensures that learning is good.
83. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader who has assumed the post recently, is energetic, a keen advocate of the subject and is committed to raising standards. This ensures that the curriculum is planned effectively and that good balance and coverage ensue. The policy and content of lessons reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum. The teachers' planning is thorough and is reviewed by the subject leader on a regular basis. A check is kept on the pupils' attainment and progress through regular assessments and evaluation of lessons, and the moderation and levelling of pupils' work against the National Curriculum attainment targets. In order to develop the teachers' professionalism, a leading literacy teacher has modelled lessons and, as a result, new strategies adopted by the teachers have improved their practice. The subject leader carries out lesson observations regularly, offering written and verbal feedback to the teachers. All classes are stocked adequately with books and the small library is maintained and supervised well.

MATHEMATICS

84. Standards by the end of Year 2 are now average and there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. There has been good improvement since the last inspection because standards have improved. Achievement for the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, is good.
85. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 are developing appropriate mathematical vocabulary, which reflects the care taken by the teachers to use appropriate terminology: this also makes a good contribution to their developing literacy skills. Year 1 pupils measure accurately and confidently and use terms such as *taller/tallest*, *shorter/shortest* and *same as*. In Year 2, pupils confidently use the language of multiplication as they identify numbers divisible by two. Most pupils are confident at halving and doubling numbers up to 20 and are able to identify the multiples of two. The language and understanding of shape and pattern are well taught and, by Year 2, pupils are familiar with the basic properties of cubes, cuboids, cylinders, spheres and cones. They learn to measure length using centimetres and metres and, through using halves and quarters, begin to understand the concept of time.
86. The quality of teaching is good overall. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well by the end of Year 2. In the best lessons, teachers communicate the learning intentions explicitly and refer to them at regular intervals during the lesson in order to check what the pupils have done and learnt. The plenary sessions in the lessons are, on occasions, good with teachers checking what the pupils have done and learnt in the lesson and eliciting from them what they need to do to extend their

mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. The quality of teaching in these lessons is good and the teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The lessons build progressively on the objectives introduced earlier in the week. In a good quality Year 2 lesson, the teacher had the learning objective written on the whiteboard and made constant reference to it in order to consolidate pupils' learning of three-dimensional shapes. High expectations challenged the pupils appropriately. The teacher's questions required them to draw on their experiences and apply their mathematics to solve problems. Recording enabled the pupils to use a variety of methods that did not totally rely on writing skills. This approach suits pupils with special educational needs well. However, in some lessons the challenge offered to higher attaining pupils was insufficient to ensure they achieved as well as possible. Pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills in subjects such as art and design, design and technology and science and the use of discussion in mathematics makes a good contribution to pupils' developing literacy skills. Pupils use computers to consolidate further their understanding of a variety of shapes.

87. Pupils' attitudes are good throughout the school. They show a positive interest and enthusiasm towards mathematics, behave well in lessons, demonstrating very good relationships with peers, teachers and teaching assistants. They show initiative and take responsibility for their work and learning. These very good relationships between staff and pupils help to create a stimulating working environment and a growing interest and enjoyment in the subject.
88. The effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, with its emphasis on developing pupils' mental calculation skills and understanding of the processes of mathematics, is beginning to have an impact on standards in the current Years 1 and 2. In addition, teachers use the structure of the Numeracy Strategy to ensure a good pace and interest level. Overall, the mental and oral session at the beginning of lessons is used well. However, discussion sessions at the end of lessons are not always used effectively to enable pupils to explain what they have achieved in the lesson, to share results and explain some of their methods of calculating. This is usually because the lesson has run over its allocated time. Homework is used appropriately and there are some good quality displays which celebrate pupils' achievements.
89. The subject leader demonstrates good subject knowledge and is making a good contribution to the progress now seen in Years 1 and 2. She carries out a programme of monitoring teaching to check that the recent improved standards are maintained. She also continues to sample teachers' planning and pupils' work. This is supported well by the systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. She has attended further training in developing the Numeracy Strategy and other staff have attended courses to improve their expertise. There are effective links with numeracy, using computers to develop pupils' skills and sufficient resources to cover all aspects of the subject.

SCIENCE

90. In Year 2, standards are average. The previous inspection reported that pupils' attainment in science was, 'below average by the end of Year 2.' There has therefore been a good improvement. In the 2002 national tests, the attainment of Year 2 pupils was average compared with national results, but the proportion that reached the higher level 3 was below the national average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. No

significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls or of pupils from minority ethnic groups were observed.

91. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, including some good features. The previous inspection described teaching as, satisfactory overall, with an example of a good and an unsatisfactory lesson being observed. Teaching has improved because none that was unsatisfactory was seen during this inspection. In Year 2, a good lesson on life processes and living things had suitable content, effective teaching and appropriate pace. Therefore, pupils maintained interest and extended their understanding. This was because they were suitably challenged to use their investigative and observational skills to examine similarities and differences between plants. Work was reasonably well matched to their differing capabilities and good support was given to those with special educational needs. This enabled them to gain valuable experience from the activities. However, higher attaining pupils needed greater challenge in order to reach the more advanced levels of attainment. The teacher engaged pupils, as a class and in groups, in helpful discussion by asking open-ended questions. This helped them to gain understanding of important aspects of what they were learning and was further refined as they discussed their observations with one another.
92. An analysis of pupils' work in Year 2 indicates that they have improved their skills in investigative science since the previous inspection. However, this needs further development to ensure that teachers' expectations are sufficiently high to guarantee that pupils' recorded work is always accurate and carefully presented. Although marking encourages pupils, more could be done to show them how to improve their work. Furthermore, too much use is made of worksheets and pupils have too little experience of research with the use of books, CD-ROM and the Internet. They have also learned about materials and their properties and aspects of physical processes such as forces and motion.
93. A satisfactory lesson in Year 1 encouraged pupils to think about ways of investigating sounds. The teacher made good use of questions and a range of different sounds to help them generate investigative ideas. They responded well to this, knew what they wanted to do and talked about their intentions, but a number became restless because this part of the lesson went on for too long. Pupils were generally well managed and therefore most maintained interest. The teacher's expectations were good with respect to what they should be able to do in the investigation. However, no indication was given about the quality or quantity of recorded work that was expected. A teaching assistant and student gave good support to pupils with special educational needs and this enabled them to make appropriate progress. In Year 1, analysis of pupils' work indicates too much reliance on worksheets that inhibit the development of their investigative and recording skills. Teachers' expectations are often too low for good quality recording and presentation of work.
94. The allocation of time to the subject has improved since the previous inspection and this has had a positive effect on standards. More time is now allowed for pupils to do investigations, but too much reliance on worksheets means that less progress has been made in helping them to devise investigations and record their results. The subject leader has re-written the scheme of work, with support from an adviser, so it now matches the needs of single age classes. She monitors teachers' planning in each year group to ensure that the curriculum is fully covered. Currently, she is investigating how the curricular needs of higher attaining pupils can be more effectively met. Assessment is in the process of development and a good range of manageable methods has been devised to help teachers with this process. However, because

there is insufficient collated information available about what pupils can or cannot do, it is too soon for assessment to be used to help plan the curriculum or to set targets for the attainment and progress of pupils.

95. The subject leader has been appointed recently and is very enthusiastic. An analysis of pupils' work and some observation of teaching, plus guidance from a local education authority adviser, have enabled priorities to be identified for the school improvement plan. Much has already been achieved and therefore, leadership and management are good. Learning resources are well used and the school grounds now provide a good source of investigative material. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Appropriate use is made of numeracy in various aspects of the subject such as compiling simple tables of results, but there is little evidence that information and communication technology is used to any significant extent. The subject meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

96. The attainment of pupils in art and design is in line with that which is expected nationally by the end of Year 2. This judgement is based upon teaching observed, a scrutiny of pupils' sketchbooks and displays of their work. The previous inspection reported that, 'Pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2.' These standards are similar to those reported in the previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, achieve well. There are no differences in the attainment of boys and of girls.
97. The quality of teaching and of learning is satisfactory overall and with some good features observed. The previous inspection judged the quality of teaching to be, 'satisfactory.' In a satisfactory Year 2 lesson, pupils were engaged in the use of various materials for weaving. Teaching was effective because it was matched to the differing needs of pupils, challenged them to use their manual skills carefully and develop their imagination. Particularly effective was the focus upon artistic creation rather than the utilitarian function of weaving. This was because the teacher used the colourful and imaginative work of Michael Brennand-Wood as a stimulus for pupils' own work. The lesson gave them opportunities to explore how different materials could be used. This feature of teaching, marks an improvement since the previous inspection. However, there was too little emphasis upon pupils' evaluation of their own work. They were generally well managed, but took too long to clear away before a final discussion about what they had achieved. This led to a slackening of pace and concentration.
98. In Year 1, a good lesson started with pupils reviewing what they had previously learned. The teacher asked a good range of open-ended questions to help them understand the various uses of weaving. They had an excellent variety of materials from which to choose and the tasks set for them were carefully matched to their various capabilities. Most quickly grasped the technique of threading strips in a warp and weft pattern. They worked with great enthusiasm and most soon produced good pieces of work, although a few had to start again, when they became muddled. This lesson was successful because it was carefully prepared and pupils were given very clear instruction. Advice and guidance about the use of colour and texture to create pattern would have provided them with a wider range of skills and understanding.
99. Displays of pupils' work indicate that they have explored and developed ideas, investigated the use of materials and tools, and grown in their understanding and knowledge about artists and the techniques employed by them. Overall, pupils generally have more opportunities than previously to evaluate and develop their work.

Another clear improvement, since the previous inspection, is the development of three-dimensional work. Two artists have recently worked with pupils to produce a large, colourful and carefully constructed boat and associated seaside items. This is prominently displayed in the hall and is evidence of the enthusiasm and interest with which pupils undertook the project.

100. The school has a re-written programme of work based upon nationally recommended guidance. Planning is improved because there is now much more detail about what pupils are to learn. A practical effect of this is that learning objectives are usually pasted in pupils' well-used sketchbooks. They learn about the wider culture when they find out about artists and their work. For example, they have attempted paintings in the style of L. S. Lowry and Paul Klee. The subject therefore makes a satisfactory contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils. There are no extra-curricular activities and although there is some use of information and communication technology in the subject, this is not well developed. Assessment of pupils' work is currently underdeveloped and therefore cannot make an appropriate contribution to the refinement of the curriculum. There has been no improvement in this aspect since the previous inspection.
101. The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic and is beginning to provide clear leadership. She has begun to identify a range of priorities necessary to continue the improvement of art and design. These include the improvement of resources and the use of information and communication technology. However, there are no opportunities to monitor teaching and it is therefore difficult for her to be fully aware of what needs improvement. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met and resources are satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. By the age of seven, standards attained by pupils are above those normally expected of pupils of this age. The majority of pupils handle equipment and materials well. They are able to plan their own designs from an early age and are given opportunities to use a range of materials appropriately in designing and making assignments. In planning designs, average and higher attaining pupils describe really well their winding mechanisms and vehicles they have planned, made, decorated and tested. Descriptions involve the use of a good, clear sequence of sentences. Some lower attaining pupils show well-developed skills. For example, one pupil has produced a good model of Whinnie the Witch using paper fasteners to allow the arms to move. Other pupils have produced good pictures with sliding mechanisms to move a main character or object. Throughout the school, the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, achieve well.
103. There has been good improvement since the last inspection when standards were in line with national expectations. Pupils are now given opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of others. Many show considerable maturity in thinking about and discussing what they have achieved and how to improve their designs. Pupils now have opportunities to use their own ideas and to select their own materials.
104. The majority of pupils show good control in the use of scissors and paste. They control pencils well when drawing round shapes. By the age of seven, all pupils are able to design and make a picture frame with appropriate support for some lower attaining pupils. The pupils show a good knowledge of shapes such as circles, triangles,

rectangles and circles and use these well in their designs. In Year 2, most pupils are successful in finding ways of constructing pulleys. Portfolios of pupils' work show that there has been work of a good standard throughout the school. Examples are the design and construction of bridges, and the making of flags, teddy bears, stick puppets and moving toys. Pupils have also learnt about food technology and show satisfactory understanding of food hygiene.

105. Teaching observed has been of a good standard in all lessons and sometimes very good. Teachers plan their lessons well, give clear explanations and demonstrations of what they want the pupils to achieve and engage the pupils through good, probing questioning. The pupils respond well by showing interest and enthusiasm. They know what is expected of them, behave well and stay focused on the task in hand. Teachers prepare the lessons well and arrange appropriate support for the main activities with adults in the room assigned to groups or circulating to give effective support where it is needed. In the best lessons, there is a brisk pace and good interventions by teachers to show examples of good practice. They encourage pupils to think about and improve what they are doing. In all lessons seen, the teachers exercised good control and had high expectations of work and behaviour. As a result, learning proceeded at a good and sometimes a very good pace.
106. In all lessons observed, the pupils worked well individually and in groups. There are very good relationships between pupils and between the pupils and adults who support them. There is a satisfactory challenge for pupils at all levels of attainment although more opportunities could be given to high achievers to produce more demanding work that differs more from the main task. Pupils with special educational and pupils with English as an additional language are appropriately supported and included in all activities. Support staff are appropriately engaged in main activities, but not in oral parts of lessons where some frequently play a passive role.
107. The subject leader has been in post for less than a year and has done much to move the subject forward. There is good planning for continuity with appropriate attention being paid to prior skills and experiences. There is good liaison with class teachers in planning. Ideas from teaching staff are appropriately included while guidelines remain within curricular requirements. There is a good, though somewhat dated, portfolio in place with photographs of good practice and annotated sheets giving national curriculum levels and descriptors. The subject leader is appropriately collecting samples of good work. There is good liaison between staff. Resources are effectively checked before the start of each unit of work. There is, however, as yet no formal monitoring of teaching and learning. The subject manager has identified appropriate priorities for improvement including staff training, resource needs and the development of assessment and monitoring.
108. Some good use is made of the local area to support the curriculum. Ideas from looking at buildings, a local park and traffic signs are examples. The subject is well supported by some very good display work around the school, much of which shows the use of a range of materials and skills. Good examples are a fishing boat produced when pupils throughout the school worked with a visiting artist, models of cranes and vehicles, pictures with sliding mechanisms, displays of joining materials and collage work.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

109. Judgements in geography and history are based on three geography lessons seen during the inspection together with work seen in pupils' books, displays around the school and documentary evidence. By the age of seven, standards attained by pupils

are in line with those normally expected of pupils of this age. In the lessons observed, pupils' attainment ranged from satisfactory to very good and was satisfactory overall. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, both in the work seen around the school and in pupils' books, is satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, the amount of time given to history was unsatisfactory and some lessons were too short. This issue has now been addressed satisfactorily. The school has maintained the standards pupils attained at the time of the last inspection and has made satisfactory progress.

110. By the age of seven, most pupils use appropriate vocabulary in geography lessons with words such as "tourists," "local area," "coastline" and "seasons." They understand the difference between man-made items such as piers and apartments and natural features such as beaches and sand. Average and higher attaining pupils use pictures well to obtain information and are articulate in expressing their opinions. Lower achievers are able to make lists of people who work at the seaside. Average and high attaining pupils produce good well-formed sentences such as "My Dad fell in the sand" or "Dear *****, I am in a big boat at Maidstone." They can write a sequence of sentences to describe what they have been observing. Opportunities for extensive written work are, however, limited and much of the written work is very short. Writing, colouring and drawing display a range of attainment in line with that normally expected of pupils of this age, but challenging activities for higher attaining pupils are limited. Some use is made of information and communication technology such as in Year 2 classes where pupils have found information about a country of their choice.
111. Teaching observed in the inspection was good overall and ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the better lessons, teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. They use good probing questioning, plan the lessons well and use good vocabulary as a matter of course. The pupils respond by showing enthusiasm and an interest in what they are doing, and make good and sometimes very good progress. In lessons where there is a good pace and good, continuous assessment of what the pupils have understood, learning takes place at a brisk pace. In a very good lesson in Year 2, the pupils were well motivated by the teacher's own enthusiasm and interest when the pupils became excited about identifying a pupils' own house on an aerial photograph. In the best lessons, the sharing of what pupils' have learnt in groups at the end of the lesson produces focused, lively and interesting opportunities for learning to proceed. In some lessons, however, where the pace is slower, these opportunities are missed. Teachers generally plan lessons very well and ensure appropriate support for all the pupils during main activities. At other times, however, teaching assistants often play a passive role that is an unsatisfactory use of their time.
112. In all lessons, pupils behaved well and worked well together in groups. There were very good relationships between the pupils themselves and between the pupils and adults. Pupils are given opportunities to think about and discuss what they are doing and their opinions are valued. Teachers take care to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are involved in all classroom activities.
113. The subject leader for geography and history has recently been appointed. Planning is good and is based on published guidelines. Most arrangements for the monitoring of teaching and learning are, however, informal. This has proved acceptable while there has been a focus on other whole school issues, but is unsatisfactory as a long-term arrangement. Some classroom observations and team teaching have taken place and

