

INSPECTION REPORT

BENENDEN CHURCH of ENGLAND

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Benenden

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118597

Headteacher: Mr David Pratt

Reporting inspector: Mrs Wendy Simmons
23674

Dates of inspection: March 10th – 13th 2003

Inspection number: 247925

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Primary |
| School category: | Voluntary Controlled |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 – 11 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | The Green Benenden Cranbrook Kent |
| Postcode: | TN17 4DN |
| Telephone number: | 01580 240565 |
| Fax number: | 01580 243112 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Revd. Christopher Smith |
| Date of previous inspection: | 17 th – 19 th November 1997 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--|--|--|
| 23674 Wendy Simmons Registered inspector | Foundation Stage Science Geography Music Educational inclusion, including race equality. | What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 9537 Caroline Marden Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| 20760 Sheila Roberts Team inspector | English Art Design and technology Religious education | How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? |
| 23079 Adrian Everix Team inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education History | How well is the school led and managed? |

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Benenden Church of England Primary School is smaller than other primary schools, educating 157 pupils. Of these, there are similar numbers of boys and girls, but in some year groups the numbers are unbalanced. The school is set in a delightful rural setting, but has to use five sites around the village because the school does not have its own hall, playing field or attached Reception classroom. The school welcomes several settled traveller pupils. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Only three pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is very low. A very high percentage of pupils join and leave the school at times that are different to the usual time of admission or transfer to other schools. As a result, although attainment at the initial point of entry to the Reception class is above average, it is affected significantly by this mobility. Taking into account the different starting points of the children, attainment on entry to the school is closer to average overall. There are 20 pupils (13 per cent) on the special educational needs register, two of whom have statements. Children come from a range of social backgrounds including a high proportion from more privileged homes. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. Many parents are well educated.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Benenden Primary School provides a good overall standard of education. It is a caring school in which pupils are enthusiastic and relationships are very good. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This, together with the very good leadership and management underpins the better than average attainment and achievement of pupils by Year 6. Pupils make good overall progress for their ability but sometimes, in Years 1 and 2; more able pupils could do more challenging work. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- By Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are higher than average.
- Very good leadership and management by the headteacher, senior staff and governors underpin pupils better than average achievement by Year 6 and the very effective improvement since 1997.
- The very good teaching and learning in Reception and at the upper end of the school, in the mixed Year 5 and 6 class, enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well.
- Pupils show very good attitudes, which reflect the school's caring ethos and very good spiritual, moral and social education.
- The school has excellent links with parents and the wider community. These enrich pupils' learning opportunities and the curriculum.

What could be improved

- Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) skills, at the upper end of the school, is lower than average, due to limited development of more complex skills.
- In Years 1 and 2 more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in mathematics work and overall, phonic and guided reading skills are inconsistently developed.
- Limitations in the accommodation for Reception children, for physical education (PE) and for the use of ICT resources prevent pupils for making the very best use of their learning time to

achieve even higher standards.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1997. At that time, the current headteacher had only just taken over. The school's climate for learning was good, but substantial improvement was required in the quality of education provided and in the management and efficiency of the school. Since then, the school has been very successful in dealing with the key issues identified for action as a result of the very significant improvement in the quality of leadership and management. Standards of work and pupils' achievement overall, by Year 6, are now higher than average and reflect the good improvement in teaching and learning. The school has addressed the improvement issues identified in 1997 for ICT well, but at the top end of the school, standards are below average. Good improvement is evident in pupils' attitudes and their behaviour continues to be a credit to the school. The school has made very effective developments in the curriculum and in health, safety and assessment procedures. Links with parents and the community have improved from satisfactory to excellent. The school is well placed to make very good progress in addressing the issues identified for improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | <i>Key</i> |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | All schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 | |
| English | C | B | A | B | well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E |
| Mathematics | A | B | A | B | |
| Science | C | D | B | C | |

The table shows that pupils achieved better results than other similar schools in English and mathematics and similar standards in science at the end of Year 6 in 2002. The school is meeting the needs of most of its pupils well, as pupils make good overall progress as they move through the school. Children in the Reception class get off to a very good start. By Year 2 pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, in Year 1 achievement is too variable and shows the impact of many staff changes. Overall, within Years 1 and 2, more able pupils are not always well stretched for their ability in mathematics. Provision for more able pupils is very good in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 3 and 4. This is due to high expectations, small group teaching and high quality planning in English, mathematics and science. At the upper end of the school, these pupils benefit from being taught by several skilled teachers and this results in high standards. From Year 3 onwards pupils make good progress with some very good progress for all pupils at the upper end of the school.

Standards in the current Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics, science and in geography and average in other subjects. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average for their age. Standards in ICT are lower than average because pupils have had less experience of using more complex computer skills. This is because the school has only recently purchased high quality resources and also it is sometimes difficult to use computers in lessons around the village. Furthermore, in ICT, assessment information is not used to identify what pupils can and cannot do. The achievement for pupils with special educational needs and traveller pupils is consistently good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils' very positive attitudes provide a strong basis for learning. They enjoy school. Pupils are interested and involved in activities and respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good. Pupils are polite and helpful and follow the school rules. The school had one fixed term exclusion in the last school year. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good, with a strong emphasis on developing social skills; showing initiative; taking responsibility and supporting charities. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory, although not as good as in 1997 due to an increase in parents taking holidays in school time. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils in: | Reception | Years 1 – 2 | Years 3 – 6 |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Quality of teaching | Very good | Satisfactory | Good |

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

Teaching and learning are good overall. The professional team of teachers and assistants show a strong team ethos and commitment to the pupils. The school is especially successful at providing for the Reception class and for pupils in Key Stage 2. The Reception teacher has a delightful manner with the children and is accomplished at helping the children to learn quickly and enthusiastically. The job share teaching in Year 2 works well and it is to the credit of these teachers that they took on the responsibility of Year 1 during the inspection, due to last minute staffing difficulties. In the last 18 months the current Year 1 have experienced several changes in teachers, which have impacted on their rate of learning. The school has taken firm steps to improve this. During the inspection, skilled staff were working to raise standards with several examples of good and very good lessons.

Good teaching is evident in Years 3 and 4 and very good teaching and learning occurs in the mixed Year 5 and 6 class, where work is particularly well planned for the wide range of pupils' abilities and teachers have very high expectations. The mixed aged classes are well managed; all teachers have a good understanding of different subjects and place a strong emphasis on basic skills. Teachers plan their lessons to a good standard. Pupils acquire a good range of skills, knowledge and understanding of subjects as they move through the school. The management of pupils and use of support staff and resources are good.

Effective use is made of the National Literacy Strategy within good English lessons, although the development of phonic skills and use of guided reading is too variable at Key Stage 1. In mathematics, teaching at the upper end of Key Stage 2 shows very effective teaching. At Key Stage 1 mathematics teaching sometimes lacks sufficient challenges for the most able pupils. Satisfactory use is made of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teaching and learning are well supported by the excellent links with Benenden Girls' School, Angley and Cranbrook School. Music teaching is enriched by strong links with the Kent Music School and a skilled parent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good. The curriculum is broad and well planned for the mixed age classes. Extra curricular activities are very good and excellent links with the community and a good range of visits enhance pupils' learning |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. Work is well adapted and assessed for pupils to make good progress. Assistants give good support. Targets on some pupils' individual education programmes (IEPs) are too general. |
| Provision for traveller pupils. | Very good. The school has a strong partnership with the support agency and parents, which helps pupils to achieve well. |
| Pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. This supports pupils' positive attitudes, growing self-esteem, and good cultural development. Pupils are beginning to understand that Britain is a multicultural society. Personal, social and health education is very effective. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Children are well cared for. Health and safety and child protection procedures are good. Personal development is well supported. |
| How well does the school use information from assessment? | Satisfactory. Assessment information is often used well to help teachers to plan the work for English, mathematics and science, but a few subjects do not yet have assessment procedures. |
| Partnership with parents | Excellent links with parents. Parents are supportive and make a very good contribution to their children's learning and school life. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff | Very good. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and management. He has vision to further raise standards and has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. He is well supported by a professional deputy, senior teacher and skilled administrative staff. Subject co-ordinators provide good leadership and management skills. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Very good overall. Governors call the school to account by evaluating standards and they play an active part in planning improvements to further raise standards. They are highly knowledgeable, enthusiastic, well qualified and provide superb links with the community. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. Monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning are good by senior staff and satisfactory by co-ordinators. Information from the analysis test results is used well to plan improvement. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. Financial routines and the use of grants and staff are effective. The school considers how it can provide 'best value' very successfully. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Staffing, accommodation and learning resources. | Satisfactory. Resources are good. Staff are suitably qualified. The accommodation is unsatisfactory for the demands of the curriculum. The outside learning area for Reception children is improving but is barely adequate for young children. The school does not have its own hall or playing field. Although staff move pupils around the village efficiently, valuable learning time is lost. |
|---|--|

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school and work hard. • It is a good and caring school. • The school is well led and managed. • Links with the community are very strong. • Teaching is good. • Pupils behave well. • There has been very good improvement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the children's annual reports to be of a consistently high standard in informing them about their children's progress. • Some parents felt that there are few activities outside lessons. • Reading books to be changed more frequently in Year 1. |

Inspectors agree with all of the parents' positive views. Inspectors note that there have been weaknesses in the provision for the current Year 1, but the school is taking effective action to address these. The quality of pupils' annual reports is variable. Some do not make it clear enough about what the children do well, what level they are working at, and what they need to do to further improve. Extra curricular activities are very good for a school of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

Attainment

This is what the pupils know, understand and can do at a particular point in time. For example, by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is often compared with national test results and also against schools with a similar percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Achievement

The progress that pupils make as they move through the school and is measured against what they were able to do when starting this school.

THE SCHOOL'S RESULTS AND PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENTS

Main strengths

- Improvement since the last inspection
- Higher than average standard by Year 6 and good achievement
- Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and achieve well.
- Provision for the most able pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Main areas for development

- Raising attainment in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Improving the provision for more able pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 1
- Developing pupils' phonic skills at Key Stage 1.
- Ensuring consistency in the way guided reading time is used for best effect.

1. When the school was last inspected in 1997, standards were found to be average, except in ICT, where they were below average and formed a key issue. Satisfactory provision and progress was identified for pupils with special educational needs. Since then, there have been many changes and improvements, which have contributed to a rise in standards, as evident from the improvement seen in the Year 6 national test results.

2. Pupils' attainment, when starting in the Reception class is above average. However, the school has a very high percentage of pupils who join and leave the school at times that are different to the usual times. This is because a number of parents transfer their children into local private schools at various points in their education. Furthermore, due to changes in jobs, parents move away or into the area. Most of the pupils who move to other schools are very able, while many who join the school include a significant number with special educational needs. Thus, attainment of children joining the school is broadly average overall.

3. Children enter the Reception class in the September or January before their fifth birthday. The knowledge and skills they bring into school are mostly above average for speaking, listening, reading, number work and social skills, but in other aspects they are average for their age. Children currently achieve well due to the very good overall teaching and learning. When they enter Year 1, most of the children will have met the expected goals for learning, and a higher than average proportion will exceed them. The current Reception class children are very well prepared for their next stage of learning. Evidence from samples of work seen, show that these high standards were not so evident until this year.

4. The findings of this inspection show that standards are average overall by the end of Year 2. They are better in Year 2 than in Year 1. This is because the current Year 2 pupils have experienced a significant amount of good teaching and learning over the last two years, while the Year 1 pupils have worked at a slower pace and have not always been sufficiently well challenged. By Year 2, standards are higher than average in English, science and geography and in all other subjects they are average. Overall, pupils, by Year 2 achieve satisfactorily for their ability, with good achievement for pupils with special educational needs and traveller pupils. However, in mathematics, the more able pupils are not achieving well enough for their ability. Pupils in Key Stage 1 use a wide range of picture and context clues to work out new words, but they do not have well developed phonic skills and guided reading time is used inconsistently to further raise standards. Parents identified issues linked to reading in Year 1. The school recognises weakness identified in the past, and is already beginning to ensure that books are changed regularly and pupils are heard to read regularly.

5. The findings of this inspection show standards that are higher than average overall, by Year 6. As pupils move into Key Stage 2 their rate of progress quickens, resulting in good overall achievement. Standards are high in English, mathematics, science and geography. Pupils' speaking skills are very well developed and as a consequence of this, much of their discussion work is of high quality.

6. Overall, in other subjects, standards are average, with the exception of ICT, where they are below average by Year 6, although in Year 2 they are average. The school is working very successfully to raise standards in ICT and has purchased many high quality resources and staff are now well trained. However, some aspects of the work are not sufficiently covered in depth, such as developing skills to control objects. As a consequence of this; and limited assessment, standards in Year 6 are not as high as they could be. In other subjects at Key Stage 2, attainment and achievement are broadly average.

7. High quality literacy activities support development in other subjects. A weaker aspect of life in the school is the amount of time that is used up in moving pupils from lesson to lesson around the village, even though this is done efficiently, time could be better spent. The school does not have its own suitable space for the teaching and development of physical activities and this prevents pupils from attaining more skills and even better agility. In some lessons, it is not possible to use ICT because it is not practical to move equipment. The school recognises the need to improve mathematics and aspects of reading at Key Stage 1, as well as the continuing development of ICT.

8. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good at both Key Stages and often results in these pupils reaching average standards. The provision for booster classes and additional literacy activities helps these pupils to make progress. Several pupils make effective use of laptop computers to help them to make good progress.

9. The provision for more able pupils is best at Key Stage 2, indeed it is often very good at the upper end of the school in English, mathematics and science, allowing them to reach their full potential, as seen in the data handling work linking mass and time, so that pupils had to invent a scatter graph to organise their data. Standards in Year 5 are often well above average. However, due to high movement, as pupils change school, the school loses a number of pupils who were likely to raise the whole school standards to a very high level in Year 6. Results this year are likely to be lower than the well above average results of 2002, due to the significant range of special educational needs in the current Year 6 class. Nonetheless, overall, the very high attainment of more able pupils in English, mathematics and science lifts the overall standard and is due to plenty of opportunities for pupils to work in small groups with several highly skilled staff.

10. Pupils very good attitudes and the very good provision for moral, personal and social development, when linked with the good curriculum and enriching cultural experiences, plays a

significant part in helping pupils by Year 6 to achieve well. Moreover, pupils are well supported by their parents and the wider community.

11. National test results for Year 2, in 2002 were above average in English, and average in mathematics. This is better than in 2001, but is not yet as high as the best results of 2000. The 2002 results showed that the school compares similarly with other similar schools in English, but in mathematics, they performed below other similar schools. The findings of this inspection confirm that the school is not yet getting enough higher level results in mathematics by Year 2; this is why they are not doing as well as other very similar schools.

12. In English, national test results for Year 6 in 2002 were well above average when compared nationally and above average compared with other similar schools. There has been very good progress since 2000, with 40 per cent of pupils getting the higher Level 5 results. Boys and girls attain similarly high standards; this means that the boys did much better than boys nationally. Improvement in English is well above the national trend. Pupils speak with clarity. In reading, they work out new vocabulary, read fluently with expression and can use vocabulary and ideas from passages to develop persuasive arguments. Pupils express themselves well in writing and enjoy improving their writing.

13. In mathematics, national tests for Year 6, since 1998, show that standards have risen considerably to be well above average overall and above average when compared with other similar schools. This is due to the high percentages of Level 5 results. Girls and boys attain similarly high standards. The effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy at Key Stage 2 helps pupils to make good progress. Most pupils solve complex problems, although they are not always as skilled at writing these down logically.

14. In science, standards improved dramatically between 1998 and 1999, but then fell for the next two years. In 2002 there was considerable improvement, bringing the school's results to above average overall, but compared with other similar schools, standards were average. This is because, even though the school gained 100 per cent at Level 4, they only managed an average percentage of Level 5 results (three pupils missed this level by only one or two marks). The school is successfully working to further increase the Level 5 results. In the national tests in science, boys did better than girls. However, in the lessons and work seen boys and girls do equally well. The good, and sometimes very good teaching is helping pupils to achieve well by Year 6. Pupils plan many investigations have a good range of knowledge and are skilled at talking about their findings.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Relationships within the school community
- Attitudes to work
- Inclusion of all pupils
- Pupils take responsibilities very seriously

Weaknesses

- Attendance has decreased

15. The school has maintained the good behaviour seen in the last inspection. Relationships within the school community and pupils' attitudes to school are now very good.

16. Pupils of all ages are very happy to come to school and enjoy their lessons. Pupils want to do well so consequently they work hard and concentrate very well. Pupils are keen to help or to answer

questions and usually listen attentively to each other. Pupils from all backgrounds, including travellers, take full advantage of the many extra curricular activities.

17. Behaviour in lessons is good overall and often very good. Sometimes pupils can become fidgety, especially if the teacher has been talking to them for too long. Behaviour around school is very good and pupils are very sensible when moving to different buildings around the Green. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that staff would deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. There was one temporary exclusion last year.

18. Although attendance and unauthorised absences are in line with the national average the level of attendance has fallen since the last inspection. This is due to an increasing number of parents taking holidays during term time and this impacts on pupils' opportunities to achieve even higher standards.

19. Relationships throughout the school community are very good. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and get on very well with each other. The school rightly prides itself on valuing all groups of pupils and fully integrating them in the school community. Pupils work and play well together.

20. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils in Year 6 are keen to take on responsibilities and take them very seriously. So many pupils wanted to be librarians a rota had to be organised. During their time at school pupils' spiritual development is very well supported. During a religious education lesson in the mixed year 5 and 6 class, pupils discussed how prayer can affect people's lives and they showed great sensitivity to feelings and events. Pupils learn to value different cultures and a Romany Gypsy was so impressed by the pupils' attitudes when they visited her that she brought the class a basket of paper flowers she had made at Christmas. Pupils have a very good understanding of what is right and wrong and are very caring to each other. When a pupil fell and hurt himself on the playground others immediately came to his aid.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in the Reception class are very good.
- Very high quality teaching and learning is evident at the upper end of the school.
- Provision for more able pupils in Years 5 and 6 is very effective.
- Across the whole school the staff are professional and committed to helping the pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning.

Areas for development

- Continuation of the improvements made for children in the current Year 1 class.
- Widen learning opportunities in ICT.
- Challenges for more able pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 1
- Greater use of phonic skills and consistency in the way guided reading time is used at Key Stage 1
- The accommodation sometimes impacts on pupils' learning opportunities.

21. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, showing good improvement since the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory. During this inspection, 50 lessons or part lessons were observed. Of these, seven were satisfactory, 31 were good, and eleven were very good. One lesson was excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Since 1997, there has been strong emphasis on raising standards of work in English, mathematics and science, especially at the upper end of the school. Planning of lessons has improved considerably.

22. The quality of teaching in the Reception class is very good and this confirms parents' views, particularly that it had developed considerably since September. Highly skilled teaching interweaves formal and practical activities, so that basic skills are practised and developed, while also allowing children time to have fun and learn how to be independent learners and thinkers. High quality questioning helps the children to understand new ideas and develop their speaking skills. For example, when the children were asked to improve their models by making split pins work better. Here, the teacher said "see if you can work out how to do it and then explain it to me". The children are highly motivated and keen to learn. The teacher is well supported by two part time assistants, who make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, especially in the way in which they support the teacher with the very good assessment procedures. Sometimes the very good teaching seen cannot lead to an excellent lesson because of the constraints of the accommodation.

23. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 1. The samples of work seen for Year 1 indicated that the work planned and completed, in the past, by the pupils had not been of a sufficiently high standard for their ability. Very good procedures have been adopted by the headteacher and other senior staff to monitor and improve the provision for Year 1 pupils. At the time of the inspection it was evident from the work being produced and the lessons seen, that the improvements are already happening. The new teachers were only just beginning to get to know the pupils, but set very high standards for pupil's behaviour and while the work was not always challenging enough for the most able pupils, there were several considerable strengths. For example, two very good lessons were seen, one in design and technology (DT) and one in religious education (RE). Throughout Key Stage 1 the management of the pupils is good and relationships are very good. Teachers are beginning to lift standards, as evident in the work on the book *Handa's Surprise*. Teaching is often good in Year 2 and planning between the job-share teachers is well thought out, but in practice, the more able pupils are not consistently well challenged in mathematics.

24. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 2. Pupils in the mixed age classes are well catered for. Teachers have good subject knowledge, set high standards and encourage pupils to research things for themselves. Homework supports pupils' learning and parents give very good support to their children, as seen when pupils in the mixed year 3 and 4 class had researched facts about Alfred the Great. In some lessons, there is a tendency for teachers to talk too long and this limits pupils' time to work independently.

25. The best overall teaching occurs at the top end of the school, where very good teaching and learning are often seen. There are several reasons for this, not least, that the pupils are often clustered together for ability group teaching or by their year group. Additional teaching time is provided by part time staff and the headteacher. As a consequence of this, the provision, for the most able is very good. For example, in the excellent lesson seen, pupils worked in a very small group and prepared a well-reasoned argument about why not to smoke. Here very effective use was made of the Internet for research and links with literacy were excellent and pupils quoted and explained mathematical statistics from the 'Ash' web site.

26. Excellent links with the community enrich the curriculum and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, as seen in the excellent science investigation activities provided by Benenden Girls' School. Pupils' very good attitudes help them to concentrate and persevere. Booster and additional literacy classes help pupils to learn effectively.

27. Teaching and learning is consistently good for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are well supported by assistants and teachers. For example, in Year 2, good support in geography helped pupils to read and understand many difficult words in their letters from Katie Morag. Their Individual Education Plans are beginning to identify what each pupil needs to learn to overcome their problems, but sometimes these are too generalised.

28. The school has several Traveller pupils. They are well supported, showing very good links with the Traveller Support Service and the children's parents. They learn best in mathematics, where a few pupils are in the most able groups. Good support in English helps them to achieve well.

29. In English, the National Literacy Strategy is used well overall, although not enough emphasis is placed on phonic skills at Key Stage 1. For example, pupils know their initial letter sounds, but are less skilled at blending sounds together to help them to work out new words. Good emphasis is given to the teaching of writing. One of the best features is the way in which teachers help pupils to develop, understand and use new vocabulary. As a result of this despite changes as pupils join and leave the school, pupils attain well above average standards in their speaking and listening skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to explore texts and develop higher order reading skills by Year 6. However, there is inconsistency in how guided reading time is used. Literacy skills are well developed in other curriculum subjects.

30. Teaching and learning in mathematics is stronger at Key stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. This is because the National Numeracy Strategy is used more effectively and pupils are well challenged, whatever their ability. At Key Stage 1 there is not enough emphasis on quick fire mental activities at the beginning of lessons and although basic number skills are adequately taught, there is limited emphasis on developing wider skills of multiplication and using the four rules of number to solve practical problems. These features are much better from Year 3 upwards and especially strong at the top end of the school. For example, in a very good Year 5 and 6 lesson, mass was compared in kilograms and as both fractions and decimals to three decimal places. Although teaching is good at Key Stage 2, pupils are not always sufficiently skilled at recording problem solving work clearly.

31. Staff are very keen to improve and quickly make use of things learnt in training sessions. For example, they are developing the use of ICT to support learning, and the quality of marking has improved. Marking often gives suggestions of how and what pupils can do to improve. Teachers make good overall use of assessment information to plan pupils' next stage of learning. Informal discussion, as teachers circulate around the class help pupils to improve. Some pupils are not as clear about their targets for development as others because some pupils have these in their books and talk about them regularly, while others do not.

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

Strengths

- Very good improvement in the curriculum since 1997.
- Excellent links with the community and parents to enrich the curriculum.
- Very good provision for the most able pupils at the upper end of the school.
- Very good provision for spiritual, moral and social education.
- Promoting pupils' understanding of the Romany Heritage enriches all pupils' learning.

Areas for development

- Continue to widen pupils' understanding of Britain as a multicultural society.
- Develop the outside play area for the Reception children to enrich their curriculum

32. The school provides a good curriculum, which meets all legal requirements and recognises the importance of racial equality. The curriculum for the youngest children in the Reception class is well planned, although their outside learning environment is not yet sufficiently developed to enrich their curriculum. Across the school, planning is now firmly in place in all subjects. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have good learning opportunities. The curriculum has been carefully organised to take account of the mixed age classes and the various levels of attainment.

Planning is carefully monitored by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators to ensure that learning develops progressively from year to year. Moreover, so that pupils in the mixed and split aged classes are given equal opportunities in the curriculum that they receive.

33. Overall, the strategies for teaching literacy and science are very effective, and have resulted in rising standards. Strategies for teaching reading skills at Key Stage 1, and numeracy throughout the school, are satisfactory. The curriculum is planned to ensure that the needs of pupils are met and that they are all fully included in learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and effective extra literacy lessons are well led by teaching assistants. Provision for extending the more able pupils is best at Key Stage 2.

34. Trips made to places of educational interest enrich the curriculum and the expertise of visitors, such as the recent talk by a famous author, broadens pupils' learning. Older pupils benefit from an annual residential trip. Extra curricular activities are many and varied and are particularly good for the size of the school. This finding does not show agreement with that of the 22 per cent of parents who felt that there were limited outside activities. Extra curricular activities include sports, chess, music groups, gardening, and cookery clubs.

35. Links with the community are excellent and make an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning. The local clergy are regular visitors and the proximity of the church means that pupils are able to have a weekly assembly in the church. Pupils are invited to use several facilities at Benenden Girls' School. They attend regular sports training sessions at another nearby secondary school. Relationships with these schools are very good. Pupils participate in music and dance festivals and sports activities with other schools in the locality. The curriculum is further enhanced by the good quality teaching of French throughout the school, and the experience of the school's 'French Day', which also included staff and students from Benenden Girls' School.

36. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good overall. The provision for promoting pupils' personal development has substantially improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The school's very strong Christian ethos underpins all aspects of school life and is further enhanced by the staff, who are very good role models

37. Teachers treat all pupils fairly and courteously. They encourage even the youngest pupils to think about how their actions might affect others. For example, when three Year 1 boys picked up sticks and started to have sword fights with them at lunchtime, the teacher asked them why it was not a good idea and what they thought they should do. As well as in assemblies and religious education lessons, pupils have many opportunities to explore moral issues. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 explored issues such as fox hunting.

38. The very good provision for moral and social development occurs throughout the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For example, as house captains and office monitors. Teachers plan their lessons to improve pupils' social skills by ensuring pupils work in different groupings. Circle time gives pupils opportunities to deal with problems, concerns and ideas. Pupils and staff actively support many charities. For example, by sharing in the headteacher's interest in Scunthorpe United Football Club in such a way as to raise funds for Demelza House, a children's hospice in Kent.

39. Good opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality are found throughout the curriculum. They are rarely included in teachers' plans but happen frequently during the school day. Assemblies and prayers provide pupils with regular times to reflect on their lives and God. In other subjects teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their achievements in the lesson. In a personal, health and social education lesson pupils identified their own strengths. During the inspection pupils visited Benenden Girls' School for a science event. The experiments thrilled the pupils and they were still talking about them when they returned to school.

40. Provision for cultural development is good. The school works hard to develop pupils' understanding of different cultures across the world. The school held a very good 'Multi-cultural

Week' with music and art from various parts of the world including African drummers, aboriginal art and sculpture making by a local artist. Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through history, art and music lessons. A particular strength is the promotion of understanding the Romany Heritage. Pupils were privileged to visit Romany Homes and talk to Romany Gypsies. The school is beginning to help pupils to understand that Britain is a multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths

- Very good overall improvement
- Improvement in child protection procedures
- Health and safety procedures
- Very caring staff

Areas for development

- A few subjects do not have formalised assessment procedures.

41. The school has improved the care of pupils since the last inspection and there are now effective child protection procedures in place. The school is very caring; staff know their pupils very well and they provide good support for their personal development.

42. The school has good procedures that it uses successfully to promote good behaviour. The headteacher takes all allegations of bullying seriously and investigates any allegations thoroughly. Exclusions are used rarely and only as a last resort. In the last school year there was one fixed term exclusion. Procedures to monitor attendance are satisfactory. The school firmly encourages parents not to take holidays during term time but this is increasing.

43. Procedures for promoting health and safety are good. Governors review the health and safety policy and regularly monitor school safety. Staff are very vigilant when pupils are moving around the village green and have well established routines for crossing the roads.

44. The school has developed assessment considerably since 1997. The school now has good procedures for assessing and monitoring the progress of pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The information gained from assessment is used well to plan and adapt the curriculum when appropriate. Assessment is particularly good when used to plan literacy lessons for more able pupils and extra support for pupils with special educational needs. It is very good in the Reception class. Progress of pupils is tracked in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have individual target cards in English, but this is inconsistent in other subjects. The school makes use of a computerised database, to record pupils' results in tests, which makes it easier to track their progress. A few subjects, including ICT, have limited, but evolving assessment procedures. Assessment is satisfactory overall and continues to be an area of development for the school.

45. Special educational needs has improved from satisfactory to good since 1997. Class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs. However, targets for improvement on their individual education plans are too general, and not identified in sufficient detail to enable close monitoring of pupils' progress. The co-ordinator has identified this as an area for improvement. Termly reviews involve good input from parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- Information about the curriculum
- The support of the parents for the school
- The effectiveness of the partnership with parents

- The improvement in the effectiveness of the school’s partnership with parents

Weaknesses

- Information about how pupils can improve their work in annual reports.
46. The school is working hard to foster excellent links with parents. The partnership with parents has improved considerably since the last inspection. Parents have positive views of the school. They particularly value their children being happy at school, the good behaviour and personal development of the pupils and the high expectations teachers have. Areas some parents would like to see improved are the opportunities for extra curricular activities and information about the progress their children are making. The inspection team agrees with all the parents’ positive views but found the provision for extra curricular activities to be very good.
47. The school values the contribution parents make to their children’s education and to the school. The excellent support of the parents as individuals and through the parents association has a significant effect on the accommodation, resources and curriculum. Parents have raised significant amounts of money that the school has recently used to purchase materials, furniture and books for the new library. Parents built the library gallery giving their labour and expertise free. Parents regularly come into school to help with different activities such as reading, technology and music.
48. The governors send out an annual questionnaire to all parents to ascertain their satisfaction with what the school provides. Governors use this information when they are writing the school improvement plan.
49. Information about pupils’ progress is given to parents through termly consultation meetings, “At Home” sessions and through the annual report. The annual reports give good information about what pupils know and can do for all subjects. Reports for Years 3 to 5 also contain results of optional national tests for English and mathematics. However, reports throughout the school do not explicitly state whether the pupil is working at the nationally expected level. In addition, teachers do not consistently explain how the pupils can improve. Parents also commented about this inconsistency.
50. The school provides very good information about the curriculum that enables parents to support their children’s learning at home. Newsletters provide information about topics pupils will be studying. The school sends home literacy and numeracy targets. Staff hold meetings to explain different aspects of the curriculum and other aspects of teaching to parents. For example, there have been meetings on science, numeracy and literacy, which are highly valued by parents, as these help them to support their children with their learning at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The headteacher’s very effective leadership provides a clear direction for the school’s improvement.
- Strategies introduced by the headteacher and supported by senior staff have enabled the school to make very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in guiding its development.
- Spending is very carefully considered and different viewpoints are taken into account to ensure money is spent wisely.

Areas for development

- The school’s accommodation is unsatisfactory, despite the best efforts of staff and governors to improve it and overcome the difficulties that it presents.

51. The headteacher provides high quality leadership. He has established a clear educational direction for the school based on high standards and continual improvement in the quality of learning. This vision has been successfully managed through the development of a number of successful strategies that have resulted in significant improvements in most aspects of school life since the last inspection. On the whole, actions to deal with the priorities of raising standards in English, mathematics and science, especially by the end of Year 6, and ensuring that pupils receive a broad education have been successful. This has been achieved against a background of a number of staff changes and high pupil turnover. The school now successfully fulfils its aims and values.

52. The management of the school had several weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. These included very poor financial planning, few systems for checking on standards or how well pupils were taught, a lack of involvement of governors, no written plan for the school's development and a number of legal requirements not being met. All the weaknesses have been successfully dealt with. The day-to-day administration of the school is efficient, with ICT being used well to keep records.

53. The headteacher and senior staff observe lessons frequently and provide written and oral feedback to teachers on how they can improve. Pupils' work is examined to see where improvements can be made and advice shared with the whole staff. Teachers' work is now appraised through performance management and time is taken to ensure new staff understand the approaches and procedures of the school. Rigorous action has been taken to deal with unsatisfactory teaching when necessary. The success of these actions is reflected in the quality of teaching, which is now good compared to satisfactory, as in 1997.

54. The school now analyses its performance carefully using test results and other information. This helps it to set challenging targets and identify areas of learning that need improvement. For example, there has been a successful focus on mental arithmetic and problem solving in mathematics. Co-ordinators are much more active in checking provision in their subjects, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The focus has been on teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science but time has also been allocated for other subjects.

55. The school's financial planning has improved considerably and is now very good. They have a higher than average amount of money to carry forward into the next financial year in order to retain the current number of teachers. Finances are clearly focused on the priorities identified by the school. Learning resources are now good overall, compared with the unsatisfactory situation at the last inspection. This is partly because co-ordinators are now given responsibility for spending in their own subjects. A significant amount of money has been spent on improving the ICT equipment, which was poor at the last inspection. Sources of money, including grants, have been channelled into gaining facilities to raise standards. Similarly, the quality and quantity of books judged to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection are now good. Imaginative use of space involving the creation of a mezzanine floor has extended the library to make a 'learning centre', which includes both books and ICT resources. The only significant weaknesses in resources are in physical education, where a lack of storage space at the village hall restricts the amount of large equipment, and in the quality of outdoor equipment for children in the Reception class.

56. Governors fulfil all their duties very well. A system of frequent, focussed visits enables them to have first hand information about the school, which they share with the full governing body. Talks given by senior staff at governors' meetings and information from the headteacher also keep them well informed. Governors make effective use of test data provided by the school and government, to ask challenging questions about standards. At their meeting with inspectors, governors showed that they had a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This helps them to make informed decisions especially when formulating the good quality school improvement plan. They check

to see if the money they have allocated is providing the best value. For example, when improving the quality of management, by appointing a deputy headteacher and allocating non-teaching periods for co-ordinators, the governors required teachers to account for how they used this time. Consultations with parents and pupils help the school to plan further improvements.

57. One of the major concerns of the governors is the school's accommodation. Inspectors' agree that there are a number of factors that make it unsatisfactory. The original building is attractive and, in suitable weather, the school makes use of the village green just outside the school. However, the building is not adequate to house the number of pupils on roll and the school has to make use of five sites near to the village green. This involves a considerable amount of walking between sites which is very well managed by the school to ensure pupils arrive at the different buildings quickly and safely. Nevertheless, time is unavoidably lost which could be better devoted to learning. Pupils have to walk to the Reception class building at the far edge of the green for lunches. Furniture has to be moved in the Reception class to make room for eating lunch and this severely limits the equipment and displays that can be left out for the reception children to explore and investigate. There is no school hall for all the pupils to meet together. Collective acts of worship are conducted in two groups, one making use of two combined classrooms with all the furniture having to be moved and another walking to a local hall in the village. For indoor physical education, pupils have to walk to the village hall, which is available on one day a week. It has very limited equipment for pupils to work at a high level. The school playground is small and sloping and restricts the range of games skills that can be practised, for example striking a ball hard over a distance or learning how to use space in team games. The cramped space within the main school means that large or three-dimensional work in art and design and technology is very restricted. The governors have aspirations to improve the accommodation but much of these are dependent on overcoming difficulties with finance and building restrictions.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The governors, headteacher and staff need to continue with the very good improvements made since the last inspection by:

Raising attainment in ICT at Key Stage 2 by:

- introducing a clear and simple assessment system, linked to different levels of skills;
- using the assessment information to plan challenging teaching and learning opportunities;
- introducing more use of control technology activities;
- widening pupils' skills in data handling;
- purchasing and using sensors.

(Paragraphs: 6, 94 and 112-116.)

Enhancing the provision for pupils at Key Stage 1, so that their rate of progress matches that found elsewhere in the school by:

- ensuring that the work for more able pupils, in mathematics, is more challenging;
- making greater use of phonic skills within the teaching of reading;
- planning a more rigorous and focused time for guided reading;
- continuing to lift standards and provision for pupils in the current Year 1 class.

(Paragraphs: 4, 6, 11, 23, 70, 75, 79 and 83.)

Developing the accommodation by:

- improving the Reception accommodation, especially the outside area, to further enrich the children's learning;
- consulting with the Local education Authority and the Diocesan Board about how to bring about further improvements in the accommodation;

(Paragraphs: 57, 60, 112 and 123.)

Minor issues

1. To restore the good attendance rate as found in 1997. *(Paragraph 18)*
2. Continue with the good plans to develop individual target setting in mathematics. *(Paragraph 83)*
3. Ensure that pupils' annual reports are equally clear for all pupils. *(Paragraph 49)*
4. Continue to develop assessment procedures as planned. *(Paragraphs; 44, 107, 111 and 116)*
5. Continue to improve the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. *(Paragraph 45)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 50 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 33 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 1 | 11 | 31 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 2% | 22% | 62% | 14% | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 157 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 3 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 2 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 20 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 0 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 14 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 13 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 5.6 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 0.1 |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| National comparative data | 5.4 |
|---------------------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| National comparative data | 0.5 |
|---------------------------|-----|

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

In accordance with OFSTED guidance in UP-DATE 34, only the total results are included in the table below because fewer than ten boys took the test in 2002 in both Key Stages.

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 | 7 | 11 | 18 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | | | |
| | Girls | | | |
| | Total | 16 | 16 | 17 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 89 (79) | 89 (76) | 94 (79) |
| | National | 84 (84) | 86 (86) | 90 (91) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | | | |
| | Girls | | | |
| | Total | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 89 (83) | 94 (83) | 100 (79) |
| | National | 85 (85) | 89 (89) | 89 (89) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2002 | 8 | 12 | 20 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | | | |
| | Girls | | | |
| | Total | 19 | 18 | 20 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 95 (92) | 90 (84) | 100 (96) |
| | National | 75 (75) | 73 (71) | 86 (87) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | | | |
| | Girls | | | |
| | Total | 19 | 18 | 19 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 95 (96) | 90 (92) | 95 (96) |
| | National | 73 (72) | 74 (74) | 82 (82) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils***Exclusions in the last school year***

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| White – British | 135 | 1 | 0 |
| White – Irish | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 1 | 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 – Y6

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 7.5 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 21 |
| Average class size | 26 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 5 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 79 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001-2002 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 350 795 |
| Total expenditure | 331 209 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2110 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 19 206 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 19 586 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 5.2 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 6.2 |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 1 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 157 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 72 Equal to 46% |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 56 | 40 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 43 | 42 | 11 | 3 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 38 | 53 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 32 | 49 | 15 | 3 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 49 | 38 | 6 | 1 | 6 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 33 | 40 | 21 | 6 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 49 | 35 | 14 | 2 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 49 | 43 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 25 | 56 | 11 | 7 | 1 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 43 | 47 | 7 | 3 | |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 47 | 46 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 24 | 46 | 18 | 4 | 8 |

Other issues raised by parents

- Teaching in the Reception class is of high quality.
- Teachers are sympathetic to pupils with special educational needs.
- Communication has improved, but varies from teacher to teacher.
- Variation in the quality of teaching and learning between classes.
- Pupils in Year 1 do not change their reading books frequently enough.

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

59. Most of the children have had pre-school experience. The school has worked very hard to develop good links with local pre schools. Pupils are sensitively helped to make the transition from these groups into the Reception class. Links with the children and their parents are quickly established and of very high quality. The knowledge and skills they bring into school are mostly above average for speaking, listening, reading and number work, but in other aspects they are average overall for their age. Children achieve well due to the very good overall teaching and learning. When they enter Year 1, most of the children will have met the expected goals for learning, and a significant proportion will exceed them.

60. The quality of teaching in the Reception class is very good. The children are helped to grow in confidence, so that they can learn by being actively involved in a wide range of interesting activities. The children are highly motivated and keen to learn. The teacher is well supported by two part time assistants. The Reception class is situated about 200 metres from the school in a listed building. There are several difficulties with this, which are noted in the leadership and management section of this report. The recently appointed co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and shows very good leadership and management skills. Moreover, she has worked very hard, in a short space of time to make improvements, such as by organising the classroom to provide plenty of areas for the children to develop their imagination through role-play.

Personal, social and emotional development

61. The provision for children's' personal, social and emotional development is good. Pupils make good progress and achieve well due to good teaching and learning. The children settle into school quickly because of the well established routines and they are happy. The teacher makes learning fun, there is lots of laughter in the class, which gives children the confidence to take risks and learn how to make relationships with others. Behaviour is very good and the children get along together very well, sharing, taking turns and working co-operatively. Moreover, they are encouraged to take charge of their own learning, as the teacher and assistants help and encourage the children to choose activities once the more formal learning activities are finished. The children are positively encouraged to show their initiative, as seen when a little girl made her own bean experiment and watched it each day to see how the beans had grown, but the water in the pot had vanished. Children in this class are active learners. Opportunities to develop skills in role-play and through other creative activities are good in the classroom, but scarce in the limited outside area.

Communication, language and literacy

62. The provision and teaching in this area of learning is very good. The teacher has modified the National Literacy Strategy well. This results in the maintenance of above average skills in speaking and reading and good further achievement in writing for pupils of all abilities. The children are able to sit and listen attentively and speak confidently in class sessions. They are confident when approaching adults to ask for help or to share their news. A strong emphasis is put on teaching initial letter sounds and in learning how to read simple books together and then individually. Very good teaching helps the children to understand how to predict the text, use picture and initial letter sound clues to work out new words. Links with homework are strong, showing parents' positive encouragement of their children in reading. Most children write their name correctly, and some are beginning to write short sentences independently. Teaching places strong emphasis on helping the children to try for themselves and persevere. For example as seen when the children wrote about 'Jasper's beanstalk'. Children are encouraged to talk in many different situations. Handwriting is developing very well, showing careful

attention to accurate letter formation, but more significantly, to the importance of flow, as seen in the 'Write Dance' activities (This is where children have fun with the arm and hand movements associated with the correct formation of letters) Due to the limited space, there is no special 'writing area' in the class.

Mathematical development

63. The teaching and provision in this area of learning are very good. This results in the maintenance of above average skills in counting and further good achievement in widening the skills and knowledge of pupils of all abilities. The children are confident when counting backwards and forwards to 20. They sing number songs and rhymes to support their learning. In both classes the children are able to identify two and three-dimensional shapes. More able children are encouraged to begin simple addition and subtraction sums, and they are keen to do this, usually writing numerals correctly. Most of the mathematical activities are practical and this is appropriate for the children in the Reception class. During the inspection a good formal lesson on time showed strong links to rhymes and use of stories. The teacher has modified the National Numeracy Strategy well.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

64. The children build on their average knowledge of the world around them, so that they soon achieve higher than average standards. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The strong emphasis on asking and answering questions helps pupils to understand new things. For example the teacher asked "How can we move the car without touching it directly with our hands?" many suggestions followed, which required much experimentation with blowing, using different object and in working co-operatively. Learning is rooted in helping the children to develop a sense of wonder, excitement and links with reading as seen in the bicycle work to go with the story Mrs Armitage. Children make satisfactory development in using computer skills. Children have access to an adequate range of inside construction materials, but these are too limited for outside activities. Pupils quickly learn about growth, with much planting and growing of bulbs and seeds as well as discussions about the differences in what they looked like when they were babies and how they look now. Children make very good progress in designing and making models. For example, a pupil was encouraged to draw a design before making his model of an aeroplane.

Physical development

65. Children develop physical skills as expected due to the good use of the village hall and plenty of opportunities to master fine hand control. Provision in this area is limited by the restraints of the accommodation and the resources, as identified above. Teaching is good, with a strong focus on helping the children to achieve well for their ability. Virtually all use pencils, crayons and scissors with accuracy and are helped to gain better co-ordination and to move around this complex site safely and with confidence.

Creative development

66. Provision and teaching in this area are good. There are good opportunities for the children to experience independent play and make decisions about the creative activities they will do. For example, they enjoy dressing up and making puppet shows. When using the role-play area the teacher and assistants intervene, to develop the children's language skills, imagination and span of concentration. This is good practice. They enjoy imaginative play, as seen when two children played together booking a car into the garage and then using the tools to repair it. Pupils experience a wide range of interesting activities in which they use their senses. For example they were totally absorbed in the play dough, making shapes and patters. Musical work is of a very high standard and excellently supported by a highly skilled parent, as seen when the children were in complete awe at the sound of the violin taking them for an imaginary walk. This helped them to develop their imagination and

contrast loud and soft sounds and develop rhythm skills far beyond the expectations of the goals for this age group. When singing the bicycle bell song, the quality of pitch and clarity of sound was very good. Spiritual and cultural development are very good

ENGLISH

67. Standards are above average by Year 6, showing a steady improvement in the last four years. Currently, they are not as high as 2002, due to variation in the groups of pupils in the year. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6. This includes pupils with special educational needs and settled traveller pupils. Higher ability pupils are achieving very well, due to the very effective teaching in small groups, which focuses on aspects of literacy such as debate, research and investigation.

68. Results of the 2002 tests for seven year olds were above the national average. Inspection evidence confirms the maintenance of above average standards in writing, but reading skills are average by Year 2. Speaking and listening skills are well above average. Overall, standards are above average by Year 2.

69. Pupils enter the school with above average speaking and listening skills and there are many good opportunities throughout the school for these to be further developed. Pupils listen very well both in class and in assembly. They participate well in class discussions, volunteering pertinent answers to questions asked by teachers. They are very articulate and use a wide vocabulary in their answers. A particularly good example of shared speaking and listening was observed when older pupils presented 'The Jabberwocky' poem to the younger classes. All pupils have good opportunities to share their work during the plenary sessions at the end of each lesson, and do so clearly and confidently. More able pupils in Year 6 presented informed arguments, based on their individual research into topics such as smoking, pollution and vegetarianism, to the rest of the group. They did this with good expression, showing sound knowledge of formal language and persuasive argument. Pupils listened attentively and courteously to each other and gave critical feedback on the presentations. Drama is a very successful aspect of the curriculum, and enjoyed by all.

70. In reading, at Key Stage 1, some pupils are not achieving their full potential. They rely heavily on word recognition when reading books from the reading scheme. Their phonic skills are not sufficiently secure for them to work out unfamiliar words or to read a variety of books confidently. Parents also commented that books are not changed frequently enough, although the inspection findings note that the school is dealing with this. During literacy lessons, Year 2 pupils are able to scan text and identify types of words, such as when pupils successfully picked out words from the text on bears and looked up the meanings from a variety of reference books, including dictionaries, and wrote out the meanings in the format of a glossary. Other pupils needed support to achieve this, but due to good guidance, pupils with special educational needs and traveller pupils were equally involved in this activity.

71. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are reading very confidently from a variety of texts. They use the Internet, as well as reference books, to research topics and collate the information to present various points of view. They discuss the language and types of texts confidently, such as the alliteration used in humorous verse to make a poem more interesting, and the effect of emotive language on the reader, to make a forceful, persuasive case. Pupils use the school library regularly, and understand the Dewey system to find reference books and have a very good understanding of technical vocabulary.

72. The literacy strategy is well established throughout the school, and within this there has been particular emphasis on developing writing skills. More able pupils, across the school write imaginatively, and use a wide and varied vocabulary. They write for a variety of purposes, such as

formal letters, instructions, play writing, stories and poetry. Pupils in Year 3 wrote clear instructions on preparing for an assembly and Year 5 wrote useful evaluations on their recent biscuit making in Design and Technology. In creative writing in Year 4, there is good perception of character, such as in the story about an imaginary football match, played by the Royal Family. In Year 6 they write confidently about controversial issues for debate, such as vivisection, ably writing from both points of view. Overall, grammar and punctuation are good throughout the school, but spelling is weaker in all age groups. There are strong links to literacy in other areas of the curriculum and writing skills are used in many different subjects. Handwriting is clear and well formed, reflecting the school's recent emphasis on improving the standard.

73. Throughout the school the teaching of English is good overall and some is very good. Teachers have very good subject expertise. Key Stage 1 teachers are working collaboratively to raise standards and ensure that all pupils in the key stage have equal opportunities to achieve their potential. Lessons seen were well introduced, with a clear sharing of the learning objectives and a review of previously learnt knowledge. These factors ensured that pupils of all abilities understood the purpose of the lesson and were well motivated to learn. Tasks were well matched to the attainment level of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, who were generally well supported. Higher-attaining pupils had good extension work to sustain the very good progress they make throughout the school. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils, understand their different needs and plan lessons to ensure that time and resources are used well. They make very good use of the plenary session at the end of each lesson to reinforce and assess learning. Marking is constructive and helps pupils understand how they are progressing. Homework is set regularly, and used effectively to support learning. ICT is well used to support learning, such as when pupils compiled a clear set of instructions on how to play a board game, and in researching topics for debate using the Internet.

74. Procedures for assessment are good. Pupils' progress is tracked and targets set, which are reviewed regularly. Targets are displayed in the front of the books for some pupils, so they are constantly aware of what they need to achieve. Extra support is given to pupils who have special educational needs by specifically focused sessions led by the very competent learning support assistants. More able pupils have the benefit of group extension activities.

75. Although the literacy sessions are well managed throughout the school, there is insufficient specific focus on the teaching of phonic reading skills at Key Stage 1. Dedicated guided reading sessions are well organised and effective at Key Stage 2, but not so effective at Key Stage 1, where they take place during the Literacy Hour and do not always focus on how to develop a wide range of reading skills.

76. English is well led and managed by the very knowledgeable co-ordinator. There are very good initiatives to enhance the English curriculum, such as the book making competition and visits by famous authors, such as Michael Rosen. The development plan identifies the improvement of writing, but the improvement of reading at Key Stage 1 is less clearly addressed. Resources to support the English curriculum are very good. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

77. By the end of Year 6, pupils' overall attainment is above the national average. This is not as high as indicated in the 2002 national tests due to differences in the abilities of the groups of pupils in the current Year 6 class. Information from various sources, including test results, a comparison of individual performance when pupils were in Year 2, and completed work, shows that achievement by Year 6 is good. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress due to effective teaching. This is reflected in the high test results.

78. Attainment, by Year 6, is above average in most aspects of mathematics. Pupils work confidently with numbers, for example those of average ability multiply and divide to two decimal places and convert fractions to decimals and percentages. More able pupils use three decimal places when estimating and measuring mass with kilograms. They use their knowledge of angles to construct pie charts accurately. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are working near nationally expected levels because of the good support they receive. Pupils are given problems to solve and investigate, for example designing the floor of a house with a specified area and the minimum wall perimeter. However, pupils' written explanations of their reasoning are not well developed in this aspect of mathematics. The school has correctly identified this as an area for improvement. Traveller pupils show a wide range of abilities and make good progress.

79. By the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly average, but in tests it is below that of similar schools. Average attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. However, more able pupils, who are capable of high attainment, are not currently achieving the standards of which they are capable. Teaching in Year 1 over the past two terms has not met the needs of these pupils, as the work has been too easy. In Year 2, the challenge for the more able pupils is better but past work shows that it is not consistent. Some work is challenging, but in other instances, it is set at a similar level to that of other pupils. Teaching over time has had weaknesses. However, the teaching and learning seen during the inspection were satisfactory. This is explained by some recent changes of staff following effective management action to raise the quality of pupils' learning. In the lessons seen in Years 1 and 2, teachers had taken account of the different levels in the class, for example by asking the more able groups to work with more difficult numbers. However, the tasks lacked precise extra challenge that would have helped pupils make good or better progress and make up for some of the weaker learning in the past. For example, the tasks did not encourage pupils to solve problems using a more complex strategy or give a sharp focus on more advanced methods of calculation such as multiplication or division.

80. Overall, teaching and learning in mathematics are satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6 they are good, with examples of very good and satisfactory teaching observed. In the most effective lessons, the work was very precisely matched to the needs of the pupils and the pace of learning was rapid. In a lesson for older pupils, the teacher started with an enjoyable game on estimation that aroused pupils' interest and generated enthusiasm for the next activity. Explanations were clear and the teacher regularly checked pupils' understanding of mathematical vocabulary such as 'mean' and 'median'. The work was very carefully planned so that it built well on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lower attaining pupils worked on straightforward bar charts whereas the most able had to plot and compare estimates of mass and time on one graph.

81. In each lesson, teachers were very careful to involve all the class in oral and other work, including those pupils with learning difficulties or from a travelling background. When available, teaching assistants were deployed well and made a significant difference to the groups they worked with. They were especially valuable in the mixed age classes. Occasionally, they are not available and the quality of learning is not so good because there are great demands on the teacher's time.

82. In a few lessons, teachers spoke too much or the group activities went on too long. Although there were several other good features in these lessons, some pupils found it difficult to sustain concentration when this happened. Extra sessions for more able and other groups are helping to raise standards. Teachers' approach to mathematics is positive and encouraging. Pupils have good attitudes and several said it was their favourite subject.

83. The subject is being effectively led and managed. The weaknesses identified in this inspection were already known and strategies for improvement are in place. The school acknowledges that improvements are still needed by the end of Year 2, and much is being done to raise expectations of

the more able. Results from national and school tests have been very carefully analysed to identify weaknesses in pupils' attainment. Curriculum planning has been adapted to ensure these are dealt with more thoroughly. For example, problem solving, mental arithmetic and the application of mathematics were identified as weaker areas and these aspects are now clearly represented in pupils' work. Pupils apply and develop numeracy skills well in other subjects including accurate measuring in DT, the use of line graphs in geography and science, and through links with ICT. The co-ordinator is clear that the next stage is to improve pupils' written answers to problems or number investigations. The school keeps a careful check on how pupils are progressing and the recorded information is used to help group pupils and set targets for future performance. Part of the co-ordinator's plan is to introduce more opportunities for pupils to assess how well they are doing and by discussing with them their individual mathematics targets. This is a useful aim, as it should give pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do next to improve. Resources are good and enable the numeracy strategy to be taught.

84. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Although there is currently a weakness in Key Stage 1, the standards that pupils attain by the time they leave the school have improved significantly. The Year 6 test results have been high for the past few years compared with average performance in 1998. The subject is now better managed, showing a strong commitment from both the current co-ordinator and her predecessor, with actions for improvement based on a more rigorous approach for analysing standards and for checking how well pupils are taught.

SCIENCE

85. Standards are above average in Year 6 and throughout most of the other year groups. In Year 5, standards are currently well above average. Since the last inspection, there has been good overall improvement in pupils' attainment and achievement due to the development of more effective teaching and the very good improvement in the curriculum.

86. Pupils' rate of achievement is good, although stronger at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. Traveller pupils and those with special educational needs often achieve average results in science, due to the good support and their positive attitude to learning. Achievement is satisfactory at Key Stage 1. It is best in Year 2, where the work is better matched to pupils' abilities. From Year 3 onwards, more able pupils achieve well, with aspects of very good achievement in Years 5 and 6, due to high quality teaching and enriching learning.

87. Standards in Year 2 are currently above average. This reflects the high proportion of pupils who are working at the average Level 2, although fewer than expected are working to gain higher Level 3 results. The good support and planning for pupils with special educational needs helps this group of pupils to often reach average standards. In Year 1, little work has been recorded in all pupils' books since September. Recent staff changes are helping to lift standards.

88. The quality of teaching and learning seen in lessons is now good overall across the school as a whole. Pupils are keen to learn and show very positive attitudes. Pupils are well managed and the relationships between staff and pupils are of a very high standard. Satisfactory use is made of assessment information by Year 2. This improves to a good standard as pupils move further up the school. Here, teachers often mark pupils' work in a way that not only praises their efforts, but also encourages pupils to overcome difficulties or further develop their knowledge. This information is used by teachers to plan pupils' next stage of learning. Overall, teachers have good subject knowledge. Teaching and learning are best at the upper end of the school, in Years 5 and 6. This is because pupils are given many opportunities to think, plan experiments and follow up lines of investigation by researching factual information.

89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 1. In Year 1, since September 2002, the work has not been sufficiently well planned to allow pupils to achieve their best. Nonetheless, in the lesson seen, pupils developed a satisfactory knowledge about sounds in the environment. In Year 2, some good teaching is evident, but overall, challenges for the most able pupils are too inconsistent. For example, when looking at fruit seeds, pupils were helped to think of clear explanations about what seeds need to ensure that they grow, but more able pupils did not design their own simple experiments, although they were encouraged to use accurate vocabulary when explaining why plants need light and water.

90. At Key Stage 2, particular strengths include very effective lesson planning and teaching methods, which when added to very high expectations and very good management of the pupils allows them to make good progress. From Year 3, pupils achieve better for their ability as seen in the investigation about how light travels through different materials. Here, more able pupils are taught about and explain such words as translucent, transparent and opaque. The Year 4 work is satisfactorily with better than average work on helping pupils to research animal 'fact files' and in their knowledge about insulation.

91. In Years 5 and 6, the good and sometimes very good teaching and learning lifts pupils' rate of achievement, for example, in the very good lesson in Year 5 about evaporation. Here, pupils designed many experiments and rapid, very good questioning and discussion helped pupils to become confident users of complex new words. They talked about liquid turning into gases and gases being made up of many particles or molecules. By Year 6, expectations remain high, with a strong emphasis on linking their understanding to providing time to develop their speaking skills. Pupils confidently explained about 'up thrust' and measurement with Newton's. More able pupils explained in detail about the difference between air and water weight being the 'up thrust' weight. A significant strength of pupils' learning is their ability to modify ideas, think for themselves and improve their work.

92. Teachers work hard to make learning engaging and meaningful. This is evident in class lessons and by making links with the wider community, such as Angley and Cranbrook Schools. Excellent teaching and learning was seen during the pupils' visit to Benenden Girls' School. This had a very positive impact on pupils' understanding about gases, sound and force. Here, learning was rooted in 'hands on' investigation, with many skilled teachers, support staff and sixth form pupils available to work with pupils on a one-to-one basis. Learning was excellent due to the exceptionally high quality guidance, wonderful resources; and helpful activity book. This allowed pupils to find out about such things as how tornadoes are formed and about numerous chemical reactions. For example, how baking powder, when mixed with acid, releases carbon dioxide and can be used to extinguish fires.

93. Considerable thought has been given to the organisation of the curriculum for all age groups. Particular strengths include: the separate teaching of science by Year groups in Key Stage 2. As a direct result of this, more able pupils are quickly pushed on and other pupils have the opportunity to consolidate new work, so that they really understand it.

94. There are good links between science and other subjects. For example, all pupils design moving objects using scientific principles in design and technology. The links with numeracy are developing well. For example, pupils use data to analyse their results, make graphs and measure their findings. Links with literacy are equally strong. For example, in Year 5 pupils made bullet point notes to use when acting in role to explain to an imaginary alien about the causes and effects of evaporation. Pupils are beginning to enrich their understanding of science by using ICT, but this is still underdeveloped, especially linked to making graphs and charts. The school does not have suitable sensors to support ICT investigations.

95. Links with parents are very good. The school has held very well attended evening workshops to help parents and children to work together, so that parents understand how they can support their child with their learning and homework.

96. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to enjoy the wonders of nature and the excitement of finding things out. One of the very best spiritual moments seen during any inspection was witnessed at Benenden Girls' School. Here, pupils were safely seated behind a glass screen and watched in complete amazement as an orange foaming peroxide mixture, shot out of the container and leapt towards the ceiling. 'Wow' they all shouted in unison. This was only surpassed by the chemical reaction, which produced a serpent like shape as seen in the Harry Potter film.

97. The quality of leadership and management of science is good, showing a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.

ART AND DESIGN

98. Based on the small amount of work seen during the inspection, standards are average by the end of both key stages. The school has maintained this standard since the last inspection.

99. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils developed their observational drawing techniques well by studying fruits, and drawing them carefully. They used magnifying glasses to study the detail more closely, which evoked gasps of awe at what they saw. Some were able to use colour wash appropriately, but others applied the paint too thickly. There was good opportunity to develop their painting skills by learning the basic principle of using the brush to paint in one direction. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have been looking at the works of famous artists, such as Marc Chagall. Inspired by this artist's 'I and the Village', they have been composing their own work on the theme, 'I and the School'. They have carefully observed aspects of the school, and coupled them with their own 'dreams', to produce sketches of their ideas. They have prepared for their final picture by drawing dividing lines and shapes in wax crayon and applying a light colour wash, ready to include their own compositions on the theme. In Year 6, the skill of applying colour wash is further developed in their work on movement pictures in the manner of the futurist artists, such as Severini. They have very carefully applied a colour wash to their paper, ready to create their own 'movement' picture, using the figures they have been sketching in their books. Year 5 pupils have linked their art to the history and drama topic on 'The Greeks', and made some very good glazed papier mache vases. They worked collaboratively to design, make and decorate the vases, using collage, based on black and white designs they had done previously.

100. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen was good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject, and pupils respond well to their teaching. There is no systematic assessment of art. Pupils' work is well displayed in the classrooms. Resources to support the curriculum are good, and these include knowledgeable and artistic parents and governors, who help with art lessons in some of the classrooms.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. It was not possible to make a judgement about standards at the end of Year 6 due to insufficient evidence. Design and technology is timetabled to take place in the summer term in Year 6. However, in the lessons and work seen in the rest of the school, standards are average, with particularly good examples of glove puppets in Year 2. The school has maintained this standard since the last inspection.

102. In Year 1 pupils had looked at the different shapes of buildings and designs, such as a section of the British Museum. They used ICT to study different types of homes and shapes used, for example in

the construction of a tepee. Some pupils used construction materials to make similar buildings, such as flats and bungalows. They constructed and evaluated the strength of hinges using cardboard and Sellotape, to make opening doors. They plan to try other materials to make the hinges stronger in their next lesson. In Year 2 pupils designed and made some very good glove puppets. Some of their designs matched the detail exactly of the finished product. They show maturity in the way they evaluate their own work and each other's, as seen in the Years 3 and 4 design of freestanding picture frames. They have designed and made a first version, just using cardboard and evaluated whether it meets its purpose. Learning from this evaluation, they are now designing their final product, which will be a framed picture of themselves, to give as a gift. They have selected materials carefully from a varied range including wood. In Year 5, pupils made biscuits and evaluated their success. They made very sensible suggestions to improve the flavour, texture, shape and design of a finished product, to be given as an Easter gift to their families.

103. The teaching seen was at least good and some was very good. Pupils enjoy design and technology, and develop a good attitude to evaluation and assessment of their work. The new subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic in leading the subject well.

GEOGRAPHY

104. Standards are above average in Year 6 and throughout most of the other year groups in the school. In Year 5, standards are currently well above average, due to the proportion of pupils who are already able to understand and do Level 4 work. Since the last inspection, there has been good overall improvement in pupils' attainment and achievement due to the development of teaching and improvement in the curriculum.

105. Pupils' rate of achievement is good from Year 2, but limited work has been covered in Year 1 and so, achievement at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. Progress is especially good in pupils' development of using and understanding maps. In this respect, achievement is very good by Year 6, as all pupils confidently use and locate six figure grid reference points and they are beginning to understand how to work in different scales as seen when pupils used different maps to locate Benenden and work out the distance in kilometres to other places in Britain. This work also shows the strong links with mathematics. Traveller pupils and pupils with special educational needs are helped to achieve average standards. This is due to good support in class lessons. More able pupils achieve satisfactorily by Year 2 and then make good progress as they move through the school.

106. There has been good improvement in teaching and learning since 1997, with no unsatisfactory teaching evident. From Year 2 onwards, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Little evidence was available for Year 1, although a display showed that pupils are making simple maps and can compare two different locations. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach basic skills well, as evident in the work on coastal erosion. Lessons are well planned. Pupils know what they are doing and apply their knowledge to their own areas of enquiry, as seen in Years 4 and 5, when pupils designed their own flood defences for Bideford. Pupils' attitudes and concentration are very good; they work at a very good pace and make good use of literacy skills to present their work. Links with literacy are strong. This is because teachers place a strong emphasis on widening pupils' vocabulary and developing writing and reading. For example, in an English lesson, the links with geography were excellent as pupils researched and made a persuasive argument case for and against producing genetically modified foods in the local environment. This example also exemplifies the very good links to pupils' moral, social and cultural awareness.

107. The curriculum is well thought out for mixed age classes. Time is organised to enable pupils to work in depth on projects. Leadership and management of the subject is good showing development in the use of ICT and in the range of visits to support pupils' understanding of the subject. As yet the use

of information and communication technology, to support pupils' learning is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, the school is beginning to develop this and assessment procedures as part of the improvement plan for geography.

HISTORY

108. Evidence from past written work indicates that pupils attain the standards expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6 and that their achievements are satisfactory overall.

109. The work in Year 2 shows that pupils gain an understanding of the past through learning about historical characters, such as Louis Braille and Guy Fawkes. They retell the stories of main points in these people's lives and explain the reasons why they acted as they did, for example, how Florence Nightingale fought for better conditions for the sick and how she convinced others that women could play a valuable role in this. The work shows that pupils' literacy skills are being developed well in the subject, including some research work by the more able pupils. A fairly narrow range of work was seen in Year 6 but there is to be a greater focus in the summer term. The writing of pupils at all levels of attainment shows that they have a satisfactory understanding of differences in life styles and changes in Victorian times. They use appropriate sources, including the Internet and census materials, to gain information. The writing of the more able pupils reflects greater expectations of teachers as it has greater depth and reasoning. However, the tasks set are often similar for all pupils and are not always specifically aimed at developing more advanced skills. Some useful links have been made with literacy, for example, a study of *The Canterbury Tales*, and these help develop pupils' understanding.

110. The two lessons observed in Years 3 to 5 showed how teachers develop pupils' understanding and feeling for the period being studied. The good methods used created high levels of interest amongst the pupils. For example, in one lesson the teacher lined up pupils in the different formations of the two armies involved in the Battle of Marathon. As they advanced on each other, she asked pupils on each side how they felt to be involved in the manoeuvre. Opposing feelings of fear and power were expressed. Other factors in the battle were clearly explained by the teacher. This helped pupils to achieve good standards in their oral and written work, for instance, when discussing views such as, 'they may have fought hard, but they didn't know the area and got trapped in the marshes'.

111. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards are similar, but satisfactory management has ensured that past weaknesses in lesson planning have been dealt with to ensure there is a better balance to the work across the school. A good feature is the study of the development of Romany culture. This increases pupils' understanding and appreciation of the backgrounds of some traveller families in the area. Studies of local historical buildings and links with a local museum also help to make learning meaningful. There is little information on how well pupils are achieving. This restricts the school's ability to track progress and identify strengths and weaknesses in learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

112. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is below that expected nationally. Although standards are improving and are better than at the last inspection, pupils are not yet achieving the standards they are capable of in a few areas of the subject. At the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly that expected nationally and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good use of laptop computers in many lessons to help them to record their work effectively. Due to the limitations of the accommodation, it is not possible to have access to ICT resources in some lessons around the village.

113. By the end of Year 6, pupils use the Internet to find information to support their work in a number of subjects, for example, to learn about King Alfred in history or coastlines in geography.

Pupils have combined pictures, sound and text to make slide shows. They use various functions of the computer competently including spell checkers for word processing, spreadsheets for recording information and the various design possibilities for creating posters. Pupils enter information and produce various graphs but have not tackled the more advanced skills for handling data expected for their ages. Similarly, in using computers for controlling actions, they have given instructions for a shape to be drawn on the screen. However, they have not completed more complex instructions such as those used to control models or sequences such as those used on traffic lights.

114. By the end of Year 2, pupils have operated a 'roamer' (programmable model that moves around the floor after simple instructions have been entered), have changed the colours and typefaces of work to improve its presentation and made 'pictograms' about their favourite foods. As in Years 3 to 6, they have used the computer to support their work appropriately in other subjects, for example, in finding out about Neil Armstrong from information stored on a CD ROM or, in science, learning to sequence the growth patterns of plants in the correct order.

115. Although there is further work to be done in raising standards, the subject has been led well to ensure good improvement since the last inspection. At that time, the teaching of ICT did not meet the legal requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources were inadequate, with some classes not having access to a working computer. Now all aspects of the subject are taught and resources have improved significantly, with a good range of up-to-date equipment. This includes a study centre in the library with computers, an interactive white board (a large display board linked to a computer which enables pupils and teachers to demonstrate various ideas by touching the screen). Digital cameras are used regularly by pupils. All classes now have computers linked to the Internet. Inadequate staff training was also a weakness at the last inspection. Teachers have now completed most of the required training and are soon to complete units on computer control, which will help them to raise standards in this aspect of ICT. The co-ordinator keeps a regular check on what is happening and has a clear plan of what needs to be done to raise standards.

116. The small amount of direct teaching observed, the use of computers during lessons and pupils' past work indicate that teaching is satisfactory. As a result, pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with learning difficulties and more able pupils, are currently making satisfactory progress. Teachers use the interactive white board effectively to introduce lessons. In an observed English lesson for more able pupils, the teacher used it very well to bring out key points to demonstrate the two sides of a debate. The pupils improved the balance of their arguments by using the Internet to find information about Vegetarianism and smoking. For the most part, teachers use classroom computers appropriately to support lessons. However, on occasions, opportunities are missed to use ICT, or pupils' work on computers is not relevant to the lesson. There is no consistent system used in the school to record how well pupils are achieving in the subject. This limits teachers' ability to track pupils' progress and identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. There is no collection of work or other recorded evidence explaining what pupils do during their time at the school. This omission is not helping the school to show what it does well and means that there are no examples showing the standards, or type of work expected in each year group for teachers to refer to.

MUSIC

117. Due to the limited opportunities to observe music during the inspection, no overall judgement has been made about standards and the overall quality of teaching and learning

118. The planning seen, suggests that pupils learn a good range of skills and knowledge and have plenty of opportunities to demonstrate their creative talents. In the assemblies seen, pupils sang tunefully, with enthusiasm. During the one lesson observed in the mixed year 4 and 5 class, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. Here, pupils listened to a range of music and then composed

their own simple pieces on the theme of jogging around the world, entitled 'Day off'. Pupils experimented with instruments imaginatively, but there were missed opportunities to use vocabulary such as crochet, quaver and to record their compositions. The main strength of the lesson was pupils' ability to work independently and organise themselves, so that they used their time well to produce group performances. Moreover, more able pupils had the opportunity to demonstrate their much higher than average skills, by showing their knowledge of dynamics (louder, quieter, silent), tempo (faster slower) and duration (longer, shorter steady beat or rhythm). In some classes, a parent was observed giving wonderful support to the teaching and learning of this subject.

119. The curriculum has been well thought out to support teachers who do not have specialist music knowledge and to give a wide range of opportunities to all abilities. The new scheme of work is carefully organised. Very good attention has been given to widening pupils' social, cultural and spiritual development. For example, pupils enjoyed an African drumming workshop. In discussion with pupils, they show very positive attitudes to music.

120. The quality of leadership and management is good; the co-ordinator is well qualified and enthusiastic. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in developing her role and a more coherent approach to the subject. A new policy is now in place, with many more pupils now benefiting from additional music tuition from the Kent Music School. This helps pupils, especially more able, talented and enthusiastic pupils to make good progress. They take regular examinations, but in the school as a whole, assessment procedures are underdeveloped. The choir is very active and takes a leading part in local festivals. An extracurricular recorder group is well supported by pupils from Year 2 upwards. The resources have improved to a good standard. The school is beginning to widen links with ICT, so that pupils can compose and record work more often. The school has correctly identified the need to develop simple assessment procedures and to provide time for the co-ordinator to observe lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

121. Not enough aspects of physical education were observed to make an overall judgement on attainment in the subject by the end of Years 2 and 6. In the lessons seen in Years 2, 3 and 4, pupils were achieving good standards in gymnastics and dance. In Years 5 and 6, the netball and hockey skills that were possible in the small playground, were those expected for the pupils' ages.

122. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning were good overall. Dance was taught well in Years 3 and 4. A sense of fun and enjoyment was created which ensured that all pupils willingly participated without inhibitions. Pupils' imaginative interpretation of the actions of machines included very expressive movements that reflected changes in the music that was played. As a result of effective teaching, pupils' dance is of a good standard by Year 4 and they are achieving well. In gymnastics, pupils in Year 2 successfully linked stretching and rolling movements. The teacher challenged and encouraged pupils to be creative. As a result, many pupils developed their own ideas well and demonstrated them with good control. Although most lessons went well, teachers did not always ask pupils to say how their own or other pupils' work could be improved. This restricted pupils' ability to learn from one another. A few boys in Year 4 misbehaved in one lesson, and learning slowed because the teacher needed to take time to ensure all the class were co-operating and paying full attention to outdoor safety rules. Teachers are successfully following the good lesson-planning guidance that has been developed since the last inspection. However, the very confined space in the playground means that pupils practising, for example, hockey skills, cannot move around at speed. Teachers do not always incorporate enough extra vigorous exercise during outdoor lessons to compensate for this.

123. The facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory. The lack of an equipped school hall and inadequate outdoor space restricts the range of learning opportunities. Pupils use the village hall for indoor PE but, understandably, this is also required for other community uses. The hall is only available on one day a week, and not at all after school. This means that indoor clubs that the school would like to run cannot take place. The hall provides good space but, due to storage restrictions, has little high level equipment so pupils can develop a full range of gymnastic skills, for example by learning to jump and land correctly from a reasonable height. The walk to and from the hall takes several minutes and, whilst this is managed very well by staff, inevitably potential learning time is lost. Similarly, pupils need to walk to a nearby field for other outdoor activities. This is shared with other users and is not always available or fit for use. The playground provides only a small sloping area, which inhibits the development of PE skills. For example, pupils cannot develop an awareness of space in team games, practise hitting balls with any force nor develop skills such as controlling a ball when running.

124. Despite these restrictions, the subject has been led and managed well to ensure pupils have good opportunities to improve their PE abilities in other ways. This has been developed well since the last inspection. Links with local secondary schools, including one specialising in sport, have been particularly valuable. Pupils benefit in several ways for example, from the swimming facilities available, the dance festivals and sports competitions organised by secondary school staff. Pupils with talents are identified by the school and are strongly encouraged to attend a range of clubs for Years 5 to 8 held at one of the secondary schools. Valuable training has been provided by secondary school staff, including visits to Benenden to advise and support teachers during lessons. The success of this was reflected, for example, in the good teaching of gymnastics seen. Clubs run by staff and parents, including netball, football, cross-country and rounders, make a good contribution to pupils' learning. The school has successfully competed in local football and netball leagues and enters other competitions, such as cross-country running, when opportunities arise.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

125. By the end of Year 6, evidence from pupils' work and lessons seen show that pupils attain standards which are in line with those set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' achievement rate is satisfactory overall although sometimes pupils demonstrate good achievement in their discussion work, reflecting higher than average speaking skills.

126. Throughout the school, pupils' knowledge of Christianity is sound, and the key aspects of Christianity are revisited each year. Pupils learn about, and from, the main world religions, and know the similarities between them. This contributes well to pupils' tolerance and understanding of other cultures within our society.

127. Younger pupils learn about aspects of Judaism, such as Moses, the Torah and the Ten Commandments and have compiled their own list of ten rules. In Key Stage 2, they further develop their knowledge of Judaism, the Passover, and the links with Jesus and Christianity. They learn about Sikhism and compare their main celebrations with those of Christianity. Older pupils learn about the symbols used in Islam and their celebrations, and the symbols and celebrations of Christianity. As they progress through the school, pupils develop an enquiring attitude, and their own personal spiritual awareness deepens. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils were learning about Easter and the ways different Christians celebrate Easter, such as the Orthodox Christians. They compiled thoughtful lists of questions, which they wanted to ask parents and the local minister. These showed a growing depth of understanding, and ranged from; 'Why did Jesus die?', 'Why do you have candles?', to, 'Why do we hunt for eggs?' However, in Year 6, some pupils were still unsure about the meaning of Easter, and needed prompting to recall that it was the next coming celebration in the Christian Church. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils learnt about the importance of prayer in people's lives, and the example of people such as Mother Theresa. They showed awareness and sincerity, when they chose their own prayers from a

selection of books and prayer cards. They reflected on their meanings and showed sensitivity to feelings and events in the lives of others. Their knowledge of 'The Lord's Prayer' is sound. They analysed the meaning of the words of the prayer and rewrote them in simple, modern language, to share with a younger class.

128. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was very good at both key stages. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident in teaching religious education. They share their own personal experiences and attitudes well, such as the sharing by one teacher of the occasions when she has felt the need for prayer. Lessons are well planned and resources well used to enhance the curriculum. The local curate acted out the baptism of a baby (a doll), in the church, for younger pupils. The involvement of the local clergy and the proximity of the village church are very important resources, which play a large part in developing pupils' awareness of Christianity. Overall, resources are satisfactory, with some good videos, well used to support learning. Formal assessment is not in place, but teachers assess informally at the end of each module. The very knowledgeable co-ordinator provides good leadership. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when the lack of a clear scheme of work was a key issue.