

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whitstable

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118759

Headteacher: Mrs E J Leaman

Reporting inspector: Mr D Manuel
21090

Dates of inspection: 24th - 28th March 2003

Inspection number: 247959

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Northwood Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Porro

Date of previous inspection: December 1997

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21090	Mr D Manuel	Registered inspector	English Music Foundation Stage Educational inclusion, including race equality	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
8991	Ms P Goldsack	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
24019	Mr K Parry	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Special educational needs	
6169	Mr M Bradshaw	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
28071	Mr A Williams	Team inspector	Art and design Geography History	English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic School is a primary school for pupils aged between four and eleven years, situated in Whitstable in Kent. The school mainly serves the areas of Tankerton and Swalecliffe in the surrounding area, with a very few pupils coming from Faversham, Canterbury and Herne Bay. The school has 302 pupils on roll, above average size. These are organised into eleven classes, with a combination of single year group classes and mixed year group classes. There are 33 pupils identified with special educational needs under the Code of Practice (eleven per cent, below average), with five pupils having statements of special educational need (above average). Twelve children are identified as being eligible for free school meals, (four per cent) which is well below the national and local education authority average. There are 17 pupils from minority ethnic groups; four pupils speak English as an additional language, but none are at an early stage of acquisition. Attainment on entry indicates that children are broadly average but there is an emerging pattern of more children having speaking, listening and communication problems.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's is a good school. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has very effectively managed the changes in the school's priorities over the past two years. The school provides a very caring and inclusive environment which is naturally incorporated into the daily life of the school. Staff work very effectively as a team and all show a commitment to provide the best opportunities to enable all pupils to achieve their full potential. This is evident in the good planning and teaching and the good progress made by pupils. By the end of Year 6 pupils attain above expected levels in English and music. Governors, parents and pupils all acknowledge the efforts of the headteacher and the staff. Much has been achieved, although there are still a few areas for improvement, of which the school is aware. Taking all factors into account, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and management.
- The quality of teaching is good and results in pupils making good progress.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- Significant improvement has taken place since the previous inspection and the strong team commitment includes all adults and pupils.
- The school provides a strong inclusive approach which is particularly well supported by the teaching assistants.
- The school has developed a very good partnership with parents, who themselves have very good views of the school.

What could be improved

- More challenge needed for higher attaining pupils.
- Better provision for all pupils within the mixed-age classes.
- Better time allocation for the non-core subjects.

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 previously inspected in December 1997. Since then significant improvement has taken place in the areas identified in the previous report. Curriculum planning has been improved by creating guidance for what should be taught in all subjects. Provision for Years 3 to 6 now fully meets requirements. Assessment procedures have been improved, are now good and closely linked to planning. Detailed information is used by teachers to plan the next stages in learning. An agreed marking policy has been successfully introduced to ensure consistency in practice. There is now greater teacher confidence and expertise in most subjects and a common approach throughout Years 3 to 6.

Teachers with subject responsibilities are now more closely involved in monitoring and observing teaching and learning and sharing good practice. New teaching staff have also contributed to improvements in planning and teaching. In addition to these previous issues, good improvement has been made in raising standards in information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, geography, and design and technology from below expected levels to expected levels and in music from below to above expected levels. The quality of teaching has improved from sound to good and the quality of leadership and management has improved from sound to very good.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	A	A*	A
mathematics	D	C	B	C
science	C	D	B	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The school's results in the National Curriculum tests in 2002 for eleven-year-olds in Year 6 were very high in English, and above the national average in mathematics and science. When compared to similar schools, results were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science. These levels were higher than in recent years and reflect the improvements that have taken place in planning, teaching and learning. Trends over the past three years have exceeded the national average in English and mathematics and have matched the national average in science. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 6, all pupils achieve well and attain above expected levels in English and music. In all other subjects attainment is at expected levels.

Children enter the reception classes with levels of attainment which cover the full range and are broadly average. Children make good progress in the six areas of learning during their time in the reception year. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests in 2002 for seven-year-olds in Year 2 were above the national average in mathematics, average in reading and well below average in writing. When compared to similar schools, results were average in mathematics and well below average in reading and writing. The year group in question had been identified by the school as a weaker year group. Trends over the past three years have exceeded the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that all pupils achieve well and attain above expected levels in speaking, listening and music and expected levels in all other subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils settle quickly and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils work hard and help each other to succeed. Boys and girls get on very well together and treat each other fairly.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. Pupils' personal development is good and relationships are excellent. Adults and pupils have great respect for each other.

Attendance	Good. Attendance figures are above the national average.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. During the inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons with three-quarters being good or better. There are now higher proportions of teaching that are good or better than at the time of the previous inspection and previously almost one-fifth of teaching was unsatisfactory. The teaching in the reception classes is good and enables all children to make good progress in their learning. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is good and effectively builds on the good teaching of the younger children. Teaching is very good in Year 6. The characteristics of the good and better teaching include good management of behaviour and high expectations of what pupils should achieve. These factors create a purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Teachers question and prompt pupils skilfully, ensuring that pupils of all capabilities are fully involved in whole-class discussions. However, in a very small number of lessons that were satisfactory overall, relative weaknesses include not sustaining the levels of challenge throughout the lesson.

The teaching of English and basic literacy skills is good. Teachers provide a good range of activities that develop pupils' communication skills and engage their interests. Teachers provide good opportunities in other subjects to develop pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The teaching of mathematics is good and mental calculation is a strong feature of all mathematics lessons. In most literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils work well and share ideas to develop their learning. Although most other pupils are also achieving well, higher attaining pupils, except in literacy, frequently do not make sufficient progress because not enough is expected of them. Great credit is due to the teachers and the teaching assistants for their good support of pupils with special educational needs. This support results in good levels of achievement for these pupils in relation to their targets and the improved standards achieved by the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its pupils. Strengths are the development of pupils' literacy skills and opportunities to develop good skills in music. Time allocation in Years 3 to 6 is below recommended levels overall and is low in some subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Teachers carefully adapt their work to meet pupils' particular needs, often with extra adult help. Provision contributes strongly to the good progress made towards set targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall good. Provision for moral and social development is very good, for personal and spiritual development provision is good and for cultural development provision is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very caring and supportive school where the wellbeing of all pupils is important to all members of the staff. Assessment procedures are good and help track pupils' progress and identify the next stages in learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and has managed improvements in the school very well. She provides a very clear direction to the work of the school. Contributions from other key staff are good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively and provide good support for the development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and governors have developed suitably structured procedures to review the work of the school in order to identify and agree future priorities.
The strategic use of resources	The adequacy of staffing is good; the adequacy of resources and accommodation is satisfactory. The strategic use of all these elements is good.

The school applies the principles of best value well, seeking to improve the whole-school performance. Taking into account the improvements in many aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection, the school provides good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in school is good. • Their children like school. • The school is well led and managed. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel that they could be better informed about how their children are getting on. • The range of activities provided outside of lessons.

The inspection team confirms the points which please parents most and would add that these aspects of school life are very good. With regard to what parents would like to see improved, the team judges that there is good curriculum information provided for each class and parents are well informed about what their children will be studying. There are planned meetings each term for parents to discuss their children's progress and their targets for improvement. These meetings, and those organised around specific curriculum themes, are well attended by parents.

Contrary to parents' views, the inspection team judges that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, which pupils enjoy. These include clubs for homework, various sporting clubs, a range of musical activities, French and daily sessions in the library after school for those needing them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the reception classes with levels of attainment which cover the full range and are broadly average but there is an emerging pattern of more children having speaking and listening problems. Children make good progress in the six areas of learning during their time in the reception year. By the time children enter Year 1, standards in personal, social and emotional development are above the expected levels of the early learning goals. In the other areas of learning, namely communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development, standards are at expected levels.
2. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests in 2002 for seven-year-olds in Year 2 were above the national average in mathematics, average in reading and well below average in writing. When compared to similar schools, results were average in mathematics and well below average in reading and writing. These levels were lower than the previous results for some years. The year group in question had been identified by the school as a weaker year group. Trends over the past three years have exceeded the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In science, teacher assessments indicated that pupils' overall attainment was similar to the national average but fewer achieved the higher levels than might be expected.
3. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests in 2002 for eleven-year-olds in Year 6 were very high in English, and above the national average in mathematics and science. When compared to similar schools, results were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science. These levels were higher than in recent years and reflect the improvements that have taken place in planning, teaching and learning in literacy. Trends over the past three years have exceeded the national average in English and mathematics. In science, test results were above the national average and in line with the results of similar schools. The trend in science results has been similar to the national average. Over the last five years there has been no significant difference in the test results of boys and girls in these subjects.
4. Targets for the year 2002 were related to the potential of the pupils and results were close to predictions, although a little higher than predicted in Year 6. Targets for the current Year 2 pupils show that proportions of pupils attaining average and above average results are expected to be higher. Targets for the current Year 6 are expected to be a little lower than last year. The school is committed to raising standards further and is well placed to do so.
5. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the current Year 2 attain standards in English which, overall, are at expected levels. Pupils read accurately and with expression and develop an interest in books. They develop satisfactory writing skills in a range of good learning opportunities with a significant minority attaining above expected levels and most of the remainder at expected levels. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and to each other and are confident in expressing their ideas in lessons. Standards in speaking and listening are above expected levels. In mathematics, standards are at expected levels. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of place value up to 100 and confidently add and subtract. In science, pupils acquire satisfactory knowledge and

skills in a range of studies, including healthy diet and electrical circuits. In all other subjects standards are at expected levels.

6. These judgements indicate that since the previous inspection, standards have risen in ICT and geography, which previously had been below expected levels, and dropped in history and physical education which had been above expected levels. Other subjects have remained at the same levels.
7. The current Year 6 pupils achieve well and attainment in English and music are above expected levels, with standards of writing well above expected levels. In mathematics, most pupils have acquired a satisfactory range of methods to add, subtract, multiply and divide and show a sound understanding of the relationship between these operations. The school has identified problem solving as an area to be improved. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in this aspect of mathematics are not as high as they should be. In science, pupils attain expected levels. The development of scientific skills is improving and pupils understand the need for a fair test. In all other subjects, standards are at expected levels. This shows significant improvement since the previous inspection when standards were above expected levels only in English and below expected levels in ICT, art and design, geography and music. Most pupils achieve well and build systematically on their knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Pupils develop their ICT skills effectively to support literacy work but their use in other subjects is broadly satisfactory.
8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, in line with other ability groups. Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support and motivate these pupils successfully to help them make good progress towards their individual targets. The majority of these pupils have particular difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics. A few pupils have more significant learning needs and have a statement of special educational need. Although most of this group remain well behind others, they too achieve well in relation to their targets.
9. Almost all pupils have achieved well this year, due to the improvements in planning which include more challenging opportunities to extend skills. However, in classes with mixed-year groups, a number of higher attaining and average pupils have not been challenged as well as they might have been. This contrasts with Year 6 where there are two discrete classes of Year 6 pupils and challenge for the higher attaining pupils and other pupils is very evident. As a result, these pupils make good progress towards higher standards and this is reflected in the proportions that achieve above average levels in national tests at the end of Year 6. Although most pupils in other year groups achieve well, higher attaining pupils frequently do not make sufficient progress because not enough is expected of them.
10. The small proportion of minority ethnic pupils, none of whom who speak English as an additional language at an early stage of acquisition, also make good progress and achieve their full potential. Teachers value all pupils equally and carefully identify those who are disadvantaged or need additional support in order to achieve their potential.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and these have improved since the previous inspection. They arrive in cheerful spirits each morning and are eager to learn. In lessons pupils settle quickly, listen carefully and ask and answer questions with confidence. These commendable traits were seen across all classes and have a very good impact on pupils' attainment. A good example was seen among pupils in Year 3

who regularly take turns and give a one-minute talk to their classmates on their chosen subject and then answer questions. These pupils enjoy this activity and speak imaginatively and clearly. The clear link between high quality teaching and pupils' very good responses was evident throughout the inspection. In a very well-taught mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 6 worked at a brisk pace that matched their teacher's high level of enthusiasm. The pupils' very high level of commitment is also reflected in their active participation in the full range of clubs and extra-curricular activities available to them. Pupils arrive promptly each morning and, as at the previous inspection, their attendance is good and above the national average. Pupils' punctual and regular attendance has a positive impact on standards. The very small number of unauthorised absences is the result of family holidays that exceed the statutory limit.

12. Pupils' behaviour is also very good and reflects improvement since the previous inspection. Each class formulates its own rules, which complement the school's behaviour policy. Pupils work hard to earn house points and help each other to succeed. Bullying is a rare occurrence and is corrected quickly according to the anti-bullying policy. Pupils' behaviour remains very good in the dining hall and outdoors and their high spirits are well directed in playground games. An endearing feature of these pupils is that they smile a lot. Boys and girls get on well together and treat each other fairly. There are very high levels of social and racial harmony. There has been one fixed period exclusion for misbehaviour over the past reporting year. Parents who made their views known during the inspection, confirm overwhelmingly that their children like school and are very well behaved.
13. Relationships between adults and pupils and among pupils themselves are excellent and have improved significantly since the previous inspection when they were reported to be sound. Adults and pupils value and respect each other. The pupils' very good listening skills and courteous manner help to support learning. They display very good levels of moral and social development. For example, pupils in a science lesson in Year 6 listened very respectfully to their classmates' responses and, even when someone made an error, there was no calling out. Learning is extended, as pupils are keen to answer questions and share their ideas in this supportive atmosphere. Pupils understand the impact of their actions very well. They regularly review each other's work in planned sessions of peer assessment in a mature and constructive manner.
14. Pupils' personal development is good. In lessons pupils responsibly carry out jobs such as delivering registers and tidying equipment. Members of the school council meet frequently and take their roles seriously. Currently they are considering an additional merit scheme for the school. Pupils in Year 6 often play with, and help, the youngest children and are good role models for the rest of the school. There is scope to extend pupils' independence and provide more areas where they can take charge of activities in the school community. Pupils have a good sense of spirituality and make valid contributions to the discussions held within lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE). They display empathy for less fortunate members of society and participate in a range of fund-raising activities for local and national charities. They have a good appreciation of historical and geographical sites in the locality and of western European culture. However, there is only satisfactory awareness of the rich, multi-ethnic diversity of contemporary British society. The lack of multicultural displays, posters and exhibits within the school and limited coverage of this area within the curriculum restrict their view of the world.
15. Pupils who have special educational needs enjoy the same excellent relationships with adults as all other pupils. As a result, they have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. Pupils respect and care for each other and this encourages those who

are less confident and raises their self-esteem. A small minority of these pupils also has behavioural problems. However, skilful and sensitive handling by teachers and teaching assistants minimises the impact on their own learning and that of their classmates.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The overall quality of teaching is good and meets the needs of pupils well. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons with just over half the lessons being good and a quarter of lessons being very good or excellent. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when one fifth of the lessons were unsatisfactory and only a small proportion was good or better. These improvements are due to changes in staff and a new team commitment to share good practice and make good use of planning and assessment to challenge pupils. Teachers value all pupils equally as individuals, whatever their needs, and work hard to enable them to achieve their full potential.
17. The teaching of children in reception classes is good. Strengths include teachers using questions and prompts successfully with the whole class at the beginning and end of lessons. This strategy enhances children's learning by ensuring their understanding of tasks and assesses their levels of learning. Good provision is made to promote children's personal, social and emotional skills and very good relationships are evident. Teachers support children's development of early reading, writing and mathematical skills well and effectively develop these basic skills. Teachers and teaching assistants have very good systems for recording daily how pupils achieve in relation to the areas of learning and the early learning goals. This information is used well to ensure that all activities on a daily basis are relevant and purposeful for all children, taking account of their prior learning. There is good use of the outdoor space to enhance children's learning in all areas of their development.
18. Teaching is good overall in Years 1 to 6 and very good in Year 6. The characteristics of the good and better teaching include very good management of pupils' behaviour and high expectations of what all pupils should achieve. These factors create a purposeful working atmosphere in classrooms, particularly in the literacy and numeracy sessions. The relationships between teachers and other adults in these lessons are very good and have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning, making them keen to get started on their work. Teachers question and prompt skilfully, ensuring that pupils of all capabilities are fully involved in whole-class discussions by phrasing questions in different ways. These particular strategies were used well in a Year 6 literacy lesson, when pupils presented their arguments about whether animals should be kept in zoos. As a result, pupils were keen to offer their well-considered views and also appreciated the opinions of others.
19. In most lessons, teachers discuss with pupils what they are expected to learn and constantly remind them as the lesson progresses. This approach enables pupils to gain a good understanding of the extent of their own learning and how it relates to their specific learning targets. Other strengths include very good subject knowledge and the use of subject-specific vocabulary to extend pupils' learning significantly. These strengths were demonstrated well in a Years 4 and 5 music lesson which required pupils to identify key elements of harmony, contrast, ostinato and octaves. In most lessons, resources are used effectively to support the activities. This was evident, for example, in Year 3 science when pupils investigated different types of soil and their properties. Teachers' subject knowledge is used well in the joint planning of lessons and good links are made between subjects. However, in a very small number of

lessons which were satisfactory overall, relative weaknesses include not sustaining the levels of challenge throughout the lesson and missing opportunities to extend pupils' learning beyond the set task. Another area for improvement is that teachers' planning does not give sufficient attention to meeting the differing needs of pupils within the mixed-age classes or to ensuring that higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently.

20. The teaching of basic literacy skills is good overall and very good in Year 6. Teachers are implementing the National Literacy Strategy well by providing a good range of activities that develop pupils' communication skills and gain their interest. Teachers plan opportunities in subjects other than English, to develop pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. These are particularly evident in history and science lessons where pupils' work contributes to their progress in the basic skills of English. Sessions focusing on personal, social and moral education, when pupils hold discussions about issues that relate particularly to their personal development, are successfully used by teachers as opportunities for the development of speaking and listening skills. The National Numeracy Strategy is implemented well. Number work is effectively promoted and mental calculation is a strong feature of all mathematics lessons. Adequate links are made with other subjects such as ICT and science, when pupils are involved in calculating, measuring and presenting information in graphical form. Pupils' learning is supported well in other areas by teachers' clear understanding of how skills in one subject can be consolidated by experiences in another subject, as in links between literacy and music. Pupils are positively encouraged to work independently and in pairs, sharing ideas. These opportunities help them increase their levels of social and moral development successfully.
21. Teachers make very effective use of the good number of teaching assistants to provide additional instruction and guidance for pupils who need individual help, including those of minority ethnic groups. Teachers and teaching assistants focus clearly on the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs to help them meet their individual targets. They are calm and patient and are clearly aware of pupils' emotional and physical needs while supporting them academically. The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is very good and contributes significantly to the good progress made by these pupils. When pupils are withdrawn individually or in small groups for extra help they make clear gains in basic skills and in their personal development as a result of focused and explicit teaching. Several sessions were seen in which pupils in Years 1, 2 and 6 were both challenged and supported in very structured and intensive sessions. There was a good blend of helpful guidance and direct instruction that helped them to move forward in their understanding.
22. Good provision for the all round development of pupils supports the strong inclusive approach of the school and helps to create the excellent relationships and very good attitudes throughout the school. Homework is set regularly and all pupils have regular practice in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and this successfully consolidates their learning in lessons.

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

23. The previous report judged that pupils were offered a broadly based and relevant curriculum, but there were weaknesses in time allocations and coverage was inadequate. National Curriculum requirements were not met in ICT, art and design, and design and technology. The absence of schemes of work and little joint planning meant that consistency and equality could not be ensured. Improvements ensure that statutory requirements are now met for all areas of the National Curriculum. The

school's planning ensures more consistency and logical development of knowledge and skills as pupils move through the school. However, the time allocated to some subjects remains low. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the time allocated to the teaching of the curriculum is below the recommended minimum for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

24. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its pupils, while those with special educational needs are well catered for. Strengths of the curriculum are the development of pupils' literacy skills and opportunities to develop good skills in music.
25. There is a good curriculum in place for children in reception, which covers all areas of learning. The well-planned activities enable children to make good progress in all areas. Children's personal development is given an especially important focus. The range of activities to promote the development of language and mathematical skills, and to raise awareness of the world around them, is well thought out. A good range of indoor activities encourages learning through play, such as role-play in the 'vet's surgery'.
26. The curriculum for pupils in the remainder of the school provides a wide range of activities, which helps prepare them satisfactorily for secondary school. The school gives a strong emphasis to literacy and numeracy. Good attention has been paid to ensuring that national requirements are met within the time constraints in Years 3 to 6. However, the time allocated to art and design, design and technology, geography and history is low. This limits aspects of coverage and the depth of study in some topics. The overall time is over an hour below the recommended minimum for Years 3 to 6. The school is now basing its work on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and commercial or national guidance that is being adapted to meet the school's needs. These strategies help to provide adequate coverage. Careful attention is being given to ensuring that undue repetition of work is avoided as the varying pattern of mixed-age classes moves through the school. The school's weekly timetable has been modified in an attempt to provide better subject coverage. However, use of this time is not always effective. Some classes experience a formal literacy session, followed by a further half hour of additional literacy. Quite often a subject is taught for relatively short periods either side of lunch. In addition to the basic curriculum, Year 6 pupils study French shortly before their residential trip to France. Year 1 pupils also have some French input, which they used to good effect in an assembly.
27. The successes of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are helping to improve achievement. The impact is especially evident in English, where pupils' attainment is above average by Year 6. Pupils' literacy skills are used extensively across other subjects of the curriculum; much less use of numeracy is evident. ICT is often used to support pupils' literacy work, but its use in other subjects is less common.
28. The school has a good programme for developing pupils' PSHE. This is based mainly on the religious education 'Here I am' programme. The regular visit of the 'Life Education Bus' supports the PSHE programme. A policy for sex education, which was not in place at the time of the previous inspection, has now been agreed. It is taught mainly through science and the 'Here I am' topic. Drugs awareness is studied in the relevant sections of the science National Curriculum. Good attention is given to pupils' personal development in their learning in other subjects.
29. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are good. Work is carefully adapted to meet their particular needs and most of the time pupils learn alongside their classmates about the same subjects and topics. Often this is with extra adult help. In particular, teaching assistants give high quality help. In addition, some pupils regularly

work outside the classroom and a particular strength is the range of programmes in place to address the specific needs of individuals, including academic, personal and physical. Most frequently though, this is planned to support pupils who are having difficulties with literacy and to help them catch up. It contributes strongly to the good progress they make in reading and writing and to the above average standards seen in English at the end of Year 6. The school now has an able pupils policy, but it is in the early days of implementation.

30. The school maintains good links with the community. The school is very involved in local events and initiatives, such as 'Whitstable Oyster Week'. It enters a range of sporting tournaments and music competitions, and enjoys considerable success. The 'St Mary's Swingers', a recorder group, received acclaim at a recent competitive performance. Year 6 pupils take part in a residential trip to France. Contrary to parents' views, the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, which pupils enjoy. These include clubs for homework, netball, rugby, football, cricket, a range of musical activities and French, and daily sessions in the library after school. Close links with other primary schools are helping to develop a more consistent curriculum. Good links also exist between the school and the Catholic secondary school to which most pupils transfer. There are also good links between the reception classes and the pre-school groups which children attend before they start school.
31. The school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is an improvement on the satisfactory standards judged in the previous report. Pupils' spiritual development is good. It is promoted effectively through religious education, in assemblies and in the caring approach within many lessons. Teachers use effective strategies to value pupils' views and contributions and help them to reflect on their own feelings and behaviour. This encourages them to think about the effect of their actions on others. Teachers provide a good range of opportunities to encourage pupils to explore and develop what interests and stimulates them, as demonstrated in the support provided for music. The school has developed an ethos in which pupils flourish and respect each other and their different talents. This is supported effectively through assemblies which acknowledge the efforts of others.
32. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. A strong moral code is taught through a whole-school culture and adults implement it consistently throughout the life of the school. This high quality approach forms the basis of the excellent relationships observed during the inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good role models by dealing with pupils in a calm and confident manner and, as a result, pupils respond in a similar way. The school's values are reflected in the class rules that are displayed clearly in classrooms. Pupils are encouraged to respond to these rules and show high levels of respect for each other and all adults in the school. Individual pupils are helped to add their own ideas for promoting all forms of equality and care of property. Teachers provide very good opportunities in the curriculum to explore moral concepts, such as whether animals should be kept in zoos.
33. The very good provision for pupils' social development is firmly rooted in the school's strong, inclusive approach. The school fosters these qualities through its mission statement on which school life is based and pupils thrive in a community where everyone is valued. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to share and work co-operatively in social and racial harmony and this is clearly evident throughout the school. Pupils are helped to understand that there are people less fortunate than themselves and enthusiastically raise money for charities and help senior citizens. This caring attitude supports their social development very well. In the playground, pupils are encouraged to share their games together in small groups, boys and girls, and in mixed

ages. Well-organised educational visits, team competitions and participation in musical festivals provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their social interaction, while at the same time extending their learning in a range of subjects.

34. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous inspection. Examples of interest in other cultures include a range of music, such as that celebrated in the Caribbean day. In literacy, different year groups study Greek myths and legends and the traditions of the African slave boats in the local oyster festival. In art and design, pupils study and work in the style of European artists and make Chinese lanterns and masks. Pupils also appreciate and learn about other faiths, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism and their special festivals. Pupils learn about their own culture through visits to the community. The provision is woven into the planning for different subjects but opportunities are missed to help pupils develop an awareness of the multicultural society in Britain and prepare them for playing an active role as citizens of the future.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. This is a very caring and supportive school where the wellbeing of all pupils is important to all members of the staff. The arrangements for child protection and pupils' welfare are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Risk assessments of the site are carried out regularly and meet legal requirements. Governors recently appointed to the premises committee are well placed to initiate an improved system of risk assessment after the current building works are completed. The headteacher is the named teacher responsible for child protection. The school's child protection policy is well written and known to all members of staff. The headteacher takes great care to ensure that all members of staff are regularly updated about practices and procedures related to child protection issues.
36. There is a satisfactory number of staff trained to administer first aid. Pupils with allergies or specific medical needs are well cared for. Although there is no medical room, the dedication of the staff overcomes this limitation well. Fire drills are held each term and fire safety equipment is inspected regularly. Pupils' very good behaviour supports safe practices in and around the school.
37. The headteacher and staff are alert to the needs of individuals, and pupils with special educational needs are identified early in their school lives. This is reflected in the good provision made for them throughout the school. Individual education plans are reviewed and updated regularly and teachers and support staff keep a close eye on progress. As a result, they know these pupils well and have a clear awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. The plans include targets and refer clearly to strategies for teaching and learning. However, the targets, although relevant to pupils' needs, are often not easily attainable in the short term. Another shortcoming is that, in some cases, targets are not specific enough and this makes it difficult to measure progress accurately. Both the headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) are aware of these issues. Measures already being put in place to deal with them include recent training for all staff. The school actively seeks the involvement of outside agencies in assessing and supporting the needs of pupils with more significant difficulties. For example, a neighbouring special school provides very good support that includes advice and guidance on a day-to-day basis and training for teachers and assistants.
38. The arrangements to monitor and improve attendance are good. Class registers are called at the beginning of each session and kept according to legal guidelines. Pupils' attendance patterns are reviewed each week. The school reminds parents about the

importance of prompt, regular attendance and requests that they refrain from taking family holidays during term time.

39. Procedures for checking on and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good and have improved since the previous inspection. The school's approach to discipline is positive and consistent and very well suited to the needs and personalities of the pupils. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and bring out the best in their pupils. The school's 'no blame' approach to bullying issues is successful and any differences among pupils are settled quickly and amicably. Class teachers know the pupils very well and keep good records of their personal development.
40. The assessment co-ordinator has introduced an effective and improving assessment system throughout the school for English and mathematics and this has contributed to the improvement in standards by Year 6. In the early years this is done using the early learning goals and the small steps (stepping stones) towards them. There are good procedures in place, using the expertise of teaching assistants, to record the assessments. This process tracks children's progress well in the Foundation Stage. The school fulfils its statutory duty to test pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and, in addition, tests pupils in English and mathematics in Years 3 to 5. The information from school testing is being organised onto a database so that staff can measure more effectively the progress of individuals and year groups and help the governors set challenging and realistic statutory targets for Year 6 pupils. In addition, the school also sets targets for Year 2 pupils' attainment. The information helps the school compare its performance with that at national and local levels.
41. Recently, the school has developed the systems further by using a tracker system of pupils' progress that breaks down each level of attainment. This informs both pupils and teachers about what progress has been made and what the next steps are for each ability group. This is in its early stages and not all pupils are yet fully aware of these next steps. The school intends to keep working on this and refining the targets for individual pupils. The school uses its information on pupils' progress well to identify those pupils who would benefit from additional work in literacy and numeracy.
42. The co-ordinators for assessment, English, mathematics and science analyse pupils' performance in the tests in Years 2 to 6. They work out what pupils found difficult or easy to answer and inform teachers so that successes may be celebrated and difficulties addressed. In this way teachers improve their own teaching and pupils' learning is improved. The assessment co-ordinator has also worked successfully with staff to compare and refine their assessment judgements using pupils' work.
43. There have been many improvements in assessing English and mathematics, and more recently science. Assessment procedures in science and the remaining subjects have not developed as much but even so are satisfactory. Teachers plan assessments into all their lessons which helps them plan new learning that focuses on identified weaknesses in pupils' learning. Staff make overall assessments of pupils' progress and report on this to parents each year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents' views of this popular school have improved since the previous inspection and are now very positive. The effectiveness of the school's link with parents is very good and reflects the mutual importance both the school and parents place on this

partnership. The home-school agreement is signed by all families and details effectively the responsibilities that parents and the school share in supporting their children.

45. Parents are very active in providing practical support for the school and their efforts are welcomed and valued by teachers. The impact of the parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good. A number of parents regularly volunteer to help in classrooms, particularly in Years 1 and 2. They are well directed and provide worthwhile help with reading, art and design, music, design and technology, physical education, the library, school trips and the netball club. An active, hardworking committee that organises fundraising and social events throughout the year leads the parents/friends association enthusiastically. Funds raised are used to purchase extra resources such as audio-visual equipment and library books. Parents appear as friendly as their children and host regular coffee afternoons to welcome new members into the school family. Non-Catholic parents were keen to express their approval for the welcome they receive. Many parents accept the school's invitation to attend specific assemblies and the school's dramatic productions are always well supported.
46. The quality of information provided for parents is good. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are combined into one document that is user- friendly and contains all the required information. Regular newsletters contain ongoing information about school activities. There is good curriculum information provided for each class and parents are well informed about what their children will be studying. Parents and teachers make good use of the home diary and reading diary in order to communicate with each other. There are planned meetings each term for parents to discuss their children's progress and their targets for improvement. These meetings and those organised around specific curriculum themes are well attended by parents. Parents agree that class teachers and the headteacher are friendly and easy to approach. There is a good induction programme for new parents and their children and helpful meetings for parents of pupils in Years 5 and 6 regarding the transfer to secondary school. During the inspection a few parents expressed concern about the lack of coaching for entrance to selective secondary schools. This criticism is unwarranted as the school makes it very clear that they are not required to carry out such a service and it will not take place. Pupils' end-of-year reports are well written, informative and meet legal requirements. The school will be updating their format and including pupils' targets for improvement at the end of this academic year.
47. The school reports that there is a good working partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are kept well informed at parent/teacher consultation evenings and are welcomed into school at other times to discuss their children's progress. In line with the recent national Code of Practice the school has highlighted its intention to involve parents, and where appropriate their children, more actively in setting and agreeing future targets.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. At the time of the previous inspection, the management of the school was judged as sound overall. Since then, there has been a period of significant change. The previous headteacher continued for two years and then resigned. The present headteacher, who was the deputy headteacher for two years, took over as acting headteacher for six months. She was then appointed headteacher two years ago. The new headteacher provides very good leadership and has managed improvements in the school very well. She provides a very clear direction to the work of the school.

49. Upon her appointment, the headteacher identified key areas needing improvement. These were to raise staff morale, develop a team spirit, develop collaborative planning, begin data analysis and improve the outdoor area for the Foundation Stage. In managing these priorities very well, the headteacher has improved the involvement of the governing body, created a strong team commitment from teaching staff and teaching assistants with all personnel aware of what the school needs to do to improve. The leadership and management of the school, provided by the headteacher, senior staff and governors, are good overall. The improvements in leadership are strongly supported by governors and parents in meetings and in questionnaires.
50. The headteacher, together with the newly appointed acting deputy headteacher, has created a very stimulating learning environment and a very inclusive approach that is naturally incorporated within the daily life of the school. The headteacher, through her visible presence around the school and her formal and informal involvement with pupils, sets a strong lead for her colleagues. The senior management team is involved and committed to further improvement of the school. The headteacher observes all teachers and monitors standards of teaching and learning. The co-ordinators for English and mathematics manage their subjects very effectively and have made important contributions to improving the curriculum planning. Other subject co-ordinators are at different stages of development due to different lengths of time in post but, overall, their monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and good practice is shared for the benefit of all.
51. The management of the school's arrangements for pupils who have special educational and other needs is good. The SENCO is an experienced teacher who has fairly recently taken on this new role. She has gained a clear view of the whole-school picture and is committed to further improvement of the school's provision. This includes continuing to refine teachers' expertise, particularly in connection with the more active involvement of parents and, where appropriate, pupils in target setting. Recent priorities have quite rightly focused on ensuring that pupils are well supported and making good progress. Now, both the SENCO and the headteacher are fully aware of the need to review and reorganise the systems for record keeping. For example, a simple recording sheet to show the provision and track the progress of each pupil would allow this information to be shared more readily with staff, parents and others.
52. The designated governor for special needs is also a recent appointment. She is preparing herself well through training and regular meetings with the SENCO for a more active role in planning and monitoring the school's provision. The school has adapted its work well to comply with new regulations and all statutory requirements are met.
53. The governing body has a clear understanding of its strategic role. The school improvement plan for 2002/3 identifies a range of short- medium- and long-term priorities and targets very clearly, focusing on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Individual governors play an active part in the life of the school. The governors successfully fulfil their statutory responsibilities and help to foster good links in the community. The school's aims and values in its mission statement are very relevant and well communicated to staff and parents, reflecting the positive team commitment among staff and governors.
54. The school has a good number of qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of all pupils and cover the full requirements of the National Curriculum. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now more closely linked to the school's own appraisal procedures, which meet statutory requirements for performance

management. Staff have an adequate range of individual strengths in subject knowledge and these are being increasingly shared to contribute to whole-school development in the curriculum and teaching. Induction procedures are good and new members of staff, including newly qualified teachers, feel well supported when they join the school, enabling them to settle quickly and successfully into their new roles.

55. Teachers and pupils are well supported by a good number of suitably trained and very effective teaching assistants. They make very good contributions to the work of the school and in particular to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. All staff have received computer training and this contributes to the improvements achieved in ICT. Support staff and lunchtime staff supervise activities at playtimes and this adds to pupils' enjoyment as well as encouraging their social interaction. The efficient administrative staff, meals' supervisors, site manager and cleaners are valued team members and contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school.
56. The school is housed in three adjacent buildings. Although not ideal, the accommodation is satisfactory and enables the school to teach all areas of the National Curriculum appropriately. Classrooms vary in size but all are kept tidy and contain attractive displays of the pupils' own work. There is a good-sized hard surface playground and playing field. Children in the Foundation Stage have their own newly created separate play area with a high quality soft surface tarmac. The school has worked hard to adapt the original building to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school hall is adequate in size and can accommodate all of the classes for whole-school assemblies. Since the previous inspection there has been innovative refurbishing of the top floor of the main building and it now houses the library, the computer suite and two small rooms for specialist teaching.
57. Overall, the school has adequate resources in all subjects and deficiencies identified in the previous report have been improved. The number of computers and the quality of software have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Computers are housed in the computer suite and in classrooms and provide the school with a good level of resources to teach ICT and support other subjects. The quantity and quality of books available to teach English and literacy are good. The supply of library books remains satisfactory. Old and worn fiction and non-fiction books have been discarded and the stock of new books increased.
58. The overall efficiency of the school is good and an improvement on the sound standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. The headteacher and governors have developed suitably structured procedures that effectively support the school's educational priorities. This is a process that now involves all members of staff in an annual review of the work of the school in order to identify and agree future priorities. Good use is made of new technology in all aspects of school life to improve efficiency levels and to support the curriculum. Specific funding, such as that for special educational needs, minority ethnic pupils and the national funding for ICT, has been used efficiently and resources acquired are used effectively to support teaching and learning.
59. The school successfully applies the principles of best value for money and regularly consults and involves all those concerned in decision-making about spending, including staff, parents and pupils. Full consideration is given to alternative providers for services and resources in order to acquire cost effectiveness and, as a result, money is spent carefully. The school's day-to-day financial controls and procedures are good, enabling the headteacher and governors to closely monitor and evaluate spending decisions,

such as the provision of extra teaching support to help raise standards. The most recent financial audit took place a year ago and raised a small number of minor points which have been resolved.

60. Taking into account the good achievement by pupils, the good teaching and learning which take place, the improvements in five subjects and many aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection and the low unit costs, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In order to further raise standards, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) improve provision for higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 5 to ensure that they are challenged to reach their full potential in all subjects; (paragraphs 9, 19, 84, 87, 96, 112 and 118)
 - (2) improve the provision for the different needs of pupils within the mixed-age classes in order that pupils in the same year group, but in a different class, have the same programme of learning; (paragraphs 9, 19, 90, 96 and 118)
 - (3) review the time allocated to the non-core subjects to ensure adequate coverage in subjects such as art and design, design and technology, geography and history, where time allocation is low. (paragraphs 23, 26, 102, 103 and 113)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

65

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

32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	10	35	17	0	0	0
Percentage	5	15	54	26	0	0	0

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

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)	302
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	20	21	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	15	18
	Girls	19	18	19
	Total	37	33	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (96)	80 (94)	90 (94)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	18
	Girls	19	19	20
	Total	38	38	38
Percentage of pupils	School	93 (94)	93 (94)	93 (91)

at NC level 2 or above	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	19	24	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	15	17
	Girls	22	21	22
	Total	38	36	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (85)	84 (71)	91 (83)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	18	12
	Girls	23	22	19
	Total	38	40	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (73)	93 (79)	72 (92)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
236	1	1
2	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

0
0
0
0
0
3

0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

The table 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)	10.75
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	229

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	594,584
Total expenditure	565,696
Expenditure per pupil	1,855
Balance brought forward from previous year	13,636
Balance carried forward to next year	42,524

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	302
Number of questionnaires returned	86

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	33	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	38	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	34	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	44	8	2	2
The teaching is good.	58	36	2	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	41	18	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	34	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	39	1	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	49	7	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	65	31	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	36	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	31	22	6	20

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

62. Children start in the reception classes in the September following their fourth birthday. Parents and children have good opportunities to get to know staff before they start school through visits in the previous summer term. Children attend part time initially, and then become full time according to age and personal needs. Attainment on entry fluctuates from year-to-year, but covers the full range and is broadly average. However, there is an emerging pattern of more children having speaking and listening problems. Good routines and work habits are established as soon as children enter the school. Consequently, all children are familiar with classroom routines and make good progress in developing basic social and academic skills. All children achieve well and make good progress in the Foundation Stage. They make particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the reception year, most children are likely to exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development and achieve them in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.
63. The quality of teaching is good. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous inspection. The classrooms are welcoming with attractive displays which celebrate the children's work and show them how much their work is valued. Equipment is particularly well organised so that children can choose from a good range of resources to support their learning. Teachers and their teaching assistants work together well, intervening at opportune moments by posing questions and probing understanding. This allows children to develop skills at their own levels of need. The sessions are well organised and provide children with a good range of suitable indoor and outdoor activities, which are securely based in structured play. Detailed planning identifies the activities for each day in each area of learning within the class. Assessment procedures are particularly good and are carried out daily by teachers and teaching assistants. These procedures enable teachers to identify exactly what the children have achieved and what they need to learn next. Good strategies are used to provide good early support for children with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. The outdoor area is used regularly for small groups of children to develop their physical and social skills.

Personal, social and emotional development

64. All children make good progress and achieve well. Most are likely to exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning, by the end of reception. Children learn to develop good self-help skills through quiet encouragement and show good self-care skills when moving about the classroom and the school. This is reflected in the confident way in which they find their own space and develop their own interests individually and in small groups. Children enjoy the outdoor activities and practise and extend a range of sequences of movement. Teaching is good. Teachers encourage children to learn to take turns and share equipment during indoor and outdoor activities. Skills of co-operation are developed further through structured learning activities. For example, in the designated role-play areas children act out various roles in pretend situations such as the 'vet's surgery'. In outside activities, the designated workshop area encourages role-play and co-operation related to the large wheeled toys and other equipment.

65. Children develop very good relationships and learn to communicate with each other in positive ways through speech and actions. This was demonstrated well when children were encouraged to talk about how their mums help them when they were preparing surprise cards for Mother's Day. The very good start that children make in their personal, social and emotional development is reflected in the very good relationships, attitudes and behaviour found in the reception classes. Adults use positive encouragement and this is reflected in the high self-esteem and confidence that the children quickly develop. All the children's answers and comments are received positively and welcomed by all adults working in the classroom.

Communication, language and literacy

66. All children make good progress and achieve well. Most are likely to achieve the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy. The quality of teaching is good and results in children making good progress in speaking and listening skills. The teachers and teaching assistants successfully encourage children to talk about their personal experiences and they do so, confidently and happily, using appropriate language. Questions and prompts are used well to inspire children to talk about the stories they are reading with the teacher, such as *'My Mum'*. As a result, children use correct vocabulary and learn key words. Thinking skills are developed well through focused questions. The role-play areas, such as the 'vet's surgery', provide good opportunities for children to talk together in focused activities that are carefully planned to encourage the use of specific language. In their roles as pet owner, receptionist, nurse and vet, small groups were observed using speaking skills confidently to explain what was wrong with the pet and what was going to be done to help it.
67. Children make satisfactory progress in developing their early reading skills. Children learn new initial and end sounds in a progressive way. Stories are carefully chosen to match children's interests and give good opportunities to learn about the way stories are structured, as well as learning to recognise key words by sight. The teaching of writing is effective. Children make good progress in developing their writing skills. Many suitable opportunities are provided for children to write about the things that interest them, for instance about their mothers under the title of *'My mum is ...'*. They make good attempts at spelling the words they do not know using their knowledge and understanding of letter sounds and names to help them. Most write their first names unaided, forming most letters correctly.

Mathematical development

68. Most children make good progress and achieve well. A majority of children are likely to attain the early learning goals in mathematical development by the end of the reception year. Good teaching ensures that different activities are matched to children's needs based securely on assessments of their previous experiences. Particular emphasis is placed on teaching children to count and recognise numbers. This is done effectively through the use of number tracks to which children regularly refer and the provision of different resources, such as coloured beads and linking blocks, to help their learning. Well-structured activities make sure that children get regular opportunities to recognise, order and count groups of objects accurately up to ten and sometimes beyond. This was demonstrated well when children were making patterns with coloured pegs and unifix blocks. They correctly identified patