

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DOWNS VIEW INFANT SCHOOL**

Ashford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118523

Headteacher: Mrs Annemarie Bolt

Reporting inspector: Valerie Whittington  
23832

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 March 2003

Inspection number: 247914

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ball Lane Kennington Ashford Kent
Postcode:	TN25 4PJ
Telephone number:	01233 632339
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Major John Kemp MBE
Date of previous inspection:	26/01/98

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23832	Valerie Whittington	Registered inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19322	Judi Bedawi	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20297	Joe Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
24027	Bharathi Kutty	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English as an additional language Geography History	
4350	Clive Whittington	Team inspector	English Music Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Downs View Infant School is an average-sized school, set in spacious grounds, in Kennington on the outskirts of Ashford. It takes pupils from four to seven years old and is maintained by Kent Local Education Authority. At the time of the inspection there were 249 pupils on roll in nine classes. Most pupils start school with average standards of attainment. Eight per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. The percentage (16.3 per cent) of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below the national average, including one per cent with Statements of Special Educational Need. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language, for this year, is two per cent. There is high mobility (20 per cent) compared with other schools nationally (17.4 per cent); this has an impact on standards attained at the end of Year 2.

At the time of the inspection, the headteacher has been in post for five years. The school has seen a rapid growth in recent years, from just over 200 pupils on roll, to the current level. This is due to its popularity and very good reputation. This has had a significant effect on the school's accommodation, including the need for new building work to replace the mobile classrooms. This is now virtually complete with a final phase due to start. A number of self help projects involving parents and governors have ensured that pupils have benefited from improvements to the school's environment, including the outdoor area for the Foundation Stage. Three teachers are new to the school in the last two years. Last year the school achieved a second 'Quality Mark' award from the Basic Skills Agency.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Downs View Infants is a good school that provides an effective, nurturing environment where standards are improving and pupils make good progress across the school. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher and management team ensures that all members of the school community work together so that the school is continually striving for improvement. There is a strong ethos within the school which fosters mutual respect and creates a positive culture for learning. Pupils have good attitudes to school and are confident learners. The quality of teaching is good overall. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The headteacher and management team provide very good leadership. The staff and governors are very effective in providing a clear educational direction for the school.
- The positive ethos in the school produces good attitudes to learning and very good relationships.
- Everyone within the school community works well together and has a sense of pride in the school.
- Teachers have high expectations throughout the school.
- Investigations in mathematics and science encourage pupils to think, make predictions and extend their learning.
- The 'Supergroups' sets in mathematics and English are very effective in supporting the progress of all pupils.
- Children in the Foundation Stage develop good independent skills and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Provision for both special educational needs and English as an additional language is good, as a result of which all these pupils make good progress.
- Provision for the pupils' understanding of other cultures is very good.

### What could be improved

- The role of learning support assistants in supporting learning by being fully involved throughout lessons.
- The role of subject co-ordinators to include observations of teaching and learning as appropriate.
- The new assessment procedures need to be embedded and further developed so that they extend to all subjects in the foundation curriculum.

*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 January 1998, and has made good progress since then. The school's scores in national tests for seven year olds are now above the national average in reading and in science. Whilst English and mathematics are still average, there has been a steady increase and improvement, over time, in line with the national trend in writing and above the national trend in mathematics. These results are the same when compared with similar schools.

The quality of teaching has improved and is now good overall. Ninety eight per cent of teaching is now satisfactory or better and 23 per cent is now very good or excellent. The headteacher and management team now provide very good leadership, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The school has addressed all of the key issues raised by the last report. The new building extension work is impressive. All curriculum co-ordinators have clear job descriptions and now monitor and evaluate aspects of their subjects effectively. As yet, however, few observe teaching and learning in lessons to gain an overview of the subject in practice. Under the leadership of the headteacher and other key staff, the school is very well placed to continue its trend of improvement.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Reading	B	C	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	C	C	C	C	
Mathematics	B	C	C	C	

Attainment on entry to the reception is average; it is good as they enter Year 1, showing good progress.

In the 2002 tests, standards of attainment were above the national average in reading, and average in writing and mathematics. Downs View pupils achieve the same standards in core subjects when compared with other similar schools. These standards have been generally constant over the last two years with a steady improvement, any fluctuation relating to differences in year groups and pupil mobility. This latter aspect has a significant effect on

standards achieved, for as many as 20 per cent of pupils who start in the reception class are no longer in the school by Year 2, when the tests are taken. The school sets realistic but challenging targets based on individual pupil data. Targets set were achieved last year. Inspection findings show that current standards are in line with national expectations in mathematics and in writing, and above average in reading and in science. Standards are rising and test results are likely to be higher this year in writing and mathematics as a result of the recent school improvement strategies, such as the 'Supergroups' and the current emphasis on problem solving and thinking skills. Standards in art and design and technology are often above average. In all other subjects standards are in line with that expected for pupils of this age. Pupils make good progress through the school and the standards represent good achievement.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school. They take an interest in their work, are keen to learn and sustain their concentration well. They are developing as confident learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	There is a good standard of behaviour in lessons across the school, although this can vary. Outside of lessons behaviour is less reliable due to a minority of pupils not adhering to the 'Golden Rules'.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good across the school. Pupils are friendly and open in their approach, and usually get on very well with each other.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is good in comparison with other schools. However, punctuality is a problem for a minority of pupils.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons. Of the lessons seen, eight per cent were excellent, 15 per cent very good, and 56 per cent good.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science is a strength. The school is particularly effective at meeting the needs of all its pupils, including pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs.

Teachers throughout the school have very good relationships with their pupils and work hard to ensure a good quality of education for all pupils. Lessons are well focused on the learning objectives and often provide a high level of challenge for pupils. There are good systems for supporting special educational needs both in and outside classes. There is a brisk pace to



lessons that promotes the good rate of progress that pupils make. The best teachers have high expectations and effective questioning skills that promote thought, understanding and a high degree of interaction. Pupils respond very well to the teaching and the majority are confident in their learning. Learning support assistants provide the best support when they have a clear understanding of their role throughout lessons. In order to raise the standard of teaching and learning to that of the best seen, the school should ensure that the new assessment systems are embedded and further developed so that good practice is extended to all subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a rich curriculum for all its pupils. This starts with a good quality curriculum for the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2 it is broad and balanced with a good proportion of time spent on foundation subjects. Good links are made between subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for these pupils. There are effective systems for identifying needs and for providing extra support. The individual education plans are helpful in identifying targets, and the Code of Practice is followed appropriately.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as additional language is good. The support provided for parents of these pupils is also very good. The teacher responsible shows considerable initiative in organising opportunities that enrich the culture of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and social development. Social development is very well promoted within the Foundation Stage where children learn to consider others and co-operate well. There is very good provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a positive ethos for learning and a caring environment. There are appropriate arrangements for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare, although these policies need to be updated or agreed by staff and governors.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a good overview of the school's work. With the senior management team she sets a clear educational direction. The school is well managed. Others provide good subject leadership and management in their developing roles as co-ordinators.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective in its key role of shaping the direction of the school. It has a good overview of the life and work of the school and is active in its support. A few governors visit the school regularly and make a significant contribution.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. These are analysed and reviewed rigorously and steps are taken to amend provision accordingly.
The strategic use of resources	The school has a good understanding of budget matters. The governors have clear lines of delegation and plan well for using funding; there are always projects in mind. Resources are used effectively; for example, an extra teacher employed for the 'Supergroups'; enhancement to the building and other staffing to support school improvement.

The school building now provides very good accommodation which is used effectively. The grounds are spacious and the designated outside area for children in reception is much improved since the previous inspection. There is a good level of staffing and resources across the school. However, in order to ensure that the investment in extra staffing resources gives the best value possible, the school should ensure clarity of role and the effective use of learning support assistants throughout lessons. Good role models and expertise exist within the school to support this.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy going to school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school enables pupils to make good progress in their work.</li> <li>• Expectations are high; the school expects pupils to work hard.</li> <li>• The school is very approachable.</li> <li>• There is good leadership and management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An interesting range of activities outside of lessons.</li> </ul>

Parents were very supportive of the school in the questionnaires and the meeting with inspectors, although 38 per cent indicated the area for improvement in the table above. Inspection findings consider that the school provides a suitable range of activities outside of lessons, usually linked to current themes and topics, which are similar to that of other infant schools. The inspection agrees with all their positive feelings about the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Standards have risen since the last inspection. This can be seen in the improvement in pupils' average point scores in reading, writing and mathematics since 1998 which have risen from below national average to the standards achieved in the national tests in 2002. In these reading is above average, with writing and mathematics average. This is also the case when standards achieved in 2002 are compared with similar schools. Standards achieved in science, as measured by teacher assessment, were above both the national average and that for similar schools. Over time there are no significant gender differences, however, in 2002 in writing and in mathematics, the girls performed better than boys. The school has taken account of this and put strategies in place to improve boys' standards in these areas.
2. Many children enter the reception classes with basic skills that are broadly in line with what is expected of children of this age. The good quality of teaching and the wide range of experiences they receive during the reception year ensure that they make good progress, and their attainment at the end of reception is above that expected of the Early Learning Goals in almost all areas of learning.
3. Owing to the very mobile nature of the population in Ashford, there is a significant amount of pupil movement in any one year. Approximately 20 per cent of the pupils who are submitted for the National Curriculum Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) at the end of Year 2 are different from the cohort of children who started in the reception classes. The school has detailed tracking systems in place which show these features. National data confirms that this mobility factor is high. Taking account of the high level of mobility in the school, pupils make good progress throughout the school and their achievement by the age of seven is generally good.
4. Current standards in English overall, for those pupils aged seven, are in line with the national average. This largely confirms the test results for 2002, where the number of pupils reaching average grades in writing was in line with expectations and reading was above average. Trends over the past four years show a steady improvement in standards. An above average percentage of pupils scored highly in reading whilst a below average percentage of pupils scored highly in writing. The school has rightly identified this as an area for development and has worked hard to ensure that this is no longer the case, partly by setting the pupils into ability groups. In these 'Supergroups' pupils are grouped according to their capability and prior attainment for some of their literacy sessions. This is proving very successful.
5. Pupils enter the school with average skills in both speaking and listening. Standards of attainment in speaking remain satisfactory as they move through the school. Listening skills are generally satisfactory as well, although some pupils find it difficult to listen quietly in large groups.
6. All pupils with English as an additional language, including those at an early stage of language acquisition, make good progress towards their targets. Those who are at a more proficient stage are set to attain standards that are in line with their monolingual peers in all areas of the curriculum. Although these pupils at an early stage make good progress, their standards of attainment in English still remain below those expected of their age nationally.

7. In mathematics, pupils' attainment by Year 2 is at the expected level for their age. This broadly echoes the picture given by national test results, which show an improving trend since the last inspection. The higher results gained in 2000 were due to the changing nature of different year groups. There are indications that standards are rising further, as a result of the very effective teaching of Year 2 pupils in 'Supergroups'. A greater emphasis on problem solving and investigative work throughout the school has improved these aspects since the last inspection.
8. Standards in science by the end of Year 2 are above national expectations across all Programmes of Study. Taking account of pupils' average attainment when they enter the school, pupils make sound progress in the Foundation Stage and good progress in Key Stage 1, where pupils achieve standards above those achieved in similar schools. This is mainly due to the very good teaching in both Years 1 and 2, where the most recent assessments in 2002 confirm that standards are above the national and similar schools' average. Performance in science has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the pupils' ability to undertake investigations and in their knowledge and understanding of physical processes.
9. In information and communications technology, pupils' attainment is at the expected level in Year 2, and standards have been maintained since the last inspection throughout the increasing demands of the curriculum since that time. The school is in the process of improving the amount of equipment available to pupils, in line with national guidance. Another important development is the recent introduction of a good quality system for assessment, developed by the co-ordinator. As this system becomes embedded, and the amount of equipment improves, it is likely that there will be a rise in standards of attainment in this subject.
10. Standards in art are generally above the expectation for age, and standards in some aspects are particularly good; for example, pupils' drawing skills and sense of colour and pattern are well developed. Progress has improved since the last inspection due to the greater breadth of experience, study of artists and the use of different media, including clay work, and also the information and communication technology software. Pupils make particularly good progress in Year 1.
11. Standards attained by pupils in design and technology are above national expectations for this age. There are particular strengths in the links made with science and other subjects. The progress made by all pupils is good. Standards and progress have both improved since the last inspection, when they were found to be satisfactory.
12. The scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' medium-term planning and a discussion with pupils indicate that pupils make sound progress and by the age of seven standards in history and geography are in line with those expected of their age nationally. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection.
13. The standard in music is generally in line with what would normally be expected. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress throughout the school. This reflects the findings for the subject during the last inspection.
14. In physical education, pupils' attainment in Year 2 is at the expected level, based on the evidence of the only lesson seen in this year group during the inspection.

15. Pupils leave the school at the age of seven with standards in religious education which are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus for Kent. This reflects the judgements made at the time of the last inspection.
16. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress towards the appropriate targets set for them. The school identifies pupils with barriers to learning at an early stage and ensures that their needs are met by adjusting their curriculum appropriately. This is effective, and many pupils make sufficient progress to be able to be removed from the register for special educational needs by Year 2.

### **Pupils' attitudes and behaviour**

17. The attitudes that children and pupils have to learning are good. Pupils' behaviour, overall, is good. Pupils' personal development is good and the quality of their relationships is very good. Attendance is good and pupils like school.
18. In the Foundation Stage, all activities encourage the children to care for each other. Relationships are very good, and all play and work happily, whether alone or with others. Staff are good role models and the reception classes are places where all children feel valued and involved, confident and happy in their learning.
19. The youngest children are happy and well settled into school life. They enjoy the stimulating activities that are provided within a colourful learning environment. They are now able to benefit from the newly developed outside play area. Their behaviour is often very good, particularly in whole-school assemblies, or when moving quietly around the school. They set a very good example to older pupils who do not always behave as well. When the children sometimes forget the 'Golden Rules', their teachers gently tell them how to improve. Children usually relate very well to each other and respect the adults around them. They are building friendships and developing other social skills well, such as sharing resources or waiting to have their turn. The children particularly enjoy caring for the reception's guinea pigs. All children enjoy a positive start to their full-time education.
20. Good attitudes to learning are maintained by older pupils. They are interested in learning and mostly work hard. Pupils enjoy asking and answering teachers' questions. In just a few lessons, discussions are marred by a minority of pupils who do not listen well enough to instructions or to the views of other pupils. They do not put up their hands to answer but call out, interrupting teachers who are speaking, and a few pupils with more challenging behaviour sometimes require consistent attention. In group work, including the school 'Supergroups', pupils settle well and work purposefully because they are provided with work that challenges them. They persevere well when having difficulties and co-operate well, mostly remaining interested throughout the lesson.
21. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually good and is better than some of their behaviour at play times. The majority of pupils understand that they are in school to learn and are successfully following the school's 'Golden Rules'. Teachers' strategies for dealing with behaviour are successful for the majority, and pupils appreciate the use of praise. In assemblies, the behaviour of older pupils in Year 2 is sometimes disappointing; they show little sense of occasion and lack respect, whispering during singing and prayers or leaving the hall noisily. They do not set a good example to younger children and to other pupils who behave far better. There have been no exclusions.

22. Playground behaviour is often boisterous. Some pupils, mainly in Year 2, boys and a few girls, behave inappropriately when playing. They chase around, bumping into others or interrupting quieter pursuits; younger pupils have little chance of using the painted markings for play. These pupils show little interest in others' needs. When reprimanded by supervising adults they show a lack of respect for authority, usually returning to thoughtless play soon afterwards. The school is aware that there are issues about playtime. Parents have also expressed their concern.
23. Pupil relationships in class are very good. They have established friendship groups and enjoy working together. Relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly good, with the relationships of the youngest children being a strength. Pupils are aware of those with special educational needs and offer them friendly support. The small number of minority ethnic pupils mix easily and the richness of their cultures are recognised and celebrated, for example, through resources and interesting displays. The majority of pupils have a good level of respect for their teachers and value their approval. However, some of the older pupils are still developing their awareness of others' needs and feelings, requiring frequent reminders about treating others thoughtfully and with respect. circle time discussions are used well to reinforce the school's expectations of attitudes and behaviour and give pupils clear messages about the need for improvement. There are opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of personal responsibility beyond the usual duties, like returning registers. The daily 'Playground Friends', recognised by the special hats they wear, is positive and is valued by the pupils. There is no formal system for consulting and involving pupils in school decision-making, such as a school council, to promote greater responsibility and independence.
24. Attendance is good and has improved since the last inspection. The majority of pupils have good attendance. However, a minority often takes holidays during term time, often for financial reasons, which is hindering further improvements in this aspect. Punctuality is a concern and a number of pupils are regularly late, missing vital learning and interrupting lessons when they do arrive. Some parents, although largely supportive of the school, are not fulfilling their legal responsibilities by ensuring that their children attend regularly and on time. The school monitors this lateness regularly and tries hard to address this issue.
25. Pupils' spiritual development is good. They are beginning to appreciate other people's attitudes and values. Most pupils are caring and thoughtful, developing a sense of empathy, concern and compassion. Awe and wonder are experienced in some lessons, such as a science lesson in Year 2, where pupils investigated moving a heavy stone using bricks and rollers. In a mathematics lesson, pupils felt a real sense of excitement in their discoveries. When discussing Mothers' Day, pupils in Year 2 talked of what their mothers meant to them, reflecting on their love and care and describing special moments.
26. Pupils' moral development is generally good. Pupils understand the school's moral code through the 'Golden Rules' displayed in every classroom. At lunchtimes they line up quietly, and are chatty and friendly. There are times in assemblies, however, when pupils in Year 2 find it difficult to listen quietly.
27. Pupils' social development is also good. Pupils are open and friendly with adults and each other in lessons, in the playground and in the dinner hall. They work together co-operatively, supporting and helping each other. Resources are often shared and pupils readily give others help and advice in a very positive way. They are generally kind to each other.

28. Pupils' cultural development is very good. In geography lessons they have looked at the way people live, comparing life in Peru with that on an imaginary Scottish island, and have also celebrated the Chinese New Year. In the only music lesson seen, Year 2 pupils sang their names as part of a Swahili folk song and in another lesson they danced to celebrate the Hindu festival of Holi. Pupils have made masks and divas as part of their religious education topic. Reception children have investigated different breads from around the world and pupils in Year 2 have looked at 'Where our food comes from'.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

29. Teaching is good overall. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with an increase seen in good or better lessons. The school has achieved a high proportion of good and very good teaching, enabling pupils to achieve well. The quality of learning closely matches that of teaching. Of the 48 lessons or part lessons observed, only one was unsatisfactory, with over three-quarters good or better and one-quarter very good or excellent.
30. The overall standard of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, and the class teachers and learning support assistants play an effective part in the children's development. The variety of activities are generally planned carefully and questions are effective. This helps to ensure high quality learning. However, lack of planning for the child initiated activities (with clear indication of adults' roles) results in missed opportunities to extend children's learning in many of these sessions.
31. Teachers in all year groups work in teams to plan and prepare lessons and this system is used very effectively to share good practice. As a result of this, the quality of teaching is consistently high. There is a focused programme for monitoring standards in teaching and learning carried out by the headteacher, which means that strengths and areas for further development are made known to staff and governors. Subject co-ordinators are increasingly developing their roles to include a range of monitoring activity. At present they monitor and support planning. They look at pupils' work and the majority are compiling portfolios of examples of pupils' work to show the breadth and range of coverage in the Programmes of Study. Appropriate steps are being taken to continue to develop the quality of teaching, although most co-ordinators do not monitor teaching and learning in lessons.
32. Teaching throughout the school is characterised by high quality relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils. Mutual respect is evident in day-to-day contact, which elicits a very positive response from pupils who show good levels of confidence and consequently have a good degree of enthusiasm and keen attitudes to work. This means that most pupils make good progress in lessons and very good progress in developing basic skills. Pupils are also supportive of their peers and recognise each other's efforts. They show keen interest in the work of others and appreciate the quality of other pupils' responses. The supportive relationships and high expectations combine with other factors, such as very good quality displays of work throughout the school, providing a pleasant learning atmosphere in lessons.
33. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been thoughtfully implemented. Teaching to improve basic skills is very well planned and effective, resulting in good progress in most lessons. Most teachers define learning objectives clearly and these are usually used very effectively to focus teaching and learning in all parts of the

lesson. In the best lessons, teachers share the learning objectives with pupils and refer to them regularly. This helps pupils check their understanding and assess their own learning.

34. Basic skills in reading are taught well; the youngest pupils are taught how to use their phonic knowledge alongside visual clues to develop their understanding of the written word. Older pupils are taught to use a wide range of strategies to enable them to read new vocabulary and to understand the full meaning of texts. Teachers model reading very skilfully, which has resulted in the vast majority of pupils showing high levels of enthusiasm and being very well motivated. Teachers' skills in teaching writing have been developed through the current whole-school focus; this is taught thoroughly with an emphasis on basic skills such as handwriting and spelling. In the best lessons teachers use very effective methods, including demonstrating key skills through their own models and from the work of other pupils. Occasionally pupils are given insufficient structure during independent activities that results in little development of their skills, and the pace of their learning is too slow.
35. The pace of teaching and learning in the introductory part of lessons is appropriately brisk and teachers use a range of methods to involve pupils actively. Consequently the majority of pupils are attentive and contribute well. In both literacy and numeracy lessons teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to promote pupils' use of specific vocabulary. However, the listening skills of a significant minority of pupils are undeveloped and this hinders their learning in aspects of the curriculum. This is especially evident in the difficulties a few pupils have in responding with clear descriptions and explanations. In a minority of lessons there was insufficient involvement of learning support assistants in whole-class sessions or activities to extend and promote development or support behaviour management.
36. Teachers have good subject knowledge in most areas of the curriculum. Because of this they give clear, accurate explanations and demonstrations which enable pupils to learn and understand key points and facts. The specialised teaching provided through the 'Supergroups' is particularly effective; the teacher's specific subject knowledge is used effectively to provide suitable tasks to develop pupils' skills. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is a strength.
37. All teachers know their pupils well, consequently work is usually closely matched to pupils' abilities. A strong feature is the emphasis placed on pupils developing their investigative skills. In the best lessons teachers provide good opportunities in whole-class and guided group sessions to stretch and challenge, such as when pupils in a Year 2 class were asked to re-enact a previous experiment on rolling balls prior to recording their findings. There is effective questioning from both the teacher and learning support assistant such as, 'What will happen if?' and 'How many cubes make the slope?' or 'Is that a fair test?' This results in high quality learning and motivation, for example, and pupils were encouraged to hypothesise about the dynamics in the investigation.
38. Challenge for lower ability pupils in independent activities is often good because the work is sufficiently structured to enable them to make good progress. When the skills of learning support staff are well matched to these groups, a good level of learning takes place. Independent activities for higher ability pupils usually have appropriate levels of challenge because expectations are high and pupils are required to work at a sufficiently brisk pace.



39. Teachers are adept at building on pupils' previous learning so they develop understanding of key ideas. For example, in a Year 1 art lesson, pupils' knowledge of the technique used for making their 'Porthole' paintings is recalled. Subsequently, their ideas for creating a three-dimensional effect using a simple hinge are further developed and applied successfully in making individually designed Mothers' Day cards.
40. The majority of teachers use a range of methods that effectively match the age, ability and interest of pupils. Pupils are actively involved in their learning and as a result make good progress. Teachers use questioning skills very well; types of questions are appropriately varied and give pupils the opportunity to respond through one-word answers and more expansively.
41. Teachers usually manage pupils' behaviour effectively in lessons throughout the school. They have very clear, high expectations and the majority use praise and reward systems consistently. Pupils usually respond well to this positive approach. Teachers are observant and usually deal with any incidents of misbehaviour or inattentiveness quickly and effectively. This means that learning takes place in an orderly, secure and happy atmosphere.
42. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good, and consequently, these pupils make good progress towards the appropriate targets set for them. The school identifies pupils with barriers to learning at an early stage and ensures that their needs are met by adjusting their curriculum appropriately.
43. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is good overall. The support offered by the class teachers and specialist teacher help the pupils to be confident learners. The questioning strategies used effectively to involve them in whole-class discussions are very good. The use of resources such as additional visual aids and gestures to support class level and group level discussions help these pupils to learn specific pattern of English language and they are confident to contribute. In one of the lessons observed, the skilful questioning strategies used by the class teacher and the specialist teacher enabled the pupils to offer suggestions about the missing words to make sense of the text. Teachers often offer alternative ways of explaining the meaning of scientific vocabulary enabling these pupils to be fully involved in scientific enquiry. The very good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to try their best because they know that their contributions are valued. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
44. Learning support assistants are generally effective throughout the school. Most teachers and support assistants have a thorough understanding of the needs of individual pupils and this is reflected in the short-term planning and teaching in lessons. In addition to providing good support for pupils with special educational needs, they usually (but not always) make a good contribution to pupils' learning in large and small groups. The school's decision to significantly increase the number of support staff is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make. This is particularly effective when class teachers involve assistants in joint planning and briefing. This enables support staff to work effectively with the teacher during whole-class lessons and to provide well-focused support for pupils in groups. Good communication results in support of a high calibre with clear understanding of teaching and support roles. At present, however, this is inconsistent across classes, which detracts from the effectiveness of the support to pupils.

45. Teachers use the school's resources appropriately and effectively. Lessons generally get off to a brisk start. They are well structured and smooth running, which means that time is used well. Teachers use a good range of materials and equipment to help pupils learn; they make choices that interest and engage pupils actively in their learning. Where information and communication technology is used it is generally effective in supporting learning. Classrooms are equipped with an adequate amount of equipment which is generally used well.
46. Teachers' use of on-going assessment is good but as yet is not fully developed in all subjects. Some staff carefully note the achievement and progress of pupils during lessons and use the information to plan lessons and activities that meet pupils' needs and enable them to take the next steps in their learning. In most lessons, plenary sessions are used effectively to assess pupils' understanding so that the next lesson builds on their learning and helps them make good progress. A target-setting system for individual pupils is in place. Pupils are developing their ability to build on the teachers' comments to make progress.
47. The use of homework is satisfactory. It is given weekly to reinforce basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy. Occasional homework is given in the form of projects and often pupils work on these showing their own initiative.

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

48. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities and a broad and balanced curriculum, including all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Statutory requirements are met in full. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a wide and rich curriculum, which is generally planned well to ensure that all make good progress in their early development. The school has successfully implemented the national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English, mathematics and science, which has helped to raise standards. There has been steady improvement in the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection to the currently good standards of provision.
49. A prominent feature of the curriculum is the emphasis that is placed on providing opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills. This is found in several subjects across the curriculum, but was observed as particularly effective in mathematics and science, where pupils make rapid progress as a result of this focus; for example, where a group of the most capable pupils investigated emerging patterns in number at an advanced level for their age.
50. Good cross-curricular links are made between subjects, for example, between art and information and communication technology when pupils use software to make designs for decorative tiles. Opportunities are often made to extend pupils' numeracy and literacy skills in the context of other subjects. For example, speaking and listening skills are well used when pupils are challenged to explain their thinking in a mathematics lesson.
51. Good quality provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. There have been several improvements in this area since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy a curriculum that helps them to make good progress and which develops their independent learning skills. For example, in a mathematics Supergroups' lesson, pupils with special educational needs made rapid gains as they explored ways of

making ten from the addition of two numbers. The day-to-day management of special educational needs support has also improved, and teachers and support staff work well together to support pupils. At the time of the last inspection, pupils with special educational needs were often taught in cramped conditions. This has now improved thanks to the improvements in accommodation that all pupils enjoy. The school successfully ensures that all pupils have equality of access and opportunity to learning opportunities.

52. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. There are five pupils who are identified as having English as an additional language. This is about two per cent of the whole school population. Of these, three pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition. These pupils receive the support from a specialist teacher once a week. The school's inclusive ethos is clearly evident in the way these pupils and their parents are given the support and guidance to be fully involved in all aspects of the school.
53. Pupils who have English as an additional language are given equal access to all areas of the curriculum. The joint planning and setting targets by the class teachers and the specialist teacher is helping to apply the principles of inclusion in a systematic way. It also helps to focus on specific learning objectives related to their targets through group and individual support within lessons. The school, with the support from the specialist teacher, takes the opportunity to learn about their cultures and to involve them in the school community by organising various events such as 'One world week' and 'Black history week'.
54. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities beyond the normal timetabled lessons. For example, pupils make visits to sites of interest to support their learning in history and geography. A range of visitors are invited to the school to meet pupils; these include the local vicar, and representatives from the police, fire brigade and RSPCA. Some parents indicated before the inspection that they would like to see the range of activities outside lessons improved. The inspection team found that the school provides a satisfactory range of additional experiences that is broadly similar to that found in other infant schools.
55. The school has good links with the community it serves and is held in high regard. Well-established links with churches in the parish have enabled elderly community volunteers to become involved in helping pupils by hearing reading; pupils and staff affectionately call one of these volunteers 'Grandma'. Clergy regularly hold assemblies and some services are held in the church. Regular visits are made to local care homes, for instance, pupils provide an Easter Bonnet Parade and also Harvest gifts. Other visitors promote the arts well, including sculpture and puppeteers. Year 2 pupils enjoyed a workshop on African music. The local and wider community links, including those with Mexico, Nepal and China, visited on Barnaby Bears' travels, are widening the pupils' understanding of local community and develop awareness of our multicultural world.
56. The school has a special partnership with the nearby junior school, to which many pupils transfer. Staff exchange visits regularly to ensure that transfer works smoothly. The programme for supporting students in training is well established and many students from university and higher education spend time in practical training at the school. Secondary school students are able to undertake work experience. In addition, other schools are regularly visited by staff to share expertise and good practice, enhancing professional development. There are a few business links,

including the Ashford Business Partnership, and the school has participated in the Partners in Leadership Programme, but this aspect of community is still developing.

57. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and it has a high priority in the school development plan. The very new co-ordinator is enthusiastic and keen to develop the subject further through both school based and national initiatives such as 'Healthy Schools'. School arrangements for lunchtime seating and a wider choice of dishes are very significant improvements since the last inspection, and are having a positive impact on pupils' social development. There is a good policy and scheme of work and intentions to monitor, so that all National Curriculum elements are included, and teachers are confident in teaching all aspects, ensuring that pupils make consistent progress. Circle time discussions are well established in the Foundation Stage but are more variable in Years 1 and 2. Some staff, when there is need, use circle time well to address immediate pupil needs, for example, unsatisfactory playground behaviour. Many visitors, including police and the RSPCA, enhance the teaching so that pupils can learn for example, about personal safety or the need to look after pets. Pupils gain good understanding of the concept of citizenship through, for example, their links with the local community.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education**

58. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. Although at the time of the last inspection this provision was also found to be good, there has been an improvement. At that time weaknesses were identified in the school's provision for social development, which was judged to be satisfactory. This area is now strong. The provision for cultural education was good, and is now very good.
59. The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual development. Opportunities are provided in both assemblies and lessons for pupils to explore their values and beliefs. Collective worship meets all statutory requirements and generally gives the pupils time to reflect on what they have been told. The school has a sympathetic, supportive ethos, within which everyone feels valued, respecting each other's feelings. The teaching style in most lessons encourages pupils to question and think things out for themselves. The weekly 'Thank You' assemblies are an opportunity for pupils to appreciate what others have achieved – whether in work, effort, behaviour (including at lunch times) or something out of school, such as tap dancing or a rugby match.
60. Provision for the pupils' moral development is good. Every classroom displays the 'Golden Rules', which set out the school's clear moral code for behaviour. These are understood by all and behaviour is usually good in lessons, although there are instances of less acceptable behaviour in some assemblies (when pupils talk to each other) and the playground (where some of the play is, on occasion, too boisterous). A reward system has been introduced to encourage better behaviour in assemblies and a similar system is effective in classrooms. Teachers are good role models and there are a number of displays around the school to promote thoughtful attitudes.
61. Provision for the pupils' social development is also good. There are none of the weaknesses found during the last inspection. Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively in many lessons. The school is a strong, supportive, inclusive community which includes staff, pupils, governors and parents. Relationships are very good and teachers use praise very effectively in most lessons. Pupils in all classes are given suitable responsibilities and those in Year 2 take turns to be 'Playground Friends' –

looking out for pupils at playtime who may be lonely. Opportunities are provided for the pupils to work and play together, whether in lessons, in the playground or in the dining hall. Pupils sing at a nearby home for the elderly and they support a number of charities, including Dr Barnardo's and a children's hospice. During the parents' meeting, someone described how – when her child returned from her first day in a new school – she had asked, "Have you made any special friends?" "Oh no," her child had replied, "they're **all** my friends!"

62. Very good provision is made within the school for the pupils' cultural development. Pupils with a background in other cultures are valued and their knowledge used. This happened, for example, in a lesson in Year 2 where two pupils speaking English as a second language were encouraged to use their mother tongue, as well as English, in their Mothers' Day cards. The religious education curriculum covers non-Christian religions, particularly Hinduism and Judaism. Divali was celebrated and some of the staff dressed in saris. The school makes very good use of opportunities to develop an understanding of other cultures through a range of visitors to the school. These include musicians from Zimbabwe and from the Caribbean. Effective use is made of the local environment in geography.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

63. The quality of attention to pupils' everyday welfare needs, support and guidance is good. The procedures for assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress are good. The monitoring of behaviour and prevention of bullying is satisfactory, as is the monitoring of pupils' personal development. Attendance monitoring is good. Some aspects of health and safety and child protection, mainly related to policy, require review. However, practices are satisfactory overall.
64. The procedures for assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress are good, the monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory.
65. The monitoring of behaviour and prevention of bullying are satisfactory. The behaviour policy is out of date and does not reflect the positive approach to behaviour used in the school. No mention of the pupil-devised 'Golden Rules' is made, nor the 'Playground Friends'. The anti-bullying policy has been agreed by governors but is brief, with insufficient information for pupils, parents and staff on strategies to reduce instances of bullying or harassment. The racial equality policy is not yet agreed by the governors. The headteacher maintains a log book of any ongoing behaviour difficulties and staff inform her of any pupils that they are concerned about. Parents are informed and involved when their children have problems in keeping to the 'Golden Rules'. The school operates a 'fresh start' system so that previous unacceptable behaviour is forgotten if the pupil shows consistent improvement.
66. Child protection practices are generally satisfactory. However, the school's own policy is out of date and requires review to ensure that guidance is appropriate and reflects recent changes such as communicating with parents. Any sensitive files have properly restricted access. The designated person is trained and aware of proper practices related to child protection.
67. The new health and safety policy is in draft. This now requires reviewing to ensure that all records are updated and fully completed. There is no formal recording system for school based assessment of any potential hazards, although staff complete good,

thorough assessments when planning any school visit. The headteacher is aware of the areas for improvement.

68. Overall, the school's procedures for the assessment of pupils' academic performance are effective and information is used well to guide planning. The assessment procedures in the reception classes are thorough, and the information gathered through assessment and observations is used effectively to cater for individual needs. In Years 1 and 2, procedures are of good quality in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and in the Foundation Stage. In other foundation subjects there is scope for further development. In English and mathematics, assessment is thorough and is used well to provide the best learning opportunities for pupils, as, for example, when information is used to group pupils for teaching in these subjects. Valuable work has recently been completed to enhance assessment in information and communication technology and new procedures have been introduced. When firmly established, this will help to raise standards in the subject. As yet there are no formal assessment procedures for all subjects. Co-ordinators are aware of this area of need. The school makes appropriate provisions to meet the requirements of all those who have special educational needs, including statemented pupils and those who have been identified as gifted or talented.
69. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory, albeit mostly informal. Staff offer effective individual guidance and do amend circle time plans to suit the needs of pupils and to reinforce the school expectations. Personal, social and health education is still developing and, although well established in the Foundation Stage, is less so for the older pupils, who are not always able to keep to circle time rules. The school is aware of the need for ongoing development in relation to monitoring and recording pupils' personal development. The use of 'Playground Friends' is positive and enhances the self-esteem of those involved.
70. The assessment and monitoring procedures for pupils with English as an additional language are good in gauging the progress pupils make as well as in identifying any potential difficulties pupils may have as early as possible. There is good liaison between the headteacher who is also in charge of special educational needs, and the specialist teacher. The support given to parents is very good. The specialist teacher visits parents at home to help them understand the educational system and to feel confident in approaching the school.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

71. The school has a very good partnership with its parents and encourages their involvement in school life and activities. Parents are strongly supportive and loyal to the school, expressing enthusiastic views about their children's education. The quality of information provided for parents is good. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning is very good.
72. Parents appreciate the very high level of communication between home and school. The school works successfully to secure parental involvement; a good number of parents regularly help in classes throughout the school, and others help when they can, perhaps on school visits. Parents like the unusual 'Blue Line' pupil drop off and collection system, whereby they wait on one side of a long diagonal line as their children enter or leave school. Teachers and their classes are clearly visible and children can be quickly spotted by their parents. This system has the advantage of

providing very good informal access to staff to share information. The parents' association is very well established and provides the school with a steady cash flow to provide essential extras to enhance learning. Events such as the 'Auction of Promises' are always well attended.

73. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Newsletters are regular, interesting and provide very helpful information including diary dates and details about the curriculum. The prospectus and annual governors' report are also useful documents, but a few required items of information have been omitted. For example, whilst there is appropriate information regarding pupils with special educational needs without statements, the summary should also include the governors' policy for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. Parents are made aware that they may withdraw their children from assemblies but it is not made clear that this right extends to religious education lessons. There is insufficient detail about the content of religious education provided. Parents are offered formal meetings to discuss their children's progress and there is a very good uptake. Pupil reports meet requirements. The reports provided for the youngest children are particularly good, with clear indications of strengths and areas needing development. All reports are relevant to individual pupils, but some in Year 1 do not consistently identify targets for improvement, but concentrate on what has been taught and what pupils can do. Parents can comment about reports. No Year 2 reports were seen as they had been passed on to the junior school. Pupils do not comment about their progress, and there is little space for the headteacher to add her comments.
74. Parents are very interested in their children's progress and make every effort to attend any learning related meetings that the school holds. Parents are generally happy with the homework provided, with a main focus on literacy and numeracy. Provision of homework is satisfactory.
75. The school is rightly concerned about the dangerous car parking of some parents on the narrow lane. This was observed during inspection. Several parents parked on the restricted yellow lines and zig zags, to be as close as possible to school entrances, even though there were unrestricted spaces on the other side of the road. Others parked in the school entrance and blocked the footpath so that children and their parents had to step into the road. Visibility is very restricted as a result and is further compounded by parents turning their cars around or pulling out. This dangerous parking presents an unacceptable risk to pupils and their families and is caused entirely by parents. Concerns are expressed about this situation in newsletters.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

76. The leadership provided by the headteacher and management team is very good. The headteacher is a driving force within the school and has a very clear sense of direction and purpose, continually working to raise standards. She is very well supported by all staff who share her vision and work together well to further the aims of the school. The school is managed efficiently and, as a result, day-to-day management is effective. All staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Subject co-ordinators make a good contribution to the development of the school. They are fully aware of their important role in monitoring their subjects and in contributing to the school improvement plan and do so well even though some co-ordinators' roles are at any early stage of development.

77. The governing body is effective in supporting the work of the school. It fulfils its statutory duties through regular meetings and an appropriate committee structure. There are a few outstanding policies relating to pupil welfare that need review or have recently been updated requiring ratification. Through discussion at meetings, reports from the headteacher and other staff, and informal visits to the school, it has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. There is an active and knowledgeable committee structure including finance, health and safety and curriculum. In addition, governors have been allocated special interests and responsibilities such as special educational needs, literacy and numeracy, but these are not fully embedded, and staff and some governors are unclear about these allocations. Co-ordinators regularly attend governors' meetings to discuss specific subjects, their development and progress. Governors contribute a great deal to the school and are committed to their roles. They have a sound understanding of best value principles and apply them appropriately to financial decisions they make, ensuring that the link to the overall aim of raising standards is clear. All governors, but particularly the chair, play an important part in deciding on the school's priorities, having first considered all information available to them through the school's self-evaluation process. The current priorities are highly appropriate and take into account national priorities and initiatives, as well as the school's needs.
78. The monitoring, assessment and development of teaching and learning, a key issue at the time of the last inspection, is now improved. The good practice identified in English has now been extended to most other subjects, although some are at an early stage of development because of changes in staffing and responsibilities. A good process is now in place that takes into account data in core subjects, pupils' work, display and teachers' planning. The process is led by the headteacher, with appropriate contributions from subject leaders.
79. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator, who is fairly new to the post, provides a clear educational direction to staff and children, and the management of the Foundation Stage is good overall. Co-ordinators have a detailed file that documents school policy, guidelines, monitoring activities. Some include standards and are developing portfolios with samples of pupils' work. Additionally, co-ordinators are responsible for subject action plans that identify the main areas for focus over the year. The monitoring activities and action plans of co-ordinators are appropriate in ensuring the continuing development of the school. The majority, as yet, do not undertake monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons. The school acknowledges this as the next step in the development of the role of co-ordinators, to extend their responsibilities to evaluate strengths and areas for further training or support, particularly with a focus on recent developments in practice. The management and provision of English as an additional language are good.
80. The school's monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and taking action are very good. There are effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. These are analysed by the headteacher, reviewed rigorously and steps taken to amend provision accordingly. The action taken to meet the school's targets is effective. An example of this is the very good provision and funding commitment for extra staffing to enable the successful Supergroups' to take place. The school actively seeks to improve in all areas, with the whole team committed to raising standards and to developing the school as an effective learning community.
81. The school applies the principles of best value in its management and use of resources. In some respects this is done very well; for example, in ensuring that those who provide services to the school do so very efficiently and economically. The



school actively compares its performance against that of other schools, but is not sufficiently aware of how its costs compare to others and the reasons for any differences, as is expected by current guidance. Given pupils' average attainment on entry to the school and socio-economic circumstances, the good quality of education provided and the progress pupils make, with the resources available to it, the school provides good value for money.

82. The school's system for performance management has formalised the approach to supporting and developing staff. All staff have had development interviews and targets set with reviews planned. The system is closely linked to their job descriptions and from this year includes teaching assistants. Targets reflect the school's main aim to raise achievement, but personal and enhanced targets are also included.
83. The School Improvement Plan is the vehicle for identifying areas needing review and improvement. This is based on appropriate priorities linked to an audit of needs. The budget is now linked to this with funding sources made clear, showing good improvement from the previous inspection report. A named lead person ensures that all staff take responsibility for whole-school development. These priorities are appropriate and action is planned in a thorough and detailed way. All planned improvements relate to the school's aims and vision.
84. Educational priorities are supported well by the school's financial planning. Systems for financial administration are efficient and minimise the burden on teaching staff. Information is readily available to enable senior staff and governors to monitor spending and to inform their decisions. The school has not had a full financial audit since 1997 but interim checks have been made since then. The school reports that all points raised in the audits and interim checks have been addressed. The 'healthy' carry forward from the previous year was used well to improve staffing and the accommodation.
85. The school is appropriately staffed, with a good range of additional classroom support, and when roles and responsibilities are clear and specific in lessons this makes a substantial contribution to pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. In order to ensure that the investment in extra staffing resources gives the best value possible, the school should ensure clarity of role in the effective use of learning support assistants throughout lessons. Good role models and expertise exist within the school to support this. The school has good systems in place for inducting new staff into the school and, through a staff handbook and other documentation, provides useful information for new staff, supply teachers and students.
86. There is a very good balance of suitably qualified teachers; a number of these teachers are new to school. The staffing matches the demands of the curriculum. Most co-ordinators have a good overview of the subjects for which they are responsible. Teachers and support staff work well together as a team. There is a systematic approach to staff development. Information from performance management is used effectively to plan for staff's training needs. The school has made a large allocation of funding for the professional development of both teaching and non-teaching staff. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and the confidence in delivering the subject. However, monitoring the impact of the professional development of support staff on the quality of provision is less well developed. Two members of staff are identified as leading teachers by the local education authority, one for the Foundation Stage, the other for mathematics.

87. The quality of accommodation is now very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The final phase of building work is due to begin shortly to improve the school entrance and reception area. Children and younger pupils benefit from the purpose built new spacious learning areas. The youngest children now have a separate outside play area, although there is no fixed large play apparatus. Classrooms are roomy and inviting and staff and pupils are justifiably proud of their 'new' school. The accommodation is kept in excellent order by the caretaker and cleaning staff. Resources for learning are good and are purchased according to the school's current priorities. The high quality of pupils' work displayed around the school ensures a stimulating learning environment.
88. The school makes very good strategic use of its resources. For example, in order to teach mathematics and literacy to three classes pupils are divided into four 'Supergroups', and it was necessary to use resources to provide an extra teacher during these sessions. This has proved successful and the consequences of this decision are seen in the rising standards and high quality teaching that have resulted. Another example is the very efficient use of resources to improve the accommodation to its very good level. Grants that are provided for specific purposes are used well, for example in providing support for pupils with special educational needs.
89. The resources are good overall. The Foundation Stage is now well resourced and there have been improvements in most areas since the last inspection. In mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education, history and geography resources are satisfactory. No pupils were observed using the school library during the inspection. Religious education resources for the major world religions are good but there is a lack of resources to promote the Christian faith. The use of outside resources, including the local area, is good.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

90. In order to further improve this good school, the headteacher, staff and governors should work together to:

1. Develop the role of learning support assistants in supporting teaching and learning, to that of the best, so that they are fully involved throughout lessons.

(Paragraph 35, 44, 82, 85, 86, 137)

2. Extend the role of subject co-ordinators to include observations of teaching and learning as appropriate.

(Paragraph 31, 76, 79, 113, 128, 138, 147, 152, 161, 169, 173, 176)

3. Embed and further develop the school's assessment new procedures so that they extend to all subjects.

(Paragraph 46, 68, 78, 137, 147, 156, 162, 168, 173, 176)

**As well as these key issues, the governors may wish to include the following minor issues in their action plan:**

- i Ensure that all policies relating to pupil welfare are brought into line with statutory requirements and are put in place, with systematic review and ratification by the governing body.

(Paragraph 63, 65, 77)

- ii Review the management of behaviour, outside of lessons, to ensure improvement of the minority of pupils who do not adhere to the 'Golden Rules'.

(Paragraph 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 41, 44, 60, 61, 65, 110, 125, 172)

The school is already aware of the above areas for improvement and aspects of these are featured in the School Improvement Plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

48

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

46

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	7	27	9	1	0	0
Percentage	8	15	56	19	2	0	0

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	249
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	22

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	40

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
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	39	43	82

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	33	38
	Girls	39	41	42
	Total	71	74	80
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (85)	90 (87)	98 (93)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	38	38
	Girls	40	42	42
	Total	72	80	80
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (85)	98 (92)	98 (95)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
126	0	0
0	0	0
10	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
15	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)	10.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30:1
Average class size	27

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	187

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	575318
Total expenditure	566802
Expenditure per pupil	2313.47
Balance brought forward from previous year	58490
Balance carried forward to next year	67006

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	247
Number of questionnaires returned	98

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	26	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	34	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	37	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	43	10	2	0
The teaching is good.	67	31	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	37	7	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	31	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	29	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	49	43	5	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	72	24	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	29	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	18	29	9	27

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents were very supportive of the school in the questionnaires and the meeting with inspectors, although 38 per cent indicated the area for improvement in the table above. Inspection findings consider that the school provides a suitable range of activities outside of lessons, usually linked to current themes and topics, which are similar to that of other infant schools. The inspection agrees with all their positive feelings about the school.

### Other issues raised by parents

Some parents are concerned about parking at the end of the school day.



## **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**

91. Children receive a good start to their education in the reception classes. The staff in reception classes all work well together as a team to create an exciting, safe and secure place where learning is made fun and care and respect for each other are valued and nurtured. A carefully planned induction programme and the learning environment enable all children to settle in quickly to the general routines and they are happy to come to school.
92. The previous inspection judged that sound progress was made for children in the reception classes and that teaching was sound and often good. It is now good overall. There were criticisms made of the facilities for outdoor learning. Very considerable improvements have been made in this area and there is now a well-planned outdoor play area, which is used effectively to enhance the children's physical development. The school has plans to improve this even further.
93. Many children enter the reception classes with basic skills that are broadly in line with what is expected of children of this age. The good quality of teaching and the wide range of experiences they receive during the reception year ensure that they make good progress, and their attainment at the end of reception is above those expected of the Early Learning Goals in almost all areas of learning.
94. The school has made good progress in improving the standard of provision since the last inspection. The accommodation and organisation of the learning environment help children to make very good progress in developing their independent skills and prepare them well for the next stage in their education. The staff are knowledgeable about how young children learn and they use this knowledge well to create a good balance between child initiated and adult directed activities. However, lack of planning for the child initiated activities with a clear indication of adults' role, and the focus for observation results in missed opportunities to extend children's learning in many of these sessions. The assessment procedures in reception classes are thorough, and the information gathered through assessment and observations is used effectively to cater for individual needs. As a result, all children, including those with special education needs and those who are gifted and talented, make good progress and achieve their full potential. The school has very good systems in place to involve parents in their children's learning. Good links are established with other schools and settings to share good practice. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator, who is fairly new to the post, provides a clear educational direction to staff and children and the management of the Foundation Stage is good, overall.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

95. Children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. They are given many opportunities to make choices and take responsibilities for their actions. They learn to work as part of a group, taking turns and sharing ideas and resources whether in negotiating roles when building Noah's ark or sharing their ideas on how to write instructions to make scrambled egg. Children are confident in choosing what they want to do and show a growing awareness of class rules on caring for others and the school property. They are eager to try new things. All adults provide very good role models for children. Expectations are high, and relationships are very good. The very good opportunities to talk about their feelings and that of

others through stories help their emotional development. They partake in class discussions with enthusiasm, often suggesting their own ideas to the questions posed by the teacher. In these situations the teachers take on board children's suggestions and develop them further. This helps children to build their confidence and their self-esteem. The good teaching in this area of learning enables children to achieve well and they are well on their way, attaining beyond the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave reception classes.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

96. The teaching and learning in communication, language and literacy are good and children make good progress. Most children speak clearly and confidently. They listen carefully to teachers' instructions and questions and are eager to contribute to class discussions, but sometimes the enthusiasm results in children forgetting the need to listen to others. Gentle reminders from teachers on these occasions bring them back to focus on the need to listen. Carefully organised role play areas and other activities enable children to use language to clarify their thinking and recreate experiences; for example, the skilful questioning by the teacher helped a group of children who were recreating the story of Noah's ark to discuss and modify their strategies on how to go about making the ark safer. Although there are some good examples where teachers use opportunities to extend children's thinking, there are missed opportunities where carefully planned adult focus could help children to clarify their thoughts and extend their learning further.
97. Elements of the National Literacy Strategy are introduced gradually and effectively to develop children's reading and writing skills. Opportunities to share books with each other and with adults are very good. They show enthusiasm and interest in sharing the book with teachers in whole-class sessions. Teachers use these sessions well to consolidate and extend children's reading skills. Many are confident in identifying specific features of punctuation like full stops, capital letters and question marks. All children can identify a title. Most children can read simple text and are beginning to use their knowledge about letter sounds and picture clues to work out unfamiliar words. The higher attaining children can read fluently and confidently. They can identify favourite stories and characters they have read in the past. They can talk about which part of the book they liked best and why. The children who are less able and those who have special educational needs can talk about the pictures as they share the book with adults. All children are encouraged to take books home to share with their parents. The strategies used to develop children's reading skills and their enjoyment in reading is very good. They are well on their way to attaining beyond the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception class.
98. Children use their knowledge about letter sounds, known words and marks as they attempt to write for different purposes; for example, writing the recipe for a gingerbread man, making a class book about their favourite story characters or writing a shopping list. Teachers and support staff act as scribes and develop children's interests in writing. The higher attaining children are beginning to write simple sentences, using their knowledge about spelling patterns and punctuation. They are beginning to understand the use of full stops and capital letters. Most children can sequence the stories and events using pictures. They are beginning to form recognisable letters, and the strategies to develop their handwriting are very good. All children make good progress in this aspect of communication, language and literacy. They are well on their way in attaining the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave reception classes, with a large number attaining beyond this.

## **Mathematical development**

99. Children are provided with a range of activities to support their learning in this area. Teaching is good. A variety of strategies and resources such as stories, rhymes and games are used to make learning of mathematics fun for young children and they make good progress. The staff in reception classes use aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy effectively to build on and extend children's mathematical skills.
100. Most children can count up to 20 confidently. They are beginning to recognise and write numerals up to ten. They can work out one more than a given number involving numerals up to nine confidently in practical situations. The higher attaining children can work out one more than and one less than a number from one to ten confidently and are beginning work out numbers higher than ten. They are beginning to understand counting on to work out the total number of objects in two sets. Strategies to develop children's understanding of mathematical vocabulary are very good whether it is working out days of the week or creating the movements of different animals in the dance session. There is a good balance between the adult directed and child initiated activities to develop and extend children's mathematical skills. However, more clearly planned adult roles and focused observations in some of the child initiated activities would further enhance the good strategies already in place to assess and extend children's learning. Most children are able to compare weight and size, and can recognise the common two-dimensional shapes. The majority are well on their way to attaining beyond the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

101. The teaching and learning in this area are good overall. Well-planned activities encourage children to use their senses to make sense of the world around them. For example, they use their senses well when investigating objects and materials. They can talk about how the earthworm looks and feels like. They can talk about and record patterns and seasonal changes they have observed around their school through pictures and words. They choose the materials and tools and use them effectively to design and make their models. Staff use the outdoor area effectively to attract children's curiosity and interest. Teachers use their questioning strategies effectively to enable children to observe and find out how things happen and explain why. For example, in one of the sessions observed the teacher used questioning strategies effectively to focus children's attention on what happened to eggs after cooking. They could tell the teacher that, "It has gone lumpy", and that the butter has disappeared because it melted with the heat. They are given opportunities to learn about their culture and those of others through stories and assemblies. They can use the computer confidently to draw pictures. They have very good control of the cursor and they can use the different icons to choose the tools they need to develop their pictures. Most children have a good understanding of the world around them. They are well on their way to attaining the Early Learning Goals in most aspects by the time they leave the reception class. In exploration and investigation and in design and making they are set to exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals.

## **Physical development**

102. The provision for children's physical development is good. The school has improved the provision for outdoor play and plans are in place to further develop this to offer children opportunities to use large equipment. They have regular access to a soft,

safety surface play area and wheeled toys. The outdoor area is organised well to offer children opportunities to extend the skills they have learned indoors about space, mobility and co-ordination as well as to develop their natural curiosity to explore their environment. In one of the sessions observed where children were playing with wheeled toys, the learning support assistant joined in by taking the role of managing the traffic signals. This encouraged the children to observe the code and refine their skills in using wheeled toys safely, negotiating space effectively, stopping and moving on in accordance with the signals received. The teaching and learning in this area are good, with some very good lessons observed during the inspection. Through carefully planned dance lessons children are learning how to create different movements and actions in response to the music. In one of these sessions observed children could move with confidence, control and imagination to create the different movements of the animals. They show increasing control and confidence in using tools and construction materials. The majority of children are set to reach beyond the expected levels of the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception classes.

### **Creative development**

103. Children are encouraged to develop their creative skills through a range of activities such as art, roleplay and music. The opportunities children have to develop their ideas by exploring different materials and methods are good. Their drawing and paintings show that they can choose the appropriate colours and use the lines to add detail to their pictures. Their drawings of spring flowers show how they have used shapes, lines and colours to create what they have observed. The quality of their observational drawing is well above those expected of them at this stage. They join in with the singing with confidence. They can negotiate roles and use the resources well to create props to support and develop a theme to their play. The teaching and learning in this area are good. Children are well on their way attaining the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception class. In some aspects, such as exploring media and materials they are well on their way attaining beyond the expectations of the Early Learning Goals.

### **ENGLISH**

104. Standards seen in English, for those pupils aged seven, are in line with the national average overall. This largely confirms the test results for 2002, where the number of pupils reaching average grades in writing was in line with expectations and above average in reading. An above average percentage of pupils scored highly in reading and a below average percentage of pupils scored highly in writing. The school has rightly identified writing as an area for development and has worked hard to ensure that this is no longer the case, partly by setting the pupils into ability groups ('Supergroups') for some of their literacy sessions. This is proving very successful. The very high number of pupils who move in and out of the school during their time at Downs View has a direct influence on these results, which do not in themselves reflect the overall good quality of teaching and learning.
105. Pupils enter the school with average skills in both speaking and listening. Standards of attainment in speaking remain satisfactory. Listening skills are generally satisfactory as well, although some pupils find it difficult to listen quietly in large groups (especially some Year 2 pupils during assemblies). Speaking and listening are developed in a number of different lessons from science in Year 1 to religious education in Year 2. The circle times are having a useful impact in teaching the pupils

to listen carefully to others and to take turns when speaking. The use of 'talking partners' is developing well in many classes, reinforcing the benefits of discussion.

106. Overall standards in reading are good. There is a sound range of reading books, although some of the scheme books are outdated. A few pupils talked confidently about what they were reading, books in general and some recognised the name of an author and named other books he had written. Books are regularly taken home, most parents listen to their children read and comment and sign their child's reading records. Most pupils have books of their own at home and many belong to a local public library. No pupils were observed using the school library during the inspection. Many pupils are building a good knowledge of phonics as a result of appropriately focused teaching.
107. The quality of writing is generally satisfactory. Most pupils take care of how they write, and this results in neat work, with joined handwriting when appropriate and an awareness of the rules of spelling. Their writing shows variety, both factual (as when writing about owls) and fiction. The 'Supergroups' ensure that all pupils have work which is appropriate to their abilities, and this has a very positive effect on their progress.
108. Pupils with special educational needs receive generally good support and make good progress appropriate for their abilities. Their tasks are often specially targeted and sometimes a support helper ensures that they are able to achieve within the same work set for others.
109. All classrooms have literacy displays, which reinforce and celebrate what has been done. These include a display in Year 2 where the pupils have 'read a book and made a list of the key words'. Then they 'put them in alphabetical order and finally ... made a glossary'. Some interesting factual writing includes character descriptions from 'Cinderella'. Literacy is reinforced and extended through other subjects; for example, in an information and communication technology lesson with a special educational needs group, where pupils wordprocessed their stories about 'The Hippo who came to Tea'; in writing about the Fire of London and Florence Nightingale during history lessons; and linking with mathematics in a lesson where the pupils used co-ordinates.
110. Pupils are invariably enthusiastic during their lessons and these attitudes have a positive impact on their learning. In all lessons observed, their attitudes and behaviour were good or better. Pupils concentrate on their tasks and co-operate with each other, taking turns and sharing. In some lessons pupils help their friends with spelling. Most work hard and enjoy learning.
111. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has helped teachers to focus on those specific steps of learning necessary for pupils to develop their understanding. The quality of assessment is very good. Formal assessments are used well and day-to-day assessment and lesson evaluations are used consistently to inform and adapt planning. Regular marking is thorough and effective, with praise and reinforcement of what has been done, such as, 'What an informative piece of writing', and consolidating suggesting learning, such as, 'Remember finger spaces'.
112. All of the teaching is good or better, with more than a quarter of lessons very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. This high quality teaching has a direct impact on the pupils' learning, and is responsible for the standards across the school. This is exemplified in most lessons, where learning

objectives are shared with the pupils during the lesson so that the pupils know what is to be covered. Teachers have high expectations and often give time constraints to add pace. In many lessons the teacher's enthusiasm is infectious and there is obvious enjoyment. Constant reinforcement is given through praise and encouragement and this is very effective in building the pupils' confidence. For example, 'Well done. You've put your hand up'. Questioning skills are generally good and there were a number of lessons observed where this extended the pupils' learning. 'What did you find difficult about this task?', for instance, reinforces what has been learned and what still needs to be done.

113. Although she is relatively new to the post, the co-ordinator is already having a positive impact on the subject. She is enthusiastic and is well aware of the strengths within the subject, as well as identifying those improvements still needed. This commitment, coupled with what has already been done in auditing resources, gives every confidence that standards in English will continue to rise. The Literacy Action Plan rightly highlights the need to improve pupils' listening and writing skills. Individual and group targets for improvement are being identified and this process should be fully in place by the new school year. In one Year 2 class pupils already have these written in the front of their exercise books. The quality and quantity of resources are good and these are used appropriately by both teachers and pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

114. Pupils' current attainment by Year 2 is at the expected level for their age. This broadly echoes the picture given by national test results, which show an improving trend since the last inspection. There are indications that standards are rising further, as a result of the very effective teaching of Year 2 pupils in 'Supergroups' (in these lessons pupils are grouped according to their capability and prior attainment).
115. Year 2 pupils' written work is well presented and shows a thorough coverage of the curriculum. They have a good understanding of place value. They show a sound knowledge of halves and quarters. In lessons, pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs, show that they are developing good investigative skills. For example, the most capable group explored number patterns at a high level for their age, while the least capable made very good progress as they explored ways of making ten by adding two numbers. Many pupils are developing the ability to perform mental calculations to a good standard. For example, the most capable pupils were able to calculate the difference between 29 and 92 mentally. Year 1 pupils experience a good quality curriculum and make good progress, for example as they learn about the properties of three-dimensional shapes through hands-on investigation and discussion. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are extended well in mathematics lessons. For example, when they are asked to explain how they arrived at a particular answer by mental calculation. Information and communication technology skills are used effectively in mathematics, for example in collecting and using data about class preferences.
116. The teaching of mathematics is a particular strength. Lessons are often very good or excellent, particularly when Year 2 pupils are taught in their 'Supergroups', but high quality teaching is also found in Year 1 teaching. Features observed in the best quality lessons include high quality relationships, planning and teaching methods, very good pace and well-chosen activities that maximise the opportunities for independent learning. These factors combine very effectively so that pupils of all capabilities make rapid progress, signalling rising standards, particularly in investigative skills and

independent learning. A key factor in the success of the 'Supergroup' lessons is the fact that teachers are able to plan learning for the needs of one particular group and match the pace and challenge of the whole lesson accordingly.

117. Pupils respond very well to the high quality teaching, often showing real excitement and complete involvement in their learning, leading to sustained periods of hard work and concentration.
118. The high number of pupils who move in and out of the school during their time at Downs View has a direct influence on the end of key stage results, which do not in themselves reflect the overall good quality of teaching and learning.
119. The subject co-ordinator is very effective in her role. She has a clear view of standards of attainment and analyses all available information carefully, providing information to teaching colleagues on where improvement is needed. Pupils' attainment is regularly assessed, and the information is used well to ensure that they are set work at a level that will challenge them. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced, and is used well to promote learning. The deployment of teaching staff to the 'Supergroups' is a very good example of the effective use of the school's resources.

## **SCIENCE**

120. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in science are above national expectations across all Programmes of Study. Taking account of pupils' average attainment when they enter the school, pupils make sound progress in the Foundation Stage and good progress in Key Stage 1, where pupils achieve standards above those achieved in similar schools. This is mainly due to the very good teaching in both Years 1 and 2, where the most recent assessments in 2002 confirm that standards are above the national average and similar schools. Performance in science has improved since the last inspection, particularly in pupils' ability to undertake investigations and in their knowledge and understanding of physical processes.
121. Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with an average knowledge of the world around them. In reception they have opportunities to learn from an appropriate range of science experiences. They gain an understanding of the variety of plant and animal life and of features that explain differences in the weather. On entry into Key Stage 1 their attainment is above that expected. Pupils in Year 1 gain a good understanding of scientific knowledge and learn the first principles of scientific investigation. For example, they understand that heat can change a solid to liquid and can observe similarities and differences between different materials and textures.
122. During lessons observed, in Year 1 pupils are beginning to understand vibration and sound through investigating and identifying different ways in which musical instruments make sound. Good links were made to music and design and technology, so that pupils showed that they know and understand that instruments can be grouped into those that you pluck, shake, scrape, strike or shake and made musical instruments to demonstrate how they work. Good opportunities are made to make connections to a range of different cultures and variety of instruments from around the world through this theme.
123. Pupils in Year 2 also make good progress, while some high ability pupils make very good progress. All investigate the properties of different materials, make predictions,

note changes and classify how any observed changes are reversible or not. Recorded diagrams illustrate a good understanding from all pupils of how an electric circuit is connected and tested.

124. Resources are chosen very well to demonstrate key concepts and to promote high motivation, particularly to engage boys. This was an area identified as a result of school assessment analysis that shows that the girls have improved at a faster rate than the boys in science since the previous inspection. An example of very good use of such resources was seen during a lesson on forces. The use of 'Ernest' the balancing bear, resulted in pupils being fully engaged and offering suggestions as to how and why the bear only balances with its sticks. The higher ability pupils respond particularly well to challenging questions that make them think, encourage them to express their own ideas and to find solutions.
125. The quality of teaching is very good overall with some excellent teaching observed in Year 2. In these classes, pupils want to learn through interesting activities. Instructions are very clear and the teachers are skilful at asking questions that challenge pupils' thinking and concentrate on central areas for learning. In the very best lessons teachers are very good at managing pupils by the effective way they deal with behaviour and by the very good pace of lessons, which generally leave little room for pupils to lose concentration. In other lessons some learning support assistants do not have the same high expectations for standards of work, pace and concentration, and, as a result, progress and work presentation are not as good as they could be, particularly with groups that require more support. Activities are very well planned and challenge both the higher and lower attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language make good progress throughout the school. Teachers plan well for individual needs and pupils' learning is supported, where necessary, by additional staff. In the best lessons, teachers and learning support staff work very well as a team as a result of shared high expectations and a thorough understanding of respective roles in ensuring the highest standards in all aspects of work and behaviour.
126. Pupils' attitudes to science are very good throughout the school. They enjoy work and like to participate in practical activities. They generally pay attention and like to talk about what they have learned. Pupils of all ages co-operate well in pairs or groups and discuss and record information they have collected. Behaviour is good. Older pupils have learned the safety rules they need to undertake practical work. They also show a good degree of scientific curiosity.
127. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and sometimes provides guidance on how improvements can be made. Assessment of pupils' work is done at the end of each unit of work and recorded. New procedures have recently been put in place to assess pupils' attainment in scientific enquiry. As a result of good leadership by the co-ordinator, team co-operation and planning scientific investigations are now planned thematically across the year.
128. The co-ordinator monitors planning and pupils' work, but needs further opportunities to monitor teaching and ensure the progressive extension of investigation, teaching and learning within the subject. She is very able, having excellent subject knowledge, and has a good understanding of her role and the strengths and areas for development within this subject.



## ART AND DESIGN

129. The teaching of art and design alternates half-termly with design and technology.
130. Provision for art and design at the school has improved since the last inspection and standards are now often above age expectations, being good overall. Standards of attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage and in Year 1 are above national expectations in several aspects of art, for example, observational drawings, paintings, textiles and collage. Little evidence was available during the inspection of individual pupils' work over time. Pupils' work on display, in the new subject portfolio and discussion with pupils provided information about standards in art and design.
131. Work seen shows that from the Foundation Stage the majority of pupils use well-developed painting and drawing skills to execute good quality observational drawings and paintings, for example, spring flowers in the reception class. Collage work with a variety of media is used in comparing old and new houses in Year 1, showing many features including the detail of the windows and a good understanding of proportion. Pupils across the school use good control and knowledge of the effects of brush strokes in their self-portrait paintings modelled on a variety of techniques inspired by the artists Klee and Picasso. Pupils in Year 1 have a well-developed sense of pattern and contrasting colours, which they combine to make effective mosaic-style pictures, and they can also weave paper strips, raffia and wool in their textile designs. Multicultural links are strong; for example, photographs of women in Peru, Mexico and Iran weaving cloth for clothes and carpets made on the different types of looms illustrated similar tasks to their own. Appropriate explanation is given alongside the display linked to the study of materials and the pupils' own weaving in different styles. These also make good connections to science work on materials.
132. Teaching in lessons seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall, one third being good and two thirds satisfactory. This does not reflect the improving quality of work seen from the work scrutiny. Strengths in teaching are evident in the Foundation Stage and in Year 1 where teachers are more confident in the subject. In the best lessons seen teachers' good subject knowledge ensures skills development is demonstrated, techniques are introduced or revisited, activities are very well planned and provide for independent thought and creativity. Support staff are well briefed, have a clear understanding of their role and support pupils in developing their own ideas and creativity within the theme. This was the case in Year 1 when making Mothers' Day cards when a basic design idea was shared. A key aspect of the work was also to provide a three-dimensional effect re-enforcing a key hinge technique previously introduced with their 'porthole' paintings. Good explanations and questioning skills are well matched to the wide range of abilities. In the most recent work by Year 2, pupils make representational pictures of fruit made with pastels as part of the class 'Tile catalogue'. Some of these are used appropriately as a plan for individual clay tiles being developed as part of a tile mural for the main hall, the theme being 'Fruits of the world'. These higher ability pupils develop good quality textured designs representing their planned ideas well. The learning support assistant manages her focus group well, encouraging and prompting ideas for design and techniques that might be used but allowing pupils to use their own ideas independently.
133. Less successful features of lessons in Year 2 are when resources are provided within the constraint of a prescribed model for Mothers' Day cards, for example, a tissue paper flower. Pupils cut out petals, stem and/or flowerpot and all produce the same. There is little scope for independent ideas, and adults, although well

intentioned, are over directive. This was an action highlighted for improvement during the last inspection and therefore should still be a focus for improvement in some classes.

134. Progress is usually good during practical sessions when teachers are effective at identifying where pupils need support and work with them, sometimes in a focused group for further explanation or demonstration. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language and those with special education needs, enjoy the practical tasks and work well on their own and in groups.
135. Pupils talk with enjoyment and enthusiasm about their work in art and design. Their knowledge and understanding are developing well, for example, they have some knowledge of well-known artists such as Klee, Picasso and Mondrian.
136. Pupils' work is displayed well throughout the school. This sets high expectations and provides a good quality learning environment. Work on display shows that pupils are given the opportunity to develop a good range of skills in art and design. They have worked with a sculptor to make three-dimensional sculptures. They have used various techniques such as weaving, painting and collage, and use computer programs such as Colour Magic to design and print pictures. This supports their development in both information and communication technology and art. Art is used effectively in a variety of contexts to support work across the curriculum, such as science and the design theme incorporating life drawing inspired by Cézanne and cross sections of fruit, made by Year 2 pupils. Observational drawings show good development of skills from the end of the Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2. However, assessment to inform progression and identifying next steps in learning, in form and the range of media and of techniques used is limited.
137. The issues outlined in the previous inspection report have been largely addressed through the implementation of a subject action plan and the recent introduction of schemes of work to improve balance and progression across the school through topics. A good start has been made in compiling a portfolio of work to provide an overview of coverage and a source of ideas to improve teacher subject knowledge. Whilst good practice exists, there is still a lack of consistency across classes, particularly in Year 2, in ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to use their own initiative and select resources independently. This is particularly relevant to explicit planning and understanding of respective roles for all adults involved in lessons. Assessment is underdeveloped to plan for the next steps in learning, particularly in skill development.
138. The enthusiastic and capable art co-ordinator has been in post for a year. Although her role is at an early stage of development, she has a good understanding of the future needs within art in the school. The art and design policy has been revised and this is now supported by useful guidance that explains the requirements of the subject. Useful resource packs have been developed to support teachers with themes and to improve their subject knowledge, for example, portrait theme. There is every indication that there is good capacity to further improve and develop art to the highest of standards.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

139. The teaching of design and technology is alternated half-termly with art and design. As no design and technology lessons were taught during the week of the inspection,

- pupils' work in books and on display, discussion with pupils and the co-ordinator provided useful information about standards in this subject.
140. Standards attained by pupils are above national expectations for this age by the end of Year 2. There are particular strengths in the strong links made with science and other subjects. The progress made by all pupils, including pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs, is good. Standards and progress have, therefore, improved since the last inspection when they were satisfactory.
  141. The youngest children learn to cut and stick using a variety of joining techniques. They are able to make good plans and models. In Year 1, pupils construct model houses complete with walls, doors and windows in collage and using construction kits. These and clay house designs link the theme of 'Houses' very well to aspects of history, geography, art and science. Higher attaining pupils work well together and explain how they refined constructions and explain features of their design.
  142. In Year 2, pupils are able to build on this good start to design and make a range of models for a specific use. For example, they have made hand puppets and more able pupils give good explanations of how they have adapted their ideas and of what they would do differently to improve. All label their plans or drawings with the relevant parts and make lists of the materials they intend to use. Lower attaining pupils achieve this with help. Year 2 pupils described a very successful project when talking about their classroom display of 'Incy Wincy Spider' models. They describe how to make and use a winding action to allow the spider to climb up the waterspout on their model houses. They give impressive explanations of why they made their own individual design and chose specific resources. For example, one girl explains that she chose to make a pom-pom spider, others chose tissue paper. Accurate descriptions were given as to the strength of tape necessary to ensure adequate fix of the spiders' legs to its body. They use appropriate technical vocabulary such as axle or levers and sliders to move the sun and the rain, and how some pupils used a split pin to turn the sun and rain.
  143. Throughout Key Stage 1, pupils have good opportunities to model their ideas by experimenting with a good range of construction kits. They do so successfully and make good progress in the basic principles of developing, planning and communicating ideas.
  144. No judgement can be made for teaching overall as design and technology was not taught during the half term of the inspection. However, scrutiny of work in pupils' books, on display, models in classrooms and discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator all indicate that teaching is at least good and activities are very well planned. Good explanations and questioning are well matched to interactive displays to cater for the full range of abilities; for example, 'Toys with Winding mechanisms. Do you know where the axle is?' Work sampling also clearly demonstrates high expectations in learning; for example Year 2 teachers expect pupils to explain their reasoning when evaluating products.
  145. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language, show evidence of enjoying the practical activities and systematically plan and record the process at an appropriate level for their age and stage of development. Lower attaining pupils find recording of their planning and developing their ideas more difficult.

146. The co-ordinator is effective at leading the development of the subject. She is a very good role model in subject expertise and most particularly in supporting links with other subjects through team planning; this is a strength. There are demonstrable improvements since the last inspection when standards were in line with national expectations; they are now above average. This has been achieved through providing more structure through the use of schemes of work to improve balance and progression across the school through topics. Pupils are now developing a good ability to evaluate their own work from the youngest children in the Foundation Stage, for example, in the Bridges theme in which a range of different types of construction for 'real' bridges linked to the story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff.'
147. The role of the co-ordinator has been further developed; she has a good overview of the subject through the monitoring of teachers' plans and pupils' work but does not yet monitor teaching and learning in classes. At present there is no file for assessment but plans are in place for formalising new assessment systems being trialled across year group teams. This is good as it will aid moderation of teacher assessment judgements, inform strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

148. It was only possible to observe one geography lesson and that was in Year 2. Scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and discussions with pupils indicate that by the age of seven, pupils attain standards that are in line with the national expectations. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection.
149. The good start pupils make in reception classes is effectively extended in Year 1 by clearly focusing on specific features of their school ground and its immediate locality. In a discussion with a group of Year 1 pupils, they can talk about specific features they have noticed on their walk around the school ground. They can use appropriate vocabulary to explain some of the local features they have observed, like the car park, the playground and the field next to the school. They are beginning to identify features of the school they like and dislike and state reasons for their choices. For example, one of the pupils pointed out that she doesn't like the mobile classrooms because they are away from the main building and are 'ugly'. They can draw plans of their journey from home to school and identify specific buildings and landmarks they pass on their way. In Year 2, pupils are beginning to use the map of the local area to identify the street in which they live, and use the keys to identify specific features of the locality. In a discussion with pupils, most of them could identify that Kennington is in Kent and that Kent is in England. The higher attaining pupils could identify the different regions of the United Kingdom. Also, in Year 2, pupils' understanding is extended to locality outside their area. Pupils show good knowledge about the countries they have researched. For example, in a discussion with a group of Year 2 pupils, they could describe some of the geographical features of the islands they have studied. They can talk about the lives of people in these islands and compare them with their own. They are beginning to understand the impact of human actions on the environment. They can recall some of the information they have learned through the story of 'Timmy turtle' about how the pollution created by man affected the turtle population. All pupils in both year groups make sound progress in all aspects of geography. The progress in knowledge and understanding of places is good. By the age of seven the majority of pupils achieve standards that are in line with the national expectations, with a number achieving beyond this in knowledge and understanding of places.

150. It was only possible to observe one lesson and therefore no overall judgement can be made about the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching observed in Year 2 was very good. The very good questioning strategies and the careful choice of resources helped pupils to develop their skills in geographical enquiry and raised their enthusiasm in learning. As a result they made very good progress.
151. Sound links are established between geography and other subjects. Teachers use these sessions well to extend pupils' writing skills. Although there are some examples of the use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' geographical enquiry, this is an area where the school needs to improve further.
152. The school uses national guidance for the medium-term planning. The medium-term planning shows breadth and balance between different aspects of the subject as well as between the two year groups. This is an improvement from the last inspection. Teachers use the intentions identified in the medium-term planning to assess and record pupils' attainment and progress at the end of each unit. The range and quality of resources are adequate and the staff and pupils make effective use of these. The co-ordinator has the opportunity to monitor the standards by scrutinising pupils' work and talking to pupils. However, she has had no opportunity so far to monitor the quality of teaching and learning or work alongside other colleagues. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable about the subject and she provides good educational direction for staff and pupils.

## **HISTORY**

153. No lessons in history were taking place at the time of the inspection. The scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' medium-term planning and a discussion with pupils indicate that pupils make sound progress in both year groups and by the age of seven standards in history are in line with those expected of their age nationally.
154. The school has made good progress in addressing all the points raised in the last inspection.
155. The school now uses national guidance to plan for medium-term. The medium-term planning and scrutiny of pupils' work show continuity and progression between the two year groups.
156. Teachers use the expectations identified at the end of each unit to assess and identify pupils for extension work and those who need support. Although this is in its early stage of development, it is used effectively to plan for the next stage in pupils' learning.
157. The school has increased some of the resources and uses Maidstone museum's project loan to further enhance the provision. Plans are in hand for the outreach worker from the museum to work with Year 1 pupils later on in the year.
158. Most pupils have a sound understanding of how things have changed with the passage of time. Year 1 pupils, for example, are learning to look at clues when comparing old and new buildings and objects. They can talk about how life was like in olden days. Pupils talked extensively about how people used to make toast and how they used to boil water using fire because there was no electricity at that time. By the time they reach Year 2 they are beginning to understand how past can be represented

in different ways. During a discussion with a group of pupils in Year 2, they were able to identify how they could find out about the past through books, visits to the museum and through the use of information and communication technology. They have a good understanding of people and events from the past they have studied. They knew who Florence Nightingale was and how the Fire of London was started.

159. No lessons were observed and therefore no overall judgement can be made about the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of pupils' work and teachers' marking are good indications of the high expectations teachers have of their pupils. Pupils take pride in their work and their work is always well presented. The discussion with pupils from both year groups shows their enthusiasm for the subject.
160. History lessons are used well to develop skills in other areas of the curriculum. The opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills are particularly good.
161. The co-ordinator has taken over the responsibility since September 2002. She had the opportunity to monitor the coverage of the subject through auditing teachers' planning and the displays around the school. Plans are in hand to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the summer term. She has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The management of the subject is good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

162. Pupils' attainment is at the expected level in Year 2; standards have been maintained since the last inspection throughout the increasing demands of the curriculum since that time. This success is largely due to the efforts of the co-ordinator who has worked very hard to improve the quality of provision that the school makes, and to keep up with the changing demands of the subject. The school is in the process of improving the amount of equipment available to pupils, in line with national guidance. Another important development is the recent introduction of a good quality system for assessment developed by the co-ordinator. As this system becomes embedded, and the amount of equipment improves, it is likely that there will be a rise in standards of attainment.
163. Pupils' completed work is often of good quality and shows that the curriculum is well covered and that information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning in other subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils have conducted a survey of preferences for different styles of school uniform. The results have been presented graphically in different forms and used to answer questions such as, "How many more people liked the most popular than the least popular design?" Pupils have used word processing to good effect to present their stories, and are learning how to write instruction sequences for programmable toys so that they will follow a track on a map that they have created. Year 1 pupils have used software to write their names with good graphic impact, and to combine text and images. They are learning how to use word banks effectively.
164. The standard of completed work shows that pupils often benefit from good teaching. Sound teaching with some notable strengths was seen during the inspection. Teachers identify the particular needs of pupils and, working with teaching assistants, ensure that work is matched accordingly. For example, a pupil with poor 'mouse' control was identified and given good support to help her to improve. Teachers give effective introductions to new software to the whole class, for example when showing pupils how to use a word bank. Plenary sessions are also effective in helping pupils

to consolidate their learning. Progress in developing information and communication technology skills is limited in some whole-class lessons because the small number of computers available to pupils means that relatively few have first-hand opportunities to use the equipment during the lesson. However, the school reports that pupils are given time to develop their skills on other occasions. The planned increase of the amount of equipment available will help to provide more opportunities for pupils. Teachers' questioning of pupils about their work is effective and well planned.

165. The curriculum is well supported by guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work. The school has made good use of training and development initiatives to support learning.

## **MUSIC**

166. The standard in music is generally in line with what would normally be expected of pupils of this age. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress throughout the school. This reflects the findings for the subject during the last inspection.
167. The standard of singing in assemblies is satisfactory. In the only music lesson seen and in an English lesson in Year 2, pupils sang enthusiastically without accompaniment. They are given opportunities to play tuned instruments, as in a dance/music lesson in Year 1, practising and refining their performances.
168. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of seven, they have composed music and experimented with different ways of recording this. They identify what could improve what they have done, "How could this be better?". They have looked at different sounds, linking very effectively with their science topic. Here they consider the sounds from those made by a baby to those on a building site. They make musical instruments, linking with design and technology, and play them. The QCA 'end of unit' assessments are used effectively to record pupils' understanding, identifying those pupils who are achieving above or below the average.
169. Too few lessons were observed during the inspection to make a judgement on the quality of teaching although, as pupils' standards are in line, it is judged as satisfactory. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, but is given no time at present to monitor the teaching of music. She supports staff and ensures that the subject is covered in all classes effectively. Resources are good and are used sensibly. There is an attractive display which shows musical instruments from different countries around the world and another, linked to science, showing 'How sounds are made'. Pupils benefit from a number of visiting musicians from different cultures, including Zimbabwe and the Caribbean.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

170. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 is at the expected level, based on the evidence of the only lesson seen in this year group during the inspection. This lesson focused on the development of skills for games. Pupils make good progress and are developing sound ball control skills as they practise dribbling, stopping and turning. They work well together and good relationships are maintained. A few pupils have very good levels of skill. Year 1 pupils make good progress as they improvise dance movements to Tchaikovsky's 'Swan Lake' with additional accompaniment provided by

other children. They are able to evaluate their own and each other's performances and make suggestions for improvement. For example, one pupil felt that the facial expressions of the dancers could be improved to convey better the mood of the music.

171. Teaching is of good quality in most lessons. Where it is good, teachers have high expectations and plan their lessons well so that a good pace can be maintained throughout. In some lessons, the pace of learning slows when too much time is spent on organisation and too little is spent actually carrying out activities. Steady progress results when pupils are set increasingly difficult tasks. For example, when Year 1 pupils were required to kick a ball at progressively smaller targets during the lesson. In some lessons, pupils with higher levels of skill are asked to demonstrate them to the rest of the class. This, coupled with the teacher's analysis of what they do well, gives the rest of the class good pointers for improvement. Year 1 teachers made good use of their combined resources of subject knowledge and time as they taught a dual class lesson. This enabled them to have double the amount of time in the hall and enabled good cross-curricular links with music. Teachers reinforce pupils learning in literacy and numeracy in lessons, for example by extending their speaking skills by asking pupils to provide an evaluation of another's performance. A good link was made with science work on friction during a Year 2 lesson, as pupils were asked to explain why it might be easier to control a ball on a grass surface than on the smooth wooden hall floor.
172. Pupils clearly enjoy physical education lessons. Most pupils behave well and show a willingness to help each other. They are sensible with equipment and show a good awareness of others when moving about the hall during their activities.
173. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and well informed. She has specialist training in physical education, which she is keen to use to good effect. As yet, she does not have a clear view of standards but has correctly identified areas for improvement. Most importantly these include the need to develop a system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in physical education, and the need to monitor teaching and learning through the observation of lessons.
174. National guidelines are followed to good effect. Staff have received recent training which has boosted their confidence in teaching the subject.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

175. Pupils leave the school at the age of seven with standards in religious education which are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus for Kent. This reflects the judgements made at the time of the last inspection. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the religious education curriculum.
176. The co-ordinator is new to the school. She is aware of the need for further developments within the subject and sees some planning, but as yet has no opportunity to observe teaching and does not herself teach the subject. Religious education is due for further whole-school development to concentrate on the weaker areas of the curriculum. The school is building a useful collection of artefacts to illustrate the different religions studied, although there are too few for Christianity.
177. Pupils are beginning to understand some of the features of non-Christian religions such as Hinduism and Judaism, as well as Christianity itself, often through topics like 'celebrations'. In Hinduism they learn a Hindu song, have made divas and masks,



acting out the story of Rama and Sita. Visitors have demonstrated a dance and during the inspection a Year 1 class were learning a dance to celebrate the Hindu festival of Holi. In Judaism, pupils in Year 1 have made 'Happy Hanukkah' cards, learned the story of the Menorah and have made Mezuzahs. An interesting display shows photographs of the local church.

178. Too few lessons were observed during the inspection to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and the attitudes of pupils. However, from a scrutiny of pupils' work, some lack of teacher confidence, knowledge and understanding in the subject is evident, and too much of the work on Christianity is limited to a study of the local church and Christian signs and symbols.
179. Circle time is used effectively to consider, develop and reinforce the need for care and consideration for others.