

INSPECTION REPORT

SWINGATE INFANT SCHOOL

Chatham

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118509

Headteacher: Mrs P Allmen

Reporting inspector: Bob Cross
15917

Dates of inspection: 13th to 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 247912

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sultan Road Lordswood Chatham Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Swingate Infant School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Goodall
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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15917	Bob Cross	Registered inspector	Science, geography, physical education.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9691	Jon Vincent	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion including racial equality.	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?
22745	Rosalind Johns	Team inspector	English, music, religious education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15271	Brian Farley	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, special educational needs.	
19142	Audrey Quinnell	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, art, history, English as an additional language.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Swingate infant school educates boys and girls aged between four and 7 years. There are 281 pupils on roll which is bigger than most other schools of the same type. There are 96 children in the Foundation Stage, 48 attend full-time and 48 attend part-time in the four Reception classes. All will attend full time after the spring half term. The school has 56 pupils on its register of special educational needs, which is broadly the level of the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need which is below the national average. Pupils with speech and communication difficulties are the largest group amongst those with special educational needs. The school has 11 more girls than boys on roll. One class has a significant imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls. About four per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds which is lower than in most schools. Nine pupils speak English as an additional language none of whom is in the early stages of learning to speak English. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is a bit higher than in most schools. Twenty-three pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average. During the last school year, ten pupils entered the school other than at the usual time of first admission and 17 left it at times which were not those of the normal leaving or transfer for most pupils. In the last two years, two teachers have left the school and five have been appointed. These rates of turnover are not unusual. Pupils enter the school at average levels of attainment although skills in English are below average on entry.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The pupils make good progress and leave at above average standards in most subjects including mathematics. Standards in English and science are average as few pupils reach above average standards in writing and science compared with other schools. Good progress is due to the very good quality of teaching and learning in Year 2. This builds well on the quality of teaching and learning in the rest of the school which is consistently at least satisfactory. It is also due to the very good leadership and management of the headteacher who is well supported by other members of staff in management positions. The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. All pupils are fully included in all aspects of its life and work. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress and, as a result, they leave the school at above average standards in most subjects.
- The very good quality of the teaching and learning in Year 2 which promotes this good progress.
- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher and the good support provided by staff and governors help the pupils to succeed.
- The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are all very good and are underpinned by the school's overall very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's very good provision for the care of the pupils means that they grow rapidly in confidence.
- The partnership with parents is very good and supports the pupils' learning very well.

What could be improved

- The number of pupils reaching above average standards in writing and science which is below the national average.
- The provision made for the outdoor curriculum in Year R which is inadequate for the number of children.
- Strategic budget planning which has not ensured that the needs of the Foundation Stage children are fully catered for.
- Attendance which is below the national average.

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 November 1997 and, since then, it has made a very good improvement. The three key issues for action from that inspection have been well addressed. There have been improvements in standards, teaching and learning, behaviour, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, arrangements for the pupils' welfare and the school's partnership with parents. All other areas of the school, apart from

attendance and provision for the outdoor curriculum in Year R, are at least as good as they were in 1997. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
reading	B	B	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	C	C	C	C	
mathematics	C	B	B	B	

The information shows that the school's standards are consistently at or above average levels in reading and mathematics and at average levels in writing in the national end of Year 2 tests. Since 1998 there has been a rising trend in standards similar to the national rate of improvement in these subjects. In the end of Year 2 assessments made by teachers in science in 2002, standards were average.

The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 2, standards are above average in mathematics, including numeracy, design and technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. They are average in English, including literacy, science, information and communication technology, and religious education. Standards are average in science as too few pupils reach above average levels and they are average in English as too few pupils reach above average levels in writing. These standards represent good progress and achievement as the pupils enter the school at average standards overall although their standards are below average in English on entry. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language ensures that these pupils also make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils work hard and enjoy their lessons and these factors help them to progress well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in class and around the school. They are polite to adults and each other and take good care of the school. There has been one fixed period exclusion in the last year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The inclusion of all pupils enables them to develop an understanding of the needs of others and they assist each other unobtrusively. The elected members of the newly established school council fully understand their responsibilities to their classmates. Relationships are very strong, regardless of age, ability, race or gender.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below the national average and there has been a declining trend for the past three years. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average.

The pupils' attitudes and values make good contributions to their achievement but attendance is unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the school is good. In Years R and 1, teaching and learning are satisfactory and in Year 2, teaching and learning are very good. The quality of teaching and learning in English, including literacy, and mathematics, including numeracy, is good in Years 1 and 2. No unsatisfactory teaching or learning was seen during the inspection. The most important strengths of the teaching are the knowledge and understanding that the teachers have of the subjects that they teach, their high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and attainment and the quality of their management and control of the pupils. The most significant weakness is failure to make sure that all more able pupils achieve their full potential in writing and science. The most significant strengths in the quality of learning are the way in which the pupils apply themselves to their work with sustained interest and concentration. There are no significant weaknesses in the pupils' approach to their learning.

The school meets the needs of its pupils well overall. In many subjects, work is carefully and effectively tailored to the pupils' level of attainment. In Year 2, the very good quality of teaching meets the needs of the pupils very well. In Years R and 1, where teaching and learning are satisfactory, the needs of the pupils are met satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the good support provided by teaching assistants, particularly in English and mathematics, which meets their needs well. Pupils with English as an additional language are quickly assisted to take a full part in the life of the school without extra help.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Curricular provision is good in Years 1 and 2 and for indoor provision for children in Year R. However, resources for the outdoor curriculum in Foundation Stage are inadequate which is unsatisfactory. All statutory curricular requirements are met. The national literacy and numeracy strategies are well implemented and curricular provision is enhanced by a good range of extracurricular activities. All pupils are fully included in all activities and have good equality of opportunity.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' individual education plans are carefully organised with realistic targets for improvement that are regularly reviewed. Learning support assistants provide valuable help for pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons because they are well managed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in learning the language and appropriate progress for their abilities in all other subjects. Those currently on roll are able to take a full part in the curriculum without additional support although some are receiving extra help in conversational English for part of one afternoon each week. All are well integrated into the life of the school and take a full part in all activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory although it is effective in collective worship. The very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly reflected in their very good behaviour and social skills. Very good provision for cultural development give pupils experience of the cultural diversity in British society.
How well the school cares for	Very good. Teachers know the children very well and look after them very carefully. Throughout the school, there are good assessment procedures for

its pupils	academic and personal development. These are well used to assist the pupils' progress except in promoting the maximum above average attainment in science and writing.
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The school has a very good partnership with parents.

All of these factors, apart from provision for the outdoor curriculum in Year R, help the pupils to progress well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher gives the school very good leadership and management. She is well supported by staff with management responsibilities, particularly the deputy headteacher, and by the governors. The monitoring and development of teaching which has resulted in improved standards, are very good. Subject co-ordinators are very active in monitoring their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have ensured that virtually all statutory obligations are met. They have a clear understanding of what the school does well and of most of its weaknesses, for example, the need to improve above average attainment in writing and science. They make a satisfactory contribution to shaping its direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school evaluates its performance objectively and is well aware of its strengths and weakness. In most instances, it addresses weaknesses well and maintains and improves strengths successfully.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial management and control are rigorous and prudent and this has resulted in the school being well resourced. The school is careful to obtain good value for money in its expenditure and assesses this thoroughly and competently. Its financial reserves are well above recommended levels and although it has plans to reduce these levels, these do not include making adequate provision for the outdoor curriculum in the Foundation Stage.

The school's leadership and management support the pupils' progress well.

The school's number of teachers and teaching assistants and its accommodation support the pupils' learning well. Its learning resources are generally very good except for outdoor provision for Year R.

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 • They are comfortable about approaching the school. • The leadership and management of the school. • The quality of the teaching. • The way the children behave. • The way in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • The high expectations that the school has of their children and the good progress that they make. • The closeness with which the school works with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities provided outside of lessons.

The findings of the inspection support the positive views of the parents. In addition, they find that the range of extracurricular activities provided by the school is good.

PART B COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, children enter the school at average standards of attainment although their skills in communication, language and literacy are below average. The findings of the inspection are that children in the Foundation Stage are on course to reach similar standards to those found in most schools by the end of Year R in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. They are on track to reach below average standards in communication, language and literacy and physical development. In the school's previous inspection, the attainment of children under the age of five was judged to be in line with expectations for children of this age.
2. In the end of Key Stage 1 national tests in 2002, compared with all schools and with similar schools, standards were average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. The school's standards have been consistently at or above average levels in reading and mathematics and at average levels in writing in the national end of Year 2 tests. Since 1998, there has been a rising trend in standards similar to the national rate of improvement in these subjects. In the end of Year 2 assessments made by teachers in science in 2002, standards were average. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.
3. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 2, standards are above average in mathematics, including numeracy, design and technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. They are average in English, including literacy, science, information and communication technology, and religious education. Standards are average in science as too few pupils reach above average levels and they are average in English as too few pupils reach above average levels in writing. Compared with the findings of the school's 1997 inspection, standards have improved in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography, art and physical education because of improvements in teaching. They have remained the same in English, information and communication technology, music and religious education. In science, standards are the same, if the measure used in 1997 is considered, but lower when the pupils reaching above average levels are taken into account. Standards found by the inspection in reading, writing, mathematics and science are similar to those reached by the pupils in the national end of key stage tests and assessments in 2002.
4. The pupils' achievement is directly related to the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, pupils achieve well in this school as the quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the Foundation Stage, where teaching and learning are satisfactory, achievement is satisfactory. However, progress in physical development in Year R is slowed down by the lack of adequate provision for the outside curriculum for these children. Progress is also satisfactory in Year 1 where teaching and learning are also satisfactory. However, it increases rapidly in Year 2 because of the consistently very good nature of the teaching and learning. In information and communication technology, there is clear evidence of more rapid progress and rising standards due to improvements in resources for the subject and to training for the teachers. The school also has a number of suitable strategies in place to raise standards for more able pupils in writing and science.
5. Good achievement is also clearly related to the high expectations that the school's management has of staff and pupils. It also indicates the pupils' very good attitudes to learning and the school's very good relationships with parents.
6. In their lessons, pupils that have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress when compared with their previous attainments. This is most notable in mathematics and English because of the specific intervention of learning support assistants. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and their peers treat them with respect and consideration. Assessment indicates that, over time, most pupils with special educational needs reach levels that exceed the national

average. The previous inspection reported that the progress of pupils was satisfactory when compared with their prior attainments. There has, therefore, been an improvement in the rate of progress made by pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils' attitudes to school remain very good. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. Most pupils settle quickly to their lessons, concentrate and are well motivated. They try hard to meet the expectations of their teachers, demonstrate a willingness to learn and apply themselves enthusiastically.

8. Pupils listen attentively, follow instructions sensibly and co-operate and collaborate with school staff and each other. They remain focused on their tasks and work well both independently and together. They respond very well to effective teaching, discuss enthusiastically and have fun while learning. They are sensitive to the needs of others and are confident and courteous in their approach to adults and each other.

9. Pupils' behaviour overall is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. This is re-inforced by the excellent examples set by all school staff. In school assemblies observed, the behaviour was very good with pupils participating enthusiastically and demonstrating strong self-discipline.

10. An unusual but extremely effective method of gaining instant silence in the classroom is used throughout the school. The teacher holds up a rain stick and immediately the whole class falls silent and waits for the next instruction. Although behaviour is very good, pupils are not passive. They understand the benefits of their very good attitudes to learning. There has been one short exclusion in the past year.

11. Pupils form orderly queues, wait their turn and open doors for others. The nature of the school layout means that occasionally pupils have to pass through other classrooms. They do this quietly and efficiently ensuring they do not disturb the other classes. They work and play well together, regardless of age and gender. No examples of inappropriate or oppressive behaviour were seen during the inspection. Pupils are confident in their approach to adult visitors and extend basic courtesies and polite treatment to both themselves and adults.

12. The personal development of pupils is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The inclusion in school of pupils with learning difficulties and also of some with English as an additional language enables pupils to develop an understanding of the many different needs that can arise. This enhances the personal development of many pupils and they assist unobtrusively and unprompted when required. A variety of extracurricular activities during school hours also help to enrich pupils' personal development. A school council has just been set up and, although the first meeting has not yet been held, the elected members fully understand their responsibilities to their classmates. This also builds personal development of pupils. Relationships between pupils are very strong, regardless of age, ability or gender. Relationships between all members of staff are of a high professional standard.

13. Children in the Foundation Stage settle into school well and enjoy coming to school. They have positive attitudes to their work and play. Behaviour is very good. They are learning to interact well with their teachers, teaching assistants and other adults in the school. Although they are given many good opportunities to develop their independent learning, this is limited by the lack of an easily accessible outside area.

14. The attendance rate is unsatisfactory and below the national average. The rate has declined over the past three years. This is caused mainly by parents taking their children on holiday during school time. The school has inadequate strategies to address this problem. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average and is monitored closely by the use of an 'off site' book. The

school works closely with the appropriate agencies should the need arise. Registrations are called promptly at the start of lessons and pupils settle down to work straight away.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the school is good although there are significant variations within this overall judgement. In Years R and 1, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, in both year groups, there was some good teaching and learning and a small amount of very good teaching and learning. In Year 2, teaching and learning are very good. The overall findings are very similar to those of the school's last inspection as no unsatisfactory teaching was seen and around one lesson in six was at least very good. There are, however, detailed differences in the findings of the two inspections. In 1997, teaching was judged to be good in Year R and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. The current inspection finds the opposite: teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year R and good in Key Stage 1. The difference is explained because, particularly in Year R, different teachers are involved and by the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and development of teaching especially in Year 2.

16. A strength of the teaching noted by both inspections was the knowledge and understanding that the teachers have of the subjects that they teach. Additional strengths observed by this inspection include the teachers' high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and attainment and the quality of their management and control of the pupils. The most significant weakness in teaching noted by this inspection is the failure to make sure that all more able pupils achieve their full potential in writing and science. An additional weakness is the failure to make sufficient use of the information and communication technology facilities available in the classrooms. The key issue for action from the school's 1997 inspection involving the provision of too many activities for the pupils in English and mathematics has been well addressed. The most significant strengths in the quality of learning are the way in which the pupils apply themselves to their work with sustained interest and concentration. There are no significant weaknesses in the pupils' approach to their learning.

17. Teaching and learning in Year R are satisfactory in all areas of learning except personal, social and emotional development where they are good. During the inspection, 13 lessons were seen in Year R. One was very good, four were good and eight were satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with some good and some very good features. Teaching of this quality means that children learn at a satisfactory rate appropriate to their abilities and make satisfactory progress. This is different from the findings of the previous inspection when teaching was judged to be good. However, since the previous inspection, there have been some changes of teaching staff within the Foundation Stage department. Children who have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are integrated well and are making satisfactory progress. The teachers and teaching assistants know the children very well as individuals and are skilled at developing warm relationships. The well-organised routines enable the children to become used to the pattern of the day. They respond positively to the high expectations for behaviour. They are attentive when a rain stick is gently moved to attract their attention, when they are engrossed in their activities. Most follow instructions well. The teachers' planning is carefully matched to the Early Learning Goals, which is the recommended curriculum for children of this age. The designated outside play area is inadequate for the number of children in the Reception classes. Only one of the four Reception classes has direct access to this. Although the Reception class teachers attempt to overcome these shortcomings by planning for the children to spend a set amount of time for outside play each day, this limits the children's independent learning and their physical development. All adults in the four Foundation Stage classes listen with interest to what the children have to say and, when working with them, demonstrate good skills in helping the children to develop

their language for communication. A strength of the teaching in the Foundation Stage is the very good teamwork between the teachers and all of the support assistants.

18. In Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are good. Forty eight lessons were observed during the inspection. Nine were very good, 25 were good and 14 were satisfactory. In Year 2, of the 27 lessons observed, eight were very good, 17 good and two satisfactory. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning was good in all subjects including literacy and numeracy, except religious education where it was satisfactory. Compared with the findings of the school's 1997 inspection teaching has improved from satisfactory to good in all subjects except English and science where it has remained good and religious education where it is still satisfactory. No comparison is possible in information and communication technology as the last inspection did not make a clear judgement in the subject.

19. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy well. A good Year 2 literacy lesson about describing characters in stories exemplified the good quality of the teaching in Years 1 and 2 and the effective way in which the school applies the National Literacy Strategy. A good sense of fun was engendered at the start of the lesson by asking "Who is a fussy eater?" to introduce the story "*I will never ever eat a tomato*". The pupils were enthralled by the teacher's expressive reading and her probing questions tested their understanding effectively. The teacher insisted on the pupils being very precise in their explanations of the emotions in the story and they responded very well. All the pupils listened very carefully but the quality of their responses varied as some had a more restricted vocabulary. However, the teacher particularly encouraged those who found it difficult to participate in the discussion so that all pupils, including one with English as an additional language, were fully included in the lesson. An atmosphere of warmth and mature respect created confidence in the pupils, who were not afraid to contribute and ask questions, and contributed well to their social development. The lesson proceeded at a good pace and the teacher's instructions for group work were clear and succinct so that the pupils knew exactly what to do. The teacher's control of the class was confident and effortless so that the pupils applied themselves willingly to their work. There was good interaction with the teaching assistant. During the lesson, the pupils made good progress in exploring the characters through, for example, role play and experimenting with words.

20. Overall, the school meets the needs of its pupils well. In many subjects, including history and art, work is carefully and effectively tailored to the pupils' level of attainment. In Year 2, the very good quality of teaching meets the needs of the pupils very well. In Years R and 1, where teaching and learning are satisfactory, the needs of the pupils are met satisfactorily. However, limited resources restrict the children's physical development in Year R. In information and communication technology, improvements in resources and training for the teachers are meeting the pupils' needs well since their introduction.

21. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. A significant contribution is made to pupils' good progress by the ordered and calm environment in lessons. Where they are deployed, learning support assistants are particularly effective in helping pupils to learn. This is because they have access to pupils' individual education plans, where in place, and know the targets set for them. Liaison between learning support assistants and teachers is generally good, but procedures for this tend to be variable. Pupils are aware of their targets for learning and this knowledge helps them to make good progress, but those who are older are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets. Some use is made of information and communication technology to teach pupils with special educational needs, but this is relatively underdeveloped.

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

22. At the time of the previous inspection, the curriculum was balanced, broadly based and well-planned. The school continues to provide a varied and interesting curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and

2 while also focusing on tasks necessary to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum promotes the school's aims effectively and fulfils the requirements for National Curriculum subjects and those for religious education and collective worship. Total teaching time is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum and time allocations for different subjects are generally appropriate. The focus on the creative arts is a strength of the curriculum and pupils are provided with a rich variety of experiences in drama, music, art and dance. For example, there were very strong cross-curricular links in the whole school topic last term based on the painting in the National Gallery *St George and the Dragon* by Paolo Uccello.

23. The National Literacy Strategy has been adapted well to meet the needs of pupils in the school and most teachers, especially in Year 2, use their expertise and time imaginatively and flexibly to teach basic skills, promote an awareness and enjoyment of language and instil confidence into pupils.

24. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy well and this has clearly been effective in raising standards. Teachers plan in year groups so that all pupils have the same lesson content. They teach lessons according to the strategy, although there are some variations in the detail that is included in lesson plans. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Agency's Quality Mark for English and mathematics.

25. A number of parents who replied to the pre inspection questionnaire were not satisfied with the range of activities provided by the school outside lessons. The findings of the inspection are that these activities are good for the age and development of the pupils including clubs during the lunch break for games, recorder, keep fit, choir and line dancing. The curriculum is also enriched by colourful and vibrant displays, concerts, music festivals, paintings sent to Japan and Fort Amherst, science, arts and book weeks. Teachers place great value on first hand experiences and organise worthwhile visits in the locality such as Upton Castle and Gore Farm. Visitors such as an artist in residence, musicians, dancers, puppeteers, storytellers and theatre groups are important and regular features of the curriculum.

26. The previous inspection noted that the school had a strong commitment to personal, social and health education and this continues to be the case. It makes good use of 'circle time' and assemblies to help pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem and to gain respect for the needs, feelings and opinions of others. Science lessons and the Healthy Schools initiative play an important part in pupils' learning about healthy life styles such as choices in food and thinking about 'good' and 'bad' drugs. Visitors like the road safety officer, local council for recycling, fire service, Learning for Life caravan and the Channel Theatre's presentation to Year 2 of *Alice's Curious Adventure* featuring drug awareness effectively reinforce the school's belief in the development of the whole child.

27. The quality and range of the learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. A strong emphasis is placed on first-hand experiences of quality. Appropriate focused teaching, linked to literacy and numeracy, is carefully planned for and introduced effectively to the children. The inadequate size of the designated outside play and work area, together with a lack of a covered outside area, limits the provision for the full range of the curriculum and learning opportunities. The Reception class teachers attempt to overcome these shortcomings by planning a set amount of time outside each day. However, this does not provide sufficient or frequent enough opportunities for children to move 'spontaneously between indoor and outdoor environments' as stated in the recommended curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. All resources are of good quality, including equipment for the indoor soft play area, a good range of large wheeled toys and appropriate climbing apparatus for outdoor play. However, the number of large wheeled toys and the amount of climbing apparatus is insufficient if each of the four classes has access to these at the same time.

28. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are clear in detail and provide good focus on the specific skills, knowledge or understanding pupils need to have. Teaching strategies and what pupils should achieve within specified times are outlined. Some individual education plans have minor administrative omissions of detail such as dates and names of people

involved. Recent national guidance for more detailed target setting for pupils has been partially implemented.

29. All pupils receive good equality of opportunity. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for individual or small group support, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is arranged so that they do not miss entitlement to the full curriculum.

30. Links with the local community are good. They make a positive contribution to pupils' experience and learning. For example, visits and visitors associated with wildlife and environmental agencies have enabled pupils to develop their understanding of 'green' issues such as the problem of pollution. There are links with the church through the vicar and pupils visit it for their work in religious education. The road safety officer and fire service have both brought a further dimension to pupils' understanding of what it means to live in a community. The school website allows the wider community access to some very good examples of pupils' work.

31. Links with partner institutions are satisfactory. There are good and regular links with the local playgroups. The latter often use the school as a source of information for development of their practice. There has been some association with other schools during the development of the Healthy Schools Project and pupils have visited a local secondary school to see an art exhibition. Toward the end of Year 2, pupils spend time in the local junior school before they transfer and teachers from the junior school visit to see them at work. Those who are in Year 3 in the junior school revisited Swingate.

32. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and has improved since the school's last inspection. The school makes satisfactory provision for them to gain insight into values and beliefs, in order to develop their spiritual awareness. Collective worship and religious education provide a range of experiences that enable pupils to reflect upon aspects of spirituality. For example, in an act of worship, the quiet setting was very effective in creating a sense of occasion that led to a good level of listening, participation and reflective calm. Pupils listened well to the parable of the *Precious Pearl* and judged by their response, many clearly understood its significance. A lit candle, Indian music and displays of Chinese art in the hall all made a good contribution to the overall effect. Not enough is done to plan specific non-religious spiritual experiences for pupils into the wider curriculum. Much of this is currently incidental although often valuable.

33. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is a strong and discernible positive moral ethos in the school with a very clear stress upon acceptable and proper behaviour. Because of this, pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong. Acts of worship provide a good contribution to their moral education through story and material drawn from a good range of sources. School rules and those produced by pupils for each class also make a good contribution to their understanding of the benefits of moral values. Rules are firmly based upon the principles of fairness, respect and tolerance, so that pupils learn the necessity of self-discipline and regard for others. Good procedures are established to monitor any incidence of bad behaviour and appropriate sanctions can be applied if this becomes necessary.

34. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. It aims to develop an ethos of positive and cooperative relationships between all its members. The very good behaviour and attitudes of pupils, seen during the inspection, are evidence of its success. All adults, both teaching and non-teaching, provide very good role models because of their training and commitment to positive values. They demonstrate respect, courtesy and high expectations of pupils balanced by appropriate firmness in their relationships with them. Pupils are courteous and polite, for example, during the inspection they were often seen to hold doors open for adults or speak to visitors enthusiastically, but with respect. Older pupils have some responsibilities and this helps them develop their initiative and independence. All pupils work well together. For example, in the computer suite they were often seen

to share their knowledge. They helped one another to develop appropriate skills and understanding of what they were meant to learn. Social education is also effectively promoted when pupils visit the local area or more distant neighbourhood to investigate sources of information for their work in geography or history. Because the school organises charitable giving from time to time, pupils begin to understand the needs of the underprivileged in society at both home and abroad.

35. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Collective worship is effective in the promotion of pupils' awareness of cultural diversity. It is carefully planned to ensure that pupils have some understanding of the multi-cultural nature of British society. Pupils are introduced to the reality of different ethnic and social cultures through visitors to the school. For example, African storytellers, Indian music and dance and a Japanese artist in residence. Displays of African and Chinese art and artefacts reinforce this as does the use of music from a range of different cultural backgrounds. Pupils have been involved in the Medway music festival and Christmas celebrations at Fort Amherst. Art education is taken very seriously because the school believes that it can help pupils to appreciate the range of cultural activity in any society. Therefore, there are plans for a World Arts Week and for teachers to develop their own expertise by further visits to the Tate Galleries as part of their professional development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school looks after its pupils very well. The caring culture promoted throughout the school by all staff ensures the pupils' well being.

37. Procedures for improving attendance are unsatisfactory. Although the unauthorised absence rate is in line with national averages, the school's attendance rate is declining. The school suffers from a common trend where parents take advantage of inexpensive 'off peak' family holidays. This is exacerbated by the school's proximity to the Channel ports and tunnel. The school does not take a firm enough line over these holiday requests and has insufficiently considered fresh systems to encourage full termly attendance.

38. The school has a comprehensive child protection policy with the head teacher having received the appropriate training. All staff are aware of the necessary procedures and know the pupils and their backgrounds very well. First aid kits are in every class room and two members of staff are trained in first aid procedures.

39. The combination of a behaviour policy based on positive re-enforcement, the examples set by all staff and the procedures for personal, social and health education ensure that the very good standards of behaviour are maintained. Parents acknowledge and appreciate these very good standards of behaviour.

40. The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy with regular risk assessments. All school staff are very aware of the need for safety around the school and continually monitor this aspect of school life. During the inspection, examples of this care were noted. In one science lesson various fruit was to be tasted to explore the use of different senses. Parents had been contacted prior to the lesson to ensure that there was no risk of allergic reactions. During a geography lesson which involved a survey of the nearby shopping centre, both staff and pupils warned each other of broken glass and slippery paths. While pupils were transferring to other classrooms, staff made sure that handrails were used correctly. The statutory requirements for a code of practice on race equality are fully met.

41. Procedures for monitoring academic and personal progress are very effective. Detailed records are kept and progress towards meeting agreed personal targets is recorded. Progress towards these targets is shown in the reports that parents receive annually. The whole culture of the school and the example set by all staff encourages the personal and academic development of all pupils.

42. The procedures for, and the use of, assessment information to guide curricular planning are good although they are satisfactory in English. This judgement is similar to the findings of the school's last OFSTED inspection. Data from the statutory end of Year 2 test results are analysed well. The school has introduced tracking sheets and half-yearly targets for pupils in English, mathematics and science, which are linked to National Curriculum levels. However, insufficient use is made of this information to raise the attainment of more able pupils to achieve above average standards in writing and science.

43. The school has recently reviewed the policy and assessment procedures to ensure a consistent approach and to make the use of assessment more efficient. However, it is too soon for this to have an effect on pupils' attainment, especially higher attaining pupils. Assessment procedures are linked well to National Curriculum levels and to the level descriptors for each of the subjects, which is good. There is a consistent approach to marking across the school although this is not fully applied in English. Good, high quality portfolios of pupils' work are kept, which are linked well to National Curriculum criteria.

44. Children in the Foundation Stage are cared for well and are very happy to come to school. They share good relationships with their teachers, learning support and teaching assistants and other adults in the school. Soon after children enter the Reception classes, they are informally assessed using procedures designed specifically for this age range. The evidence from this provides a precise insight into the stage of development of each child, which enables teachers to plan activities to meet their needs.

45. Teachers and assistants are aware of the procedures to identify pupils who may have special educational needs. Good emphasis is placed upon early identification, including the recommendations of pre-school advisers. The school makes effective use of agencies such as the speech and language service and educational psychology to help organize suitable provision. The co-ordinator collates information on pupils at the beginning of each year to assess their needs and then allocate appropriate resources. The progress of pupils with individual education plans is carefully monitored using data and observation. This information is carefully recorded and used in the regular target setting reviews to which, where appropriate, parents are invited. All staff are informed about the purposes of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs. They are, therefore, aware of pupils' individual needs and stage of social development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Partnership with parents is strength of the school. The school enjoys very good relationships with parents and this well established partnership has continued to build from the last inspection. Parents appreciate the standards of behaviour and the sound promotion of moral and social values the school develops. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems and appreciate the high expectations the school has of their children, whatever their ability.

47. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. The prospectus invites them to become 'Friends of the School' and to become involved in the daily life of the school. A few help regularly in school and many others make themselves available should the school need them. This commitment to parental involvement is reinforced by the school's 'Parent and school partnership policy' published in September 2002.

48. Parents consider that they are well informed about their children's progress. They receive a comprehensive annual report covering both curricular and personal development. In addition, the reports set out areas for development and their child's views on the progress they have made. There is also provision for parental comment

49. Parents receive regular newsletters and curricular information which help them to reinforce learning at home. Parents can also use the reading book to communicate with the school. The governors' Annual Report to parents is comprehensive. The school prospectus is very informative and

helpful to parents. Both these documents comply with legal requirements with regard to publishing attendance figures but also have minor omissions.

50. For the parents of children about to join school, there is a meeting, a tour of the school and an induction 'welcome pack'. Parents also appreciate the smooth transfer to junior school. Parents have an evening meeting every term when agreed targets are set. Confidential meetings can be arranged if necessary. The school has a genuine 'open door' policy and parents appreciate and take advantage of this. Parents also feel that the teachers are very approachable and all who responded to the parents' questionnaire agreed that they would have no qualms about approaching the school.

51. Good partnerships are established between parents and the staff in the Reception classes, which helps every child to feel secure and able to learn. Induction procedures for children starting school are good. During the term before the children start in the Reception classes, their parents are invited to meet with all the Reception year staff, the headteacher and a governor to hear about what their child will experience and to receive the school's documentation. Parents are invited to bring their children into school for two visits to enable them to meet their teachers and classmates so that they are familiar with the school before the children start school. The children attend school on a part-time basis for their first half term in school.

52. Parents are informed if the school has a concern that their child may have special educational needs and there is a particular emphasis upon early identification. The co-ordinator is always available to meet with parents to discuss their children. Where appropriate, parents are invited to reviews of individual education plans and they are consulted about the progress made by their children and the next steps to be taken.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. Overall, the school's leadership and management are good. However, the leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. The strength of the leadership is indicated by the strong team spirit found in the school and by the support which the governors and staff give to the headteacher. The effectiveness of this shared commitment is clearly shown by the very good improvement, including better standards, that the school has made since it was last inspected. Shared commitment also gives the school a good capacity to continue to succeed. Very good management is displayed by the very high quality of the monitoring and development of teaching in the school. Good delegation ensures that all levels of management are involved in this work including co-ordinators who are very active in monitoring teaching and learning. The effectiveness of this monitoring is shown by the improved teaching at Key Stage 1 identified by this inspection compared with the findings of the school's 1997 inspection.

54. The governors fulfil their duties well. They have a range of suitable strategies for finding out what goes on in the school including visiting, receiving reports and analysing data. As a result they are well aware of what the school does well. The governors also know most of its major weaknesses, for example, the need to improve above average attainment in science and writing and the fact that attendance is below the national average. They have ensured that all statutory obligations apart from some minor omissions in the statutory information for parents are met. The governors make a satisfactory contribution to shaping the school's direction, for example, through their committee work.

55. Through its school development plan, the school addresses appropriate targets for improvement. This is because the quality of its self evaluation is good. Its current plan includes raising standards in English which is a key issue for action arising from this inspection. The school implements the priorities identified effectively and reviews its progress towards meeting its targets well. The plan is well costed and carefully related to the aims and the management structure of the school. However, some of the criteria used to judge its success are not sufficiently sharp and its many areas of development are not clearly prioritised. The effectiveness of the school's Action Plan

following its last inspection is clear as the three key issues for action identified by that inspection have been well addressed.

56. Financial management and control are rigorous and prudent and this has resulted in the school being well resourced. Specific funds, for example, those devoted to pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and for information and communication technology training and development are well used. The school is careful to obtain good value for money in its expenditure and assesses this carefully and competently. It compares its standards and spending with other schools, consults parents through questionnaires and gets three quotations for major expenditure. Its challenge to its own performance is clear in its subject monitoring files. The school's financial reserves are well above recommended levels and, although it has plans to reduce these levels, these do not include making adequate provision for the outdoor curriculum in the Foundation Stage. This means that the strategic use of its resources is satisfactory.

57. The school has a clear set of aims and values including a commitment to good relationships. These aims are well reflected in its life and work. This is shown, for example, in the very good quality of relationships and the good equality of opportunity which all pupils receive. No differences in attitudes and attainment of boys or girls were noted during the inspection. All pupils are fully included in all activities.

58. The co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage has a good understanding of how young children learn and provides good leadership. The quality of relationships within the Foundation Stage department is very good and together all the adults form a very effective team. The indoor accommodation is bright and well organised. Learning resources are good to support the children's learning indoors. The outdoor area for free play has a good range of resources, but is inadequate for the number of children and lacks a covered area for inclement weather.

59. The provision for special educational needs is good and is well managed by the co-ordinator. A new policy, based upon the revised code of practice, has been produced, but has some omissions of which the school is aware. The policy has very good guidance for teachers and the documents in use are clear and easy to manage. This helps to ensure that teachers are confident in both assessing need and teaching pupils. Learning support assistants are efficiently managed, well trained and effectively deployed. Because of this, they consider themselves part of the school team and are very effective in their work with pupils. The prospectus has no clear summary of the governors' policy for special educational needs. The Annual Report to parents has no clear statement about how successful is the implementation of the policy. Apart from these omissions, of which the school is aware, all statutory requirements for special educational needs are met.

60. The school has a good number of teaching and support staff which meets the demands of the curriculum well. Induction, training and support procedures for new and established staff are good. Training is based on individual needs identified in the school's well established performance management procedures and school issues from the school development plan. The school has undergone the appropriate training to gain 'Investor in People' status to improve further its training provision. First and second year students visit the school for teaching practice and receive effective support. There is a 'team approach' to training throughout the school. At present, one unqualified teacher is receiving structured mentoring support on a day-to-day basis. Similarly, the learning support assistants have access to any training needs that may benefit them.

61. Individual records are kept of training needs and progress for all members of staff. These are very detailed and cover many aspects of professional development. The staff are well qualified and sensibly deployed.

62. Overall, accommodation is good and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. However, the small area of secure outside space for Foundation Stage children does not allow for spontaneous movement between the indoor and outdoor environment. In certain weather conditions, it does not

permit the full use of large wheeled toys in conjunction with static play equipment. The fabric of the school is well maintained and in good decorative order. Imaginative displays feature throughout and pupils respect and take care of their school environment.

63. The school's learning resources are very good. There is a very good range of equipment which is easily accessed and well looked after by pupils. Although the school is well stocked with information and communication technology equipment, its use of new technology is satisfactory. For example, the school has decided not to use information and communication technology to administer the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs. Additionally, too little use was made of computers in the classroom during the inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. In order to improve further the quality of education offered to the pupils, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

A. Raise the number of pupils reaching above average standards in writing* and science by:

- using assessment information more accurately in these subjects to ensure that the work provided for pupils capable of reaching above average standards always helps them to reach Level 3 by the end of Year 2;
- improving teachers' accuracy and confidence in assessing pupils at above average levels, particularly in science and writing;
- ensuring that their language and recording skills are always fully developed in all subjects including subject specific vocabulary;
- raising the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school to that found in Year 2.

(Paragraphs 3,4,10,16,42,78,81,91,92,93)

B. Improve the provision made for the outdoor curriculum in Year R which is inadequate for the number of children through:

- organising their education so that they have the freedom to move spontaneously between indoor and outdoor activities;
- providing adequate outdoor resources for the number of children involved including space, wheeled toys, clambering apparatus, role play areas and gardening facilities.

(Paragraphs 1,4,17,20,27,56,65,75)

C. Ensure that strategic budget planning makes certain that the curricular needs of all children are fully met by addressing the needs of the outdoor curriculum in the Foundation Stage.

(Paragraphs 1,4,17,20,27,56,65,75)

D. Increase the level of attendance which is currently below the national average and on a declining trend.

(Paragraphs 14,37)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Ensuring that the statutory information for parents fully meets requirements.

(Paragraphs 49,54,59)

* Already in school development plan

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	29	22	0	0	0
Percentage	0	16	48	36	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 one percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	281
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23
Special educational needs	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	56
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	47	65	112
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	42	42	47	
	Girls	55	63	63	
	Total	97	105	110	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (89)	94 (92)	98 (96)	
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)	
Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	42	47	46	
	Girls	59	62	59	
	Total	101	109	105	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (88)	97 (93)	94 (92)	
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)	

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	219	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	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 – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	232

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	728067
Total expenditure	698653
Expenditure per pupil	2019
Balance brought forward from previous year	126852
Balance carried forward to next year	156266

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	5
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)	0.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	281
Number of questionnaires returned	69

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	30	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	39	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	51	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	43	9	1	0
The teaching is good.	64	33	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	39	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	32	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	35	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	42	52	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	55	42	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	42	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	23	25	4	28

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

65. The well-organised day-to-day routines enable all children to feel secure and safe and to grow in confidence. However, in 1997 teaching and curricular provision were good. They are now satisfactory.

66. Children are admitted to the Reception classes at the start of the autumn term or the spring term during the year in which they become five years old. They attend on a part-time basis for the first half term. They are taught within a warm, caring, supportive environment where they feel safe and secure. Most of the children have attended a pre-school nursery or playgroup before starting in one of the Reception classes. When children enter the school, their attainment is average in most areas of learning. However, many have below average attainment in their communication, language and literacy development for their age. Teaching and learning in Year R are satisfactory in all areas of learning except personal, social and emotional development where they are good. By the end of the Reception year, most children make satisfactory progress and are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals except in their communication, language and literacy development and physical development.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. The children achieve average standards in their personal, social and emotional development. Most are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the time they leave the Reception year. Adults within the department encourage the children to feel confident about what they can achieve. The children's behaviour in and around the school is very good with only a few disagreements. They work and play beside each other well. They show a good understanding of classroom procedures and most respond well to them. The children are aware of the teachers' high expectations of them and respond well. When given the opportunity to choose activities for themselves, they do so in a sensible way and most sustain concentration well for their age. However, when the children are directed to go out to, and when to come in from, the outdoor play area, this restricts their opportunities for self-initiated activities and range of choices. This also limits their opportunities to persist at and complete activities, which restricts their independent learning. Most settle well to the more structured activities, such as literacy and numeracy, and show ability to concentrate for an appropriate length of time. The children attend to their personal hygiene appropriately and most are able to undress and dress themselves independently before and after physical development lessons.

68. Personal, social and emotional development is promoted well in all areas of learning. A strength of the teaching is the warm, caring relationships that adults develop with the children, which helps them to feel secure and to grow in confidence. The adults provide very good role models for the children, always treating each of them with courtesy and respect to which they positively respond. The children enjoy the many moments of fun and time for reflection, which helps to strengthen the bond between them.

Communication, language and literacy

69. Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning, including those who have special educational needs and children who have English as a second language. However, many are not on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals due to their below average starting point when they start school. All adults make very good attempts to communicate with all children in the Foundation Stage. They talk to the children individually, in groups and as a class to help all children extend their vocabulary and start to use their language and communication skills for a range of purposes. All adults

show the children that they value their efforts at communicating. A few children are eager to talk about the things that interest them, such as what they are painting or making with the construction toys. The children enjoy listening to stories. They enjoy the story *Goldilocks and the three bears* and use the illustrations well to extend their understanding of the story. They handle books correctly and realise that pictures convey meaning. However, few are able to read print, although some recognise the initial letters in the text, which are the same as their own names. Some children are learning that spoken words and print can have the same meaning and that, in the English culture, text is read from left to right. When phonic work is linked with correct letter formation, this is good, as this helps to reinforce the children's understanding of both concepts. However, this is not consistently applied, which limits children's learning. Many of the children have difficulty with their pencil control, but there is not always sufficient intervention by an adult to correct these mistakes, so children continue to practise incorrect letter formation. Some children make a good attempt at writing their own name. The acceptance of developmental writing is good as this enables the children to be confident and to feel they are writers. They can read their own writing back to others and understand that the marks on the paper represent words. This enables them to feel successful and enables them to learn. However, when children write over an adult's writing or try to copy an adult's writing, this is less meaningful to them. Often they are unable to read what is written on the page, which limits their learning both in their reading and writing skills. Children are encouraged to take books home to practise their early reading skills. Some have good listening skills and listen carefully to instructions, but others do not listen well, which restricts their own and others' learning.

70. Children are provided with a good range of purposeful activities to develop their use of language for reading, writing, speaking and listening, whatever their stage of development. The children are provided with good role-play areas, such as the three bears' house. They enjoy re-enacting the story of *Goldilocks and the three bears*. However, during the inspection, there were no observations of an adult involved in the role-play areas to extend the children's vocabulary. The children are provided with paper and pencils for a range of activities, including a writing area and when being one of the bears. Many of the children have difficulty with their pencil control and are often allowed to reinforce incorrect skills, which limits their learning. Teaching assistants are used effectively with small groups, when direct teaching is involved. They are well briefed and assist the teachers in maintaining ongoing assessments of individual children's progress. Classroom displays are rich in language clues intended to reinforce learning.

Mathematical development

71. Most children are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals for mathematics. Teachers are helping the children to develop their mathematical understanding well by providing a structured programme of practical experiences, which enables them to make good progress. The children are learning to recognise and some can name common shapes such as square, triangle and circle. Most can count by rote numbers to ten and some can count beyond this. Most recognise numbers to five and more able children are learning to recognise numbers to twelve. These skills are practised regularly when singing nursery rhymes, number jingles and playing sorting and ordering games. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support by playing counting games with the children, which enable the children to experience practical counting, and early addition and subtraction in a practical way. They experience working with sand and water, filling and emptying differently sized containers. They are learning the difference between 'big' and 'small', 'biggest' and 'smallest' by placing dragons in the correct order.

72. Teachers use many opportunities to extend the children's understanding and reinforcement of basic skills through practical experiences. They ensure that all adults in the Foundation Stage classes use correct mathematical vocabulary and provide many activities, which build upon the children's understanding at that time. Questions are used skilfully to encourage children to organise their thoughts

and build on their understanding. Overall, the work is well planned and tasks are appropriate and in line with the recommendations in the National Numeracy Strategy for young children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. On entry to the school, the children's knowledge and understanding of the world are average for their age. During the Foundation Stage the teachers effectively build on the children's knowledge, and help them to learn more about the world around them. The teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most children are on course to meet the expected standard by the end of the Reception year. Many activities are planned and organised well in order that the children can gain in their understanding through practical experiences. The children have grown cress seeds, which helps to extend their learning about what plants need in order to grow. The making of ice-lollipops helps them to gain in their understanding of the changes in water when they are frozen and how the process is reversed when an ice-lollipop is put in the water tray in the classroom. A wide range of construction toys and materials is provided for the children to explore and use their skills to make models. They confidently use the computer mouse when moving items on the screen to dress the teddy and to draw a snowman or a teddy bear. They use the infill tool to colour in the outline drawings of a dragon. Older children in the Reception classes competently click onto the printer icon to print their own pictures.

74. The teaching and learning of skills to use a computer competently is good. Children acquire new learning when the teacher involves them well by effective questioning and clear explanations of how to create their own pictures on the computer using the program colour magic. The use of correct vocabulary and practical demonstration extends the children's learning well of this form of information and communication technology. Teachers provide a wide range of planned activities, most of which start with what the children already know, and this enables them to extend their understanding and knowledge of the world.

Physical development

75. Many of the children are achieving below average attainment in their physical control. Although there is a good range of outdoor, large apparatus to balance and climb on, and large wheeled play equipment is available, the children have very limited access to these, which limits their physical development. The indoor accommodation in the two halls for the children's physical development lessons is spacious and allows them to move freely. They have greater control of their bodies, when they are able to move freely to music than when asked to move in a given way in the large apparatus lesson. Teachers ensure that the children handle tools and equipment safely, which is helping them to become aware of and develop this concept. After moving quickly in different directions in the warm-up sessions before their dance and large apparatus lessons, the children noticed that their hearts were beating faster.

76. Teachers provide them with many opportunities to develop their hand control through the use of a range of mark-making tools, and cutting and gluing activities. However, many have weak pencil control and most have difficulty forming their letters correctly. They enjoy using construction kits. Most are able to dress and undress themselves, but some need help with buttons and zips. Teachers give clear instructions during physical education lessons and allow children to demonstrate good examples of their work.

Creative development

77. The children make satisfactory progress in developing their creative skills and most are on course to meet the nationally recommended levels of attainment by the end of the Reception year. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and activities are well resourced and organised. The children enjoy a good range of practical activities, which enable them to experiment and to explore creatively and imaginatively. Many of the children's own paintings are immature for their age. However, when supervised by an adult, the children produce higher quality paintings, such as their self-portraits, which have good facial details and the snow scene paintings of themselves. Children stick

strips of white paper onto a black background to create a three dimensional effect for their snowy mountains. They use salt dough to make Christmas decorations and clay to create hedgehogs. Role-play activities are carefully planned and enable the children to play out imaginary situations well. They enjoy using appropriate resources and dressing up, which extends their imaginative play. The children enjoy their music lessons and sing tunefully for their age. They can clap simple rhythms and enjoy accompanying the music by Debussy in their dance lesson. Most of the children call out the names of musical instruments as the teacher shows them to the children, such as triangle, chime bars, Indian bells, and tambourine. Most enjoy singing *When Goldilocks went to the house of the bears* and taking part in action songs, such as *One, two three, four, five*.

ENGLISH

78. In all aspects of English, standards in Year 2 are average. This is similar to the results of the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2002 and also reflects the findings of the last inspection. Many pupils enter the school at below average levels in communication, language and literacy. They achieve satisfactorily during the Reception year and well as they move through the rest of the school. This is because some teachers, especially in Year 2, show flair and imagination in the methods they use to teach the subject which enable pupils to discover a sense of fun and delight in words. Displays throughout the school are also rich in language to attract pupils' interest and reinforce learning. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because they receive well-planned support and their progress is regularly reviewed. The Early Literacy Support programme effectively helps pupils to make up ground in reading, writing and spelling. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls because most teachers plan work that engages and motivates all pupils. Teachers are also well aware of the language and learning needs of the few pupils who speak English as an additional language and value their cultures so that they quickly gain fluency in English, achieve well and are able to take a full part in lessons. The school has a strong focus on improving performance in writing for more able pupils, but there has been insufficient time for some of the new initiatives, such as additional support in class, to be fully effective.

79. In Year 2, standards in speaking and listening are average. Pupils are generally careful and responsive listeners who love hearing stories, rhymes and poems. In assemblies, they were enthralled by the teachers' quiet, expressive readings of biblical stories such as *The Precious Pearl* and *The Calming of the Storm* and gave very thoughtful responses as a result. Most pupils also listen attentively to teachers' instructions and explanations so that they know what is expected of them, settle quickly to work and do not waste valuable time for learning. Teachers are keenly aware that they have to compensate for pupils' below average starting point in literacy skills and actively extend their language and successfully build up their confidence as speakers through drama, role-play, discussions and assemblies. Another frequent and effective device is the use of response partners which enables pupils to listen carefully to others' views and test out their opinions with a partner before offering an answer. Such good opportunities for performance and confidence building mean that many pupils are beginning to communicate clearly and audibly in well-formed sentences and answer questions appropriately. Even those pupils who have a narrow range of vocabulary and need support to develop their ideas beyond a sentence or short statement show increasing confidence as speakers. In 'circle time', when Year 1 pupils were discussing celebrations and special memories, all pupils were able to contribute at their own level even if it was only a short response.

80. The high profile given to language throughout the school and the subject's very good resources mean that pupils are surrounded by a large and exciting range of books which stimulate their interest and encourage them to take great pleasure in reading. The library is bright, spacious and welcoming and class book corners also successfully invite pupils to browse and enjoy books. As a result, pupils' obvious enthusiasm for books is a strength of their learning. More able pupils use their knowledge of sounds and word-building techniques well and cheerfully tackle more difficult words. Most pupils use simple phonics and illustrations to guide them and show that they understand the importance of

punctuation in their reading. Less able pupils are more hesitant when reading aloud and require prompting to sound out some words. Most pupils are keen to make comments about their reading and to identify favourite books. Many are also aware of how they can locate simple information in non-fiction books.

81. Skills in writing are average in Year 2. Teachers generally work hard to devise creative ways of expanding pupils' imagination and enriching their vocabulary. Most pupils show a developing awareness of the structure of a story and are given opportunities to write in a variety of styles including poetry, instructions, letters, invitations, recipes, posters and speech bubbles. There was no evidence of too many different writing activities within individual lessons reported at the previous inspection. More able pupils fill their stories with lively images to add interest and excitement and confidently use a good range of words. Less able pupils communicate their ideas through simple words and phrases but they do not always convey meaning. 'Everyone is a poet!' encouraged a notice in Year 2 and pupils' enjoyment in writing poetry is seen in their work 'Winter is' Similarly, pupils delight in being authors and illustrators and this is clear from the variety of writing using the painting *St George and the Dragon* as a creative stimulus. In Year 2, some pupils are making sound use of their knowledge of phonics and growing awareness of spelling patterns to help them spell simple, familiar words correctly. Many realise the importance of using capital letters and full stops in their work. Handwriting is variable but a significant number of pupils produce handwriting that is often ill formed, uneven in size and rarely joined. This adversely affects the overall standards of the presentation of pupils' work across the school and has been identified as a focus for improvement. The school is also aware of the importance of increasing the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in the national tests and assessments. However, the school's assessment procedures in English, although satisfactory overall, are not used precisely or consistently enough by teachers, especially in identifying National Curriculum levels, to track the progress of individual pupils. This means that more able pupils do not always receive the required degree of challenge in class to enable them to forge ahead and reach above average standards.

82. In all classes, standards in literacy are the same as those found in English and the development of literacy skills across the curriculum is good. In history, pupils research information about famous people, write evaluations of their finished products in design and technology, predict outcomes about humans and their characteristics in science and write about the various uses of buildings in geography. Pupils also devise their own rules for home in religious education and discuss their experiences in personal, social and health education within a secure, supportive environment. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning although this was not the case at the previous inspection.

83. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in English is good. The teaching of basic skills is also good. This broadly reflects the findings of the last inspection. Some lessons in Year 2 are exciting, very well informed and dynamic where teachers obviously enjoy teaching and pupils delight in learning. In a Year 2 lesson about character profiles, the teacher gave a very dramatic performance as one of the characters in the story to stimulate an imaginative response from pupils and to encourage early prediction skills. As a result, pupils were fired with enthusiasm when acting out their own scenarios and worked in happy cooperation with their teacher. Teachers often inject a sense of fun and energy into the lesson which effectively captures pupils' initial interest and enthusiasm and ensures a lively pace. 'Who's a fussy eater?' asked a Year 2 teacher as pupils were about to examine the character of Lola, a reluctant eater. A Year 1 lesson on characters in traditional stories was interrupted dramatically by the arrival of a letter 'Help!' from the three little pigs who were trapped by the wolf and wanted pupils to rescue them. Pupils were caught up in the air of expectancy and were bursting with ideas. Teachers also use the shared text very skilfully to enable pupils to explore the richness of language and to experiment with words and ideas. In a Year 2 class, the teacher's very lively and expressive reading of *I will never ever eat a tomato* by Lauren Child held pupils spellbound as the story unfolded. After a period of reflection, they were encouraged to be bold and inventive in

their use of language so that there were plenty of adventurous ideas for disguising Lola's dislikes in food. Apples became 'giant moon crunches' and 'giant berries from Pluto Island' and fish fingers were transformed into the more appetising 'orange fish drops' and 'giant long rockets'. The warm, supportive relationships in the classroom also mean that pupils are not afraid to ask questions, learn from mistakes, seek help or express their feelings because teachers consistently value their contributions. In a Year 1 class, the teacher drew skilfully on her easy rapport with her pupils to discuss how different characters like Cinderella and Goldilocks would react to problems. In all classes, teachers share learning intentions with pupils at the outset so that they know what is expected of them, there is a clear sense of purpose and pupils gain a good knowledge of their own learning when it is reviewed at the end.

84. 'I want this to be sparkling, wonderful writing!' a Year 2 teacher challenged her pupils. However, in general, although teachers give good explanations and fluent instructions about the tasks set, they do not make their expectations of the quality and quantity of work for various groups clear enough to pupils. This lack of rigour means that vital learning is lost especially for more able pupils. Most lessons have a sharp pace which accelerates pupils' learning, but others lack vitality. This means that the pace is comfortable rather than challenging; pupils relax into a leisurely rate of working and their output is not good enough. Occasionally, a lack of consistency in managing pupils' behaviour leads to an underlying restlessness in the classroom so that the teacher has to waste valuable time re-establishing control.

85. As in the last inspection, the subject is well led and the co-ordinator has a pivotal role in monitoring, developing and evaluating the subject including regular classroom observations. Targets for development in the subject are appropriate. Specific personal targets, which are reviewed half termly, enable pupils to focus on the particular skills needed to move on to the next stage of learning. Marking is too variable and does not always provide pupils with clear pointers on how they can improve their work. The profile of the subject is raised well by role-play areas, such as a travel agent, writing areas, book weeks, theatre groups, puppeteers, library visits and world book day. Eye-catching and lively displays like 'Who's in the cave?' by Year 1 and Year 2's character profile of Clarice Bean give pupils a sense of pride and show that their work is valued. English makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They create flights of fancy about *St George and the Dragon*, examine relationships between characters in traditional stories, share their ideas freely with their response partners and listen avidly to tales from around the world.

MATHEMATICS

86. The findings of this inspection indicate that, in Year 2, most pupils reach standards that are above average in numeracy and all other aspects of mathematics. The inspection of 1997 reported that attainment was 'similar to national standards'. A clear improvement has, therefore, been made. The results of the national end of key stage tests in 2002 show that, compared with all schools and with similar schools, standards were above average in Year 2. The number who exceeded the national standard was also above average, but evidence indicates that too few pupils still reach this level. The progress of pupils is good if compared with their attainments when they entered the school, which were judged to be average. This good progress includes those with special educational needs, because they receive effective support from learning assistants. Progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is also good. There were no observed differences in the achievements of boys and girls during the inspection.

87. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Year 2 and satisfactory in Year 1. The judgements on teaching and learning are based upon lesson observation, analysis of work and discussion with pupils. The previous inspection described teaching as, 'always satisfactory, sometimes good'. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection. Since the previous inspection, there has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching, particularly in Year 2 where all lessons observed were judged to be good. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher presented the objectives clearly and

encouraged pupils to explain to the class their strategies for adding two digit numbers. She placed particular emphasis upon the mathematical vocabulary involved in understanding key ideas and applying them. This emphasis was particularly appropriate because the school has identified the use of mathematical vocabulary as a weakness in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils were presented with an appropriate level of challenge because work was carefully matched to their various levels of understanding and need. Because of this, they showed sustained interest, responded well and most showed good understanding of the tasks and how to tackle them.

88. Overall, and particularly in Year 2, pupils' work is now much better matched to their capabilities. The previous inspection also noted that too many activities took place in lessons. In all of those seen, except one, this has been remedied. Good improvement has, therefore, been made. In another good Year 2 lesson with similar content, the teaching was effective because it was well paced, pupils were consistently engaged in learning and made good use of the skills of ordering numbers and calculation that they had been taught. Effective teaching in Year 2 lessons was consistently characterised by interesting lesson content, clear teaching of skills by teachers and high expectations that pupils would extend their understanding. Those with special educational needs worked with good application because of effective guidance by learning support assistants. Another reason for good progress made in lessons was the very positive attitudes that pupils had to learning. Where there were weaknesses, they were the result of transitions from whole class teaching to group activities that took too long and sessions where teachers talked for too long so that pupils became restless. In Year 1, a good lesson on simple place value had clear focus on the planned objectives, and a range of different approaches was used to help pupils learn the skills involved. For example, effective use was made of questioning so that pupils developed their understanding of key ideas by explaining what they knew in appropriate mathematical vocabulary. A satisfactory lesson with the same content had suitable explanations given by the teacher, but the pace of learning was variable because a small proportion of pupils were not consistently engaged in the task. For some, this was because the work set for them was too challenging. Another weakness apparent in some Year 1 lessons was a slow pace that resulted when some pupils did not fully understand what they had to do and teachers were not aware of this.

89. Analysis of work in both year groups indicates that pupils have reached good levels of attainment in using and applying mathematics and in shape, space and measures. Their work is generally well presented, skills and knowledge are applied well and they show sustained levels of interest in their work. It is marked regularly, comments are constructive and strengths and weaknesses are identified. Little evidence was seen of the use of information and communication technology.

90. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced overall. There is growing emphasis on using and applying mathematics in other subjects. For example, in information and communication technology pupils have used data handling software to input and present information on the colour of pupils' hair. In design and technology, pupils have measured and cut materials for their work on structures. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and, therefore, has a good knowledge of what pupils are taught. Information and communication technology is used in mathematics, but the school has identified a need for its further development. Pupils have some homework in both years to help them develop their skills and understanding. Assessment procedures are good; they provide teachers with important information about the progress of pupils. The use of assessment in planning the curriculum is well developed. This is indicated by the current identified need to focus upon the language of mathematics in teaching. The subject co-ordinator is well established and enthusiastic. She regularly monitors both teaching and pupils' work. Therefore, she is in a good position to know what needs to be improved. Resources are very good and used effectively to contribute to pupils' knowledge and understanding.

SCIENCE

91. In Year 2, standards in science are above average in terms of the numbers of pupils reaching Level 2 (the expected standard) and above. This is the same judgement as that made by the school's 1997 inspection. However, standards are below average at the higher Level 3 and above and, therefore, average overall. Both of these judgements are the same as the end of Year 2 assessments made by teachers in science in 2002. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.

92. The pupils have a very strong knowledge of life processes and living things. For example, they know what plants and animals need to remain healthy and to grow and have watched caterpillars change into butterflies before releasing them. Work in this area of science is linked to the Healthy Schools initiative. They have a good understanding of materials and their properties and recognise how changes in materials such as ice are caused by heating or cooling. The pupils have a sound understanding of physical process such as electrical circuits and forces. Much of the pupils' work in science is carried out through investigative activities, for example, work on decay and the shape of boats. The school's own monitoring and the findings of the inspection show that, on occasions, this work does not concentrate sufficiently on the scientific process of predicting, investigating and drawing conclusions. Additionally, both show that the use of information and communication technology in the subject is under developed and that the more able are not always fully challenged. Failure to extend the more able consistently was also noted by the school's last inspection in this subject. The findings of the inspection also indicate that the pupils' scientific vocabulary is not consistently extended. In addition, they show that, although there are examples of mathematics being used in the subject in the form of graphs, cross curricular links are not extensive enough. Furthermore, the range of strategies used by the pupils to record their work is too narrow and often very directed by the teacher.

93. The quality of teaching and learning is good as it was when the school was inspected in 1997. As a result, all pupils, except some of the more able, make good progress. Progress for the more able is satisfactory. This is because their work does not always challenge them as it is not set at the standard necessary for them progress to the next National Curriculum level as the use of assessment information and some teachers' planning do not focus sufficiently on these levels.

94. A good Year 2 lesson about differences in people illustrated the quality of the teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2. The teacher explained the objective of the lesson very carefully so that the pupils, including one with English as an additional language, fully understood what they had to do. There was a lively discussion about differences the pupils recognised such as boys/girls, faces, hair and height. The teacher developed the suggestion of different heights well to indicate that this could be measured and a good discussion about measuring hand spans, shoe size and so on ensued. This was extended to a consideration of how age, height and other factors might influence the size of these parts of the body. Predictions such as "The shortest people have the smallest feet" were made. The class then worked in groups to measure their hand spans and so on to get data to test these predictions. The teaching assistant made a valuable contribution to the lesson by ensuring that the pupils' height was measured accurately. This was a good lesson. It had a good pace, a wide range of activities, was well prepared, the pupils were well controlled and worked hard and good relationships were evident. Its major weakness was that the work provided was the same for pupils of all levels of ability.

95. The subject is well resourced and its teaching is very well supported by activities such as the school's science week. This involves a range of varied and interesting activities for the pupils including hands on experience of a wide range of "bugs" brought in to school by the "Bug Man". This opportunity to appreciate the wonders of the natural world provides good spiritual development for the pupils. The monitoring of teaching and standards is very strong. It identifies strengths and weaknesses and has resulted in suitable strategies to raise standards for the more able. Assessment procedures in science are good. For these reasons, its leadership and improvement since the school's last inspection are good.

ART AND DESIGN

96. Pupils' work in art and design, including that of pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as a second language, is above average throughout the school. This is an improvement from the standards reported in the school's previous OFSTED inspection, when pupils were judged to be achieving average standards. There are no differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is good and promotes good progress. All teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and ranges to very good. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of art and design and this ensures that pupils learn the basic skills of drawing, designing and painting well. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, which enable them to feel confident and to learn. Teachers provide stimulating materials and resources, which pupils enjoy using, such as the African and Indian artefacts for the Year 2 lessons. Pupils refine their skills well as they progress through the school and show increasing confidence in using various media and techniques. The regular use of sketchbooks for observational drawings and to develop ideas is a good initiative, as this is helping to raise pupils' awareness of the intricate details in both natural and man-made objects. This is helping to raise the standard of art and design throughout the school.

98. Pupils develop their skills very well in observational drawing and many produce high quality sketches with suitable attention to line, detail and texture. Year 1 pupils use pastels, charcoal and chalks well for their good observational drawings of fruits and vegetables. Year 2 pupils produce detailed, realistic pastel drawings of hyacinths, a stem of forsythia and an acorn with a cluster of oak leaves. During their visit to Upnor Castle, pupils took rubbings of the floor. On returning to school, they indented patterns on squares of polystyrene to make printing blocks and used paints with these to print similar patterns to the castle flooring. Pupils have a good understanding of the styles of famous artists, for example, Andy Goldsworthy, Mondrian, Canaletto, Paul Klee, Georgia O'Keefe, Chagall, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, which helps them to improve their own work. Pupils use information and communication technology well to enhance their learning. They use it to create their own pictures, such as the Year 2 shades of colour pictures in the style of Mondrian and they use the Internet to gather information about famous artists.

99. A very good Year 2 lesson illustrated well the strengths of the teaching and learning in the school. The teacher had a very good relationship with her pupils and her vivacious, lively personality inspired them. The lesson was very well planned and the resources well prepared. The teacher clearly explained the learning intention of the lesson, so pupils were aware of what they were going to learn. As the teacher revealed the many artefacts from Africa and India from a box covered with an African cloth, the pupils' eyes lit up and there were exclamations of wow and ah. The teacher immediately engaged the pupils' interest and there was a true feeling of excitement in the room. Pupils were eager to handle carefully the artefacts and quickly became absorbed in their sketching. Many pupils produced high quality sketches with good attention to detail, line and texture. While pupils were drawing, African music was quietly playing in the background, which complemented the atmosphere in the room very well. The very good plenary session enabled pupils to reflect on and to evaluate their artwork. The teacher's imaginative approach, very good subject knowledge and lively teaching engaged pupils' interest at all times and enabled them to extend their learning very well and achieve a high level of attainment in their artwork.

100. In the lessons when teaching and learning is satisfactory, lessons lack the brisk pace and vibrancy of the higher quality lessons. However, pupils are given appropriate opportunities to explore and choose materials for themselves and make satisfactory progress.

101. The co-ordinator for art is enthusiastic and has a fresh and imaginative approach to the subject. She helped to revise the good policy in 2000 and is adapting national guidelines for art and design to the needs of the school to ensure progression of skills across the school. The co-ordinator inspires her colleagues and is enabling them to gain in confidence to teach art and design. She

arranged for staff to visit to the National Gallery to enhance their expertise and a similar visit to Tate Britain is arranged for the week following the inspection. The co-ordinator gives informal advice to colleagues and monitors displays and classroom practice. She has a comprehensive portfolio of pupils' work, which is well documented together with the planning for each section of work.

102. Teachers create relevant links with other subjects, for example, work on castles in history and work on different parts of the world in geography. In 2002, some of the pupils' artwork was sent to the Mayor of Ito in Japan for the 56th Anjin Festival. Their artwork formed part of the Japanese 30th Children's Painting Exhibition by children from other parts of the world. This was a good acknowledgement of the high standard of artwork in this school and helped to raise pupils' self-esteem. An artist in residence specialising in Japanese art is due to work with pupils in the school for a week later this term to provide pupils with first-hand experiences. Pupils have visited a local secondary school's art exhibition to observe and draw some of the sculptures. The school was awarded an Arts Mark in July 2002 in recognition of the school's commitment to the creative arts. Resources are excellent. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment to inform future planning are good throughout the school. Colourful displays are used effectively to enliven classrooms and enhance communal areas very well, creating a stimulating learning environment. Art and design makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. From an evaluation of one lesson seen in Year 2, analysis of a wide range of previously completed work and an examination of teachers' planning, attainment in design and technology is judged to be above average. The previous inspection judged attainment to be, 'in line with the national average'. The progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is good overall. There were no differences between the attainments of boys and girls observed during the inspection.

104. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Year 2. The previous inspection reported that teaching was, 'never less than satisfactory'. In the lesson seen, the teacher discussed with pupils the learning objectives, the design process and the use of designs on fabrics. Pupils listened well and contributed their own ideas. The lesson provided a good challenge because they had a range of ideas and techniques presented to them upon which to work. Therefore, they responded well, gained competence in manual skills and increased their understanding of the design process. Pupils were very well managed and because of this, they worked with good concentration and creative effort and used an appropriate range of media such as paint, print, and drawing or cut out shapes. Pupils with special educational needs were particularly well supported by a learning support assistant. Analysis of pupils' previous work indicates a good range of activities, carefully produced designs and their own evaluations of their efforts. No lessons were seen in Year 1 because of the constraints of the timetable. However, pupils have designed and made simple playgrounds with the use of a range of materials and have designed and made fruit salads. Work produced was generally of satisfactory to good quality.

105. The school has a well-planned curriculum for the subject and teachers use it effectively to plan work for pupils. Information and communication technology is used to some extent when pupils use graphics for the design element of their work. The use of assessment to determine pupils' progress is good. This is because their work is checked against what is expected in the National Curriculum. The co-ordinator is, therefore, able to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject and use that information to improve curriculum planning. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has identified appropriate priorities for improvement. For example, greater use of teachers' creativity in the design and making processes. It has been possible to identify what needs improvement because the co-ordinator monitors the quality of teaching and learning by working with pupils in lessons. Resources are very good and this contributes well to the good quality of pupils' work and the enthusiasm of teachers.

GEOGRAPHY

106. Standards of attainment in geography are above average and all pupils make good progress. This is an improvement on the findings of the school's 1997 inspection when standards were found to be average. The difference is explained by the fact that the quality of teaching was satisfactory in 1997 whereas the current inspection judged teaching and learning to be good. Judgements are based on the two lessons observed, an analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning and monitoring files and discussions with pupils and teachers. No differences in the attainment of boys and girls were observed.

107. The evidence shows that pupils in Year 2 understand and explore their local area. They know about places that are further away, for example, the fictional Scottish island of Struay and places that other pupils take Barnaby Bear to places such as Paris. The pupils are also starting to use appropriate geographic language to ask questions and find out the answers in geographic topics. Work in Year 2 builds well on that covered in Year 1 where the pupils collect and sort natural things from their immediate environment in links with science and geography. Good cross curricular links were also noted by the 1997 inspection. The pupils also note the effects of weathering. The pupils make use of information and communication technology, for example, when recording a discussion about Lordswood. Early map work is carried out in Year 1, for example, by drawing a map of the playground and producing early symbols and a key. This is developed in Year 2 by the examination of aerial photographs. However, the school feels that the progressive development of mapping skills is an area of relative weakness as are the use of information and communication technology and the full development of a range of recording and writing skills, particularly for the more able.

108. The lessons seen during the inspection were concerned with the local area and involved fieldwork in visiting the nearby shops. This fieldwork was well organised and carried out. Tasks were differentiated by ability so that all pupils were fully challenged but also totally included in the work. The pupils recorded their observations of land use, were well behaved and followed instructions closely. The teacher was very safety conscious. There was a good discussion of how this work would be built on when the pupils returned to their class. The pupils also commented on the high levels of litter and vandalism they had observed which was a significant contribution to their moral development. All pupils, including one for whom English is an additional language, took a full part in the discussions.

109. The subject is well managed by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator. It has made a good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen and resources are now good rather than adequate. Assessment procedures are also good and they are well used to plan the pupils' work. The monitoring of teaching and learning and of the standards reached by the pupils is very good.

HISTORY

110. Pupils' work in history, including that of pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as a second language, is above average throughout the school. This is an improvement from the standards reported in the school's previous OFSTED inspection, when pupils were judged to be achieving average standards. There are no differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good, which is an improvement from the previous inspection when teaching was judged to be satisfactory and sometimes good. All teaching is at least satisfactory and ranges to very good. In a very good Year 1 lesson, pupils extended their understanding very well of the differences between toys from olden times with present day toys. The use of excellent resources enhanced pupils' learning very well. The teacher allowed pupils to handle the toys and talk about them to their neighbours before using effective questioning to help them express their ideas about the toys. Pupils realised that the merry-go-round was made of metal and that few modern day toys are made of this. They thought that the merry-go-round was powered by electricity and were surprised to learn about the spring mechanism. Most were able to make good

comparisons between their own toys and the old fashioned toys. One pupil knew that a metal round ring with a metal stick attachment was a hoop, which children played with about a hundred years ago. He had seen a similar one on a television programme and explained how it should be used. Others had previously made suggestions that it was 'something that goes on top of a chimney' and 'it looks like a lampshade'. The teacher allowed pupils to try to play with the hoop, but they found this quite difficult. She then showed pupils an antique doll, which they could only look at because of the fragile nature and value of the doll. They compared this with two modern dolls and were surprised to learn that the antique doll used to cry when tipped forward and that her head turned when she walked. They were fascinated by the whole experience and sustained concentration very well. All pupils were able to participate because the teacher's management of them was effective and relationships in the classroom were productive and very good. Pupils have also asked their parents and grandparents about games and toys that they had played with when they were children, which has also extended their learning.

112. Year 1 pupils can compare Victorian and Edwardian homes with their own homes. They know about similarities and differences in styles and in the appliances to be found in the homes. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about seaside holidays in the past and compare these with present-day holidays. Year 2 pupils have visited Upnor Castle and have studied the Great Fire of London. They are learning about famous people. In a very good Year 2 lesson, the teacher's effective questioning enabled pupils to express their knowledge about famous people, such as Winston Churchill, Princess Diana, Tony Blair, David Beckham and the Queen Mother. They know that 'Hitler tried to kill all the Jews' and had previously undertaken research using the Internet to gather information about William Shakespeare. Pupils are keen to learn and eagerly set about their task to gather more information about famous people using books, magazines and newspapers. The teacher differentiated the work well for more able pupils by asking them to use non-fiction books for their research about certain people, such as Florence Nightingale, Alexander Graham Bell, Christopher Columbus and Guy Fawkes and to find out why these people are famous. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use artefacts and secondary sources of information to enhance their learning.

113. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is supportive and encouraging. Teachers use history to develop pupils' literacy skills well, such as when making lists of famous people and writing from the point of view of someone who was living at the time of the Great Fire of London in 1666.

114. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and provides good support for staff. She helped to write the good policy when it was reviewed in 2000. The school has a good scheme of work based on units of work from the national guidelines, which are adapted to the needs of the school. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, pupils' work and the teaching of history. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment are good, which is an improvement compared with the previous inspection. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; for example, through their understanding of why people are famous.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

115. In Year 2, the attainment of pupils in information and communication technology is average. In the previous inspection, pupils' attainment was reported to be, 'broadly in line with national expectations'. Therefore, standards have been maintained. Pupils have covered an appropriate curriculum and their overall progress has been satisfactory, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. No differences were observed in the attainments of boys and girls.

116. On the evidence of an analysis of pupils' work and lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning is judged good overall in Year 2. The previous inspection made no clear judgement on this, but noted that, 'often pupils do not receive advice and help at the precise time that they need it.' In Year 2, a good lesson in the computer suite was characterised by pupils' interest and good concentration. They worked very well together to develop their understanding of how text can be

entered, altered and corrected with the use of menus and the mouse. They were very well managed and responded capably to the teacher's enthusiastic approach and ability to teach the necessary skills. She made particularly good use of the interactive whiteboard and of questioning to give direct instruction to help pupils acquire necessary skills. Another good lesson in Year 2 had some similar characteristics. In addition, the challenge presented, to use graphics in the production of a repeating pattern, resulted in good levels of creative effort by pupils. They tackled the task with confidence because they had the necessary skills and because of the high expectations of the teacher. In a Year 1 satisfactory lesson, pupils learned how to correct mistakes in word-processing with the use of the mouse and appropriate keys. The teacher presented them with a sound challenge and gave clear instruction for them to learn essential skills. They were attentive, showed sustained interest and made satisfactory progress in the lesson. A significant weakness in most of the lessons seen was the underdeveloped keyboard skills of pupils. This frequently slowed or limited their progress because they took too long to find keys to enter commands, such as delete, shift, and backspace, or to type text efficiently.

117. A scheme of work is well established and is used to enable teachers to plan interesting work for pupils. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Good use has been made of funding to establish a well-equipped computer suite, but insufficient use is made of the classroom computer resources. During the inspection, they were notably underused. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects is developing. Good links with the community have been established through the school's website and this has some attractive examples of pupils' work. A good policy and clear procedures have been established to protect pupils from undesirable Internet material. Their progress is checked regularly by observation and recorded and some use is made of this to plan curriculum development. This is another improvement since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator is very new to the post, but has a good basis upon which to build. This is because the previous holder of the post had implemented major developments, including the systematic training of both teaching and non-teaching staff. In addition, she had identified priorities for further development of the subject. Therefore progress made in improving the expertise of staff since the previous inspection has been particularly good. Resources are very good and this contributes to the progress that has been made in provision since 1997.

MUSIC

118. As in the last inspection, standards in music in Year 2 are above average. Music has a high profile in the school and pupils are given a good range of musical activities. As a result, all pupils achieve well as they move through the school and thoroughly enjoy their music making. This also includes pupils with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language as a lot of work is carried out in groups where pupils support each other well. Judgements in this inspection are based on observations of lessons, assemblies and choir practice, scrutiny of planning and records and discussions with teachers and pupils.

119. In assemblies, there is a sense of lively enjoyment in music and pupils sing a variety of songs enthusiastically and with a good sense of pitch and melody for their age. After hearing the story of Jesus calming the storm and reflecting that he must be 'powerful', 'magic' and 'very special', they sang *He's got the whole world in his hands* confidently and expressively. Pupils are also taught to value and appreciate music from across the world such as listening to water music evoking the quiet after the storm and Indian music featuring the playing of the sitar.

120. The quality of teaching and learning in music is good in Years 1 and 2. This is the same as the previous inspection. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils realise the importance of listening intently to what they hear and using instruments carefully and with proper control. They are also skilled at motivating pupils and give positive responses to their efforts to promote confidence. 'You are going to be an orchestra!' encouraged a Year 1 teacher as pupils created rhythmic patterns based on words and phrases linked to their work on healthy eating in science and personal, social and health

education. This meant that pupils echoed the rhythmic patterns very carefully and accurately with their instruments and enjoyed the alliterative sounds of 'pear, pepper, potato'. As the lesson progressed, she increased the demands on pupils which enabled them to cover a lot of ground in a short time because they had enjoyed themselves so much. A sense of fun and energy also accelerated the pace of another Year 1 lesson on creating rhythmic patterns. The teacher used various techniques to add interest to the lesson and the rhythm and tempo gradually increased in complexity. However, in another Year 1 class, the lack of organisation meant that time was wasted and the lesson never regained momentum.

121. The quality of learning is often enhanced because pupils' very good behaviour and keen interest enable them to make the best use of the opportunities presented to them. As a result, in a Year 2 lesson on controlling a pulse and identifying the stronger beats in the music, the teacher was able to treat her pupils as young musicians which led to a successful partnership in learning. Pupils were able to recognise the importance of pulse and tempo to the mood of the music. They realised that it was difficult to march when *The Grand Old Duke of York* was sung slowly and that a lullaby lost its effect when the tempo was changed. The teacher challenged pupils in the 'pulse game' by altering the tempo and, by the end of the lesson, pupils performed with increased confidence and skill. This was because of the teacher's very spirited and knowledgeable approach which made for happy, relaxed music making. Pupils are also very keen to talk about how music can create mood and atmosphere. Year 2 pupils were very thoughtful in their responses as they discussed the feelings evoked by listening to Bach's *Air from Suite no 3 and G*: 'it's like dying', 'I'm sleeping', 'dancing slowly' and the contrasting *Spring* by Vivaldi: 'we're at a party', 'having a snowball fight', 'everyone's happy'. Although pupils are introduced well to the language of music, their knowledge of simple notation is insufficiently developed and they are not given enough opportunities to evaluate and improve their performances.

122. The subject is well led and promoted by the very experienced co-ordinator who has a good overview through classroom observations and monitoring recorded lessons. Resources are very good and there is plenty of listening music to enable pupils to explore and enjoy music from a variety of times and cultures. This was also the case at the last inspection. Assessment is good and provides teachers with a clear picture of pupils' progress. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning. The subject is enriched by recorder club, choir, music festivals, whole school productions such as *The Jolly Christmas Postman*, singing to the elderly and visiting musicians. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they sing joyfully in assemblies, improvise rhythms in a group, support each other in performance and play ethnic instruments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. In Year 2, standards of attainment in physical education are above average. All pupils make good progress. This is an improvement on the findings of the school's 1997 inspection when standards were average. The difference is due to an improvement in the quality of teaching. In 1997, the quality of teaching was satisfactory but teaching and learning are now good. No differences in the attainment of boys and girls were observed. Only gymnastics and games were observed but the school's planning shows that all aspects of the curriculum are taught progressively.

124. In Year 2, pupils roll a ball with good levels of accuracy and control. They have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and know why it is necessary to warm up and to cool down when exercising. The pupils travel in a well co-ordinated way, for example, when running, jumping and rolling. They respond well when given the freedom to show their skills at making varied body shapes and moving on the floor and on small apparatus. Their technical vocabulary for the subject is well developed.

125. A good Year 2 gymnastics lesson involving work on the floor and on small apparatus exemplified the good quality teaching and learning seen during the inspection. The warm up session

was an interesting game in which the pupils moved around the hall making, for example, curling hiding shapes or stretching frightening shapes in response to danger from aliens. The teacher gave clear instructions and the pupils listened carefully and worked well. They tended to bunch rather than use the space available well even though the teacher drew their attention to this point. In the main part of the lesson, the pupils travelled in varying shapes whilst moving using different parts of their bodies. A strength of the teaching was the way in which pupils were encouraged to develop their own ideas and to use their imagination. Useful questions from the teacher helped the pupils, including one for whom English is an additional language, to extend their vocabulary and to use technical language such as hopping and rolling. The teaching assistant provided good support for a pupil with special educational needs which helped in his progress and full inclusion in the lesson. The pupils were encouraged to give demonstrations of their work for the other pupils and the class acted as performers and audience when divided into two groups. Discussion of the performances of others helped to develop the pupils' social development as they appreciated the work of others. However, their evaluations of the performances were largely directed by the teacher and concentrated on the strengths identified rather than on helping to improve what they had seen. A strong feature of the lesson was the emphasis on safety, for example, when setting out and putting away the apparatus. The lesson ended with a suitable cool down and discussion session.

126. Standards have risen since the last inspection and detailed assessment procedures have been developed. Many of the strengths noted by the 1997 inspection, for example, safe working, levels of resources, documentation and extracurricular support have been maintained and developed. These factors constitute good improvement which is the result of good management of the subject. Resources remain very good and they are well supported by two halls and good outdoor areas. Staff have received appropriate training in the subject. The subject is monitored by the examination of teachers' plans and direct observations of teaching and learning are planned for the summer term. Physical education is supported by suitable extracurricular activity. Information and communication technology is used to help the monitoring of the subject but its application is limited apart from this.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

127. In Year 2, standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is the same judgement as the previous inspection although, at that time, there were limited opportunities for discrete lessons in religious education and some teaching was carried out in assemblies. This is no longer the case. Judgements in this inspection are based on observations in classrooms and assemblies, an analysis of work, scrutiny of teachers' planning, records and displays and discussions with teachers and pupils. The warm, inclusive ethos of the school and the value placed on each pupil enrich teaching and learning in religious education. Together with collective worship, it makes a distinctive contribution to pupils' personal development and ensures a sense of purposefulness and community in the school. All pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language take a full part in all activities and, with careful guidance, make sound progress.

128. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. This is broadly similar to the last inspection. Most teachers have sound confidence and expertise in teaching the subject. They also have an appropriate balance between imparting knowledge and providing pupils with opportunities to consider important questions. Pupils in Year 1 have a satisfactory understanding of what 'belonging' means, that families have different religious faiths, and the significance of Christmas and giving gifts. In a Year 1 lesson on religious celebrations, pupils enthusiastically took part in role-playing different scenarios like Christmas, weddings and baptism but their work, lacking direction from the teacher, soon became unfocused and some were unsure of the importance of baptism and of Easter to Christians.

129. Pupils also explore the values and beliefs of different religions and teachers encourage them to reflect on how these can relate to their own lives. Pupils in Year 2 have looked at the impact of the

lives of the saints like St Augustine and St Patrick and have examined the meaning of the parables such as *The Lost Sheep* and *The House built on the Rock*. This emphasis on the universal messages of different faiths was seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils learned about the Torah as a source book of inspiration and learning for the Jewish people. They also understood the links between the Bible, the Ten Commandments and the importance of rules in their own lives. By their calm and sensitive approach, teachers generally create a quiet, focused atmosphere where pupils can effectively explore their responses and develop new thoughts and ideas. In another Year 2 lesson on the Torah, the teacher perceptively questioned her pupils about reasons behind rules for living: 'Somebody might get hurt', 'So that you can learn in school', 'To make the world a better place.' They then devised 'Rules to keep at Home' and could give good ideas about how these would enable their family to live in harmony. Pupils were also fascinated by the teacher's imaginative use of artefacts inscribed with Hebrew lettering which developed their learning well and encouraged them to show sensitivity and respect. However, there is not enough evidence of teachers developing pupils' spiritual growth through observation and reflection on the beauty, order and mystery of the natural world. There is also not always sufficient challenge in recorded work to encourage more able pupils to think more deeply about the subject.

130. The subject is well led and the co-ordinator has a clear overview of teaching and learning through looking at pupils' work and classroom observations. Resources are very good. Targets for development are appropriate. Assessment is good and provides an accurate profile of pupils' achievement to help teachers' planning. Information and communication technology is not used adequately in the subject. The contribution of high quality displays to pupils' learning was noted at the previous inspection. Displays such as those associated with the Chinese New Year and Festivals, Year 1's celebration cards and the focus on Judaism in Year 2 have a powerful visual appeal and are a good stimulus for learning. Religious education makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development when they reflect on *The Canticle of the Sun*, visit St David's Church and the synagogue, understand why Jesus told stories and make their own diva lamps.