there are plans for assessments at the end of each unit of work. There is, as yet, no clear structure for the systematic checking of the humanities curriculum.

114. The school makes satisfactory use of the local environment and community to support the history and geography curriculum. Studies are made of local buildings and a park and traffic surveys are carried out. Appropriate use is also made of educational visits and visitors such as grandparents who give information about the past. The curriculum is well supported by some very good display work such as seaside displays showing a map of Kent together with pupils' writing and pictures and key words prominently and attractively placed nearby.
115. The subject leader has identified priorities to take the subjects forward and is to attend an appropriate course on using information and communication technology in geography later in the year. Resources for both subjects are satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

116. By the end of Year 2, attainment is in line with national expectations, which is similar to the last inspection. A new mini-computer suite has been installed recently, incorporating a full networking system which has improved provision significantly. The pupils also have further opportunities to develop and practise their skills consistently on other computers placed strategically in all classrooms. This, together with some good, but overall satisfactory teaching and the pupils' good attitudes, ensure that they achieve well. A pleasing feature is the effective use of information and communication technology across all other areas of the curriculum, which has maintained improvement over the past two years. Considering the greater learning and teaching demands placed on the subject in recent times, this is even more creditable. Consequently, the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make overall satisfactory progress.
117. The pupils begin to use the computers as soon as they start school. In reception they learn mouse control and to recognise letters on the keyboard. In Year 1 they use the spacebar, delete and arrow keys, write simple sentences such as 'I have a teddy' or 'I like to play', and during geography topics, they use computer-based programmes to produce traffic survey graphs. By the end of Year 2, most pupils enter text, save, retrieve and print their work as well as changing font, size and colour. They also use click and drag skills well, as observed in a sample of completed artwork using flood-fill, shape tool and spray can programmes. In mathematics lessons, programmable robotic toys are used to measure distances and degrees of turning, thus reinforcing control technology skills. The majority know how to load and access information from CD-ROMs, as observed in a Year 2 lesson studying animal habitats. In their science lessons on life processes and living things, the pupils in Year 1 have used information and communication technology to label and classify parts of a plant. For geography topics, the pupils in Year 2 have used CD-ROMs to produce maps with simple symbols to denote locations and features.
118. The pupils' attitudes to information and communication technology are good. Most talk enthusiastically about the subject and are proud to show their work. Many have access to computers at home and a small number enjoy receiving and sending emails, as established during a discussion with an inspector. These pupils are happy to help their peers during work carried out in pairs, as observed in a Year 2 lesson using a computer-based word-bank to construct simple sentences.

119. Of the three lessons seen, two were satisfactory and one was good. The teachers' subject knowledge is good, lessons have a clear focus on a specific skill to be taught, and the time allocation is appropriate. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teacher confidence is increasing and all adults working in classes are becoming more secure in the use of the new equipment. For example, during a Year 2 lesson, a computer projector and screen were used well to demonstrate how a series of instructions using the mouse and icons accesses information from a variety of programmes. Classes are managed effectively which ensures that the pupils experience appropriate handling and communicating of data over a range of topics, for instance classifying the characteristics of 2-D shapes, inputting the information and using a computer programme to generate a graph, as observed in a Year 1 lesson. Overall, resources are satisfactory.
120. The subject leader manages the subject well. She provides effective support for colleagues and governors through in-service training and helpful documents. Assessment is on going throughout lessons and a system is in place to evaluate pupils' performance against the National Curriculum expected levels for pupils of this age. Curriculum and lesson plans are detailed, ensuring that there is appropriate coverage and continuity, verified in inspection findings. The subject leader has observed teaching and learning with feedback, written and verbal, offered to teachers. She reviews teachers' planning on a regular basis on which evaluations are made at the end of work units. All these initiatives contribute well to the pupils' learning.

MUSIC

121. Pupils throughout the school attain standards expected for their age, have many opportunities for practical activities and enjoy music making. The majority, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily overall, although in some lessons achievement is good. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection
122. Younger pupils learn the correct way to handle and use instruments and investigate the sounds made by a range of percussion instruments in a lesson exploring volume. All children can make loud and soft sounds. Pupils in one class also experimented with rhythmic patterns. Older pupils can illustrate making long and short sounds in different contexts and begin to arrange these in a sequence. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are fully involved in all lessons and are well supported in the classroom.
123. Teachers are now using a nationally recommended programme of work for music and this is successful in supporting planning for lessons and developing learning experiences throughout the infant curriculum. Teaching involved all pupils in practical music making, and feedback to pupils in lessons was positive and constructive. The teaching of music was satisfactory overall and some good teaching was seen. Pupils enjoy singing in assembly, accompanied by the piano. The standard of singing is good and music is celebrated in school performances in which every pupil participates.
124. The management of music is satisfactory. The school has a helpful guidance for music, which is planned by the subject leader with all staff. The integration of music with other curricular areas, for example, number songs in mathematics and an appreciation of rhythm in poetry, adds to the coherence of the infant curriculum. Resources for music are satisfactory and used well. The subject leader has extended the range of resources and plans to increase school's collection of compact discs to include more multicultural music. She helps teachers informally in their lesson planning

but there is no planned opportunity for her to share her expertise in teaching, which results in some inconsistency in the standards of teaching and learning across the school. Assessment is an area for development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. The attainment of pupils in Year 2 is similar to that which is expected nationally. The previous inspection reported that it was, 'in line overall, with national expectations, with dance being a particular strength.' During this inspection, it was only possible to see a limited range of physical education because of timetable constraints. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, made good progress. No differences in the attainment or progress of boys and girls were seen in the lessons.
126. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In Year 2, a good gymnastics lesson had an appropriate warm-up session that helped pupils gradually increase their physical efforts and co-ordination. They followed the teacher's directions carefully and were attentive to her demands. The main part of the lesson was based upon the idea of 'twisting' and pupils responded well to this and most made good imaginative efforts on the apparatus. The teacher helped pupils to extend their understanding of what could be done, when individual pupils were invited to demonstrate their own good ideas. Those who watched were very attentive to this valuable strategy. In the lesson, most pupils made satisfactory physical and imaginative effort, but the teacher could have demanded more from some of them. Pupils enjoyed the session and made good gains in skills and their understanding of the movement tasks. However, they had no opportunities to discuss their own performance or that of their classmates. In a good Year 2 dance lesson, there was effective teaching of skills and sustained pace. Pupils responded well to the challenge to develop movement ideas connected with the seaside and building sandcastles. This was because the teacher's explanations were clear; pupils worked well in groups to put their ideas together and made good creative efforts to accomplish their intentions. They learned how to improve what they did by simple evaluation of each group's work. A satisfactory outdoor games lesson in Year 1 focused on the development of pupils' throwing and catching skills. The skills taught were appropriate to pupils' needs and most made good effort to gain mastery of this basic, but quite difficult activity. Although the teacher presented each new catching and throwing activity clearly, not all pupils listened or watched well and there was too little insistence that they should. Consequently some were less able to do the practical tasks as well as they should have been. Some pupils had underdeveloped co-ordination and as the tasks increased in difficulty became less engaged in them. Some activities went on for too long without change and a number of pupils began to lose interest in them.
127. The school has a programme of work, based upon nationally recommended guidance. This has been developed by the subject leader and therefore the needs of each year group are now properly addressed. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Health and safety issues are addressed in the policy, as are some other aspects of personal and social education. However, in some physical education lessons, long hair was left loose and not properly tied back. There are no specific extra-curricular activities in physical education and therefore there has been no improvement in this issue since the previous inspection. There are no formal procedures to record what pupils can or cannot do. This is a weakness because development of the curriculum is rather unsystematic and based upon informal observation. The subject leader is enthusiastic and has some clear ideas about what needs to be developed. However, there is no action plan to set targets for development

and to measure success in meeting them. Teaching is not formally monitored, but the subject leader has discussions with teachers and this helps, to some extent, to determine what requires to be improved. The subject meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and resources are satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Attainment by the end of Year 2 is in line with that expected by the local education authority's Agreed Syllabus for religious education for pupils of this age. This judgement is similar to that of the previous inspection and the improvement since then has been satisfactory. Only a limited number of lessons were observed during the inspection. Evidence therefore includes an analysis of the pupils' past and present work, and discussion with them and their teachers. The pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, is good. Considering their below average attainment on entry to the school, all pupils achieve well due to challenge, choice of appropriate topics and their own sustained interest.
129. The pupils acquire a good factual basis from the topics which they study. Throughout the school, they learn not only about religion but also from it. They relate events and teaching to their own lives, which is a pleasing feature. For example, in a Year 2 lesson about Hindu worship in the Mandir they enacted the service reverently, bowing their heads and removing their shoes as a mark of respect. At the end of the lesson, the pupils' comments indicated a good understanding of the rituals involved.
130. In Year 1, the pupils recall accurately the main facts from Biblical stories such as the Christmas story and Noah's Ark. They know that the story of Rama and Sita is important to the Hindu faith. In their study of Christianity they learn the significance of initiation ceremonies, for example baptism, and relate this to becoming part of a family. In addition to learning more about Christianity, the pupils in Year 2 study many aspects of major religions including Judaism and Hinduism. They begin to develop an understanding about different faiths as they learn about celebrations such as Diwali and Hanukkah. They recount events of the major Christian festivals including Easter and Lent. They link these teachings to their own lives, for example the idea of forgiveness in the 'Prodigal Son' and the focus on sacrifice during Lent. Based on many aspects of these religions, the pupils have drawn up their own 'ten commandments' caring rules. As they begin to understand the meaning of these celebrations and stories, the majority develop a good awareness of self and respect for others. However, some pupils fail to grasp the moral implications of these stories.
131. Visits to places of worship enhance pupils' learning, for example, to the local church, where the symbolic use of artefacts and vestments is explained to them. School assemblies make a satisfactory contribution to the school's work on religious education. Themes are often chosen to link with appropriate religious stories, especially at Christmas, Easter, Diwali and Hanukkah.
132. The teachers make good use of the school's programme of work which is based mostly on the local education authority's Agreed Syllabus. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers begin lessons well, creating an appropriate calm, spiritual atmosphere through music, lighted candles or burning incense. A very good example was observed in a Year 2 lesson where pupils reflected about Hindu worship while listening to recorded sitar music. Classes are managed well, creating opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and spiritual awareness. Teachers handle discussions with sensitivity. This was evident during a Year 1 lesson where the pupils

debated the importance of respect and reverence during the taking of communion in the Christian church. During such discussions, the pupils' attitudes are good, most are eager to contribute and the majority responds well by listening carefully and respecting the views of others.

133. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has extensive subject knowledge and ensures that all aspects are taught. She monitors teachers' plans on a regular basis. An assessment system has been introduced recently. Links with the community include regular visits from the vicar of the local church and members of the Hindu faith. During the inspection, a Hindu woman demonstrated how a sari is worn and explained the importance of the puja tray's contents in her religious belief. The subject leader monitors teaching and learning on a regular basis, offering verbal and oral feedback to the teachers. Resources are adequate and are easily accessible to pupils and teachers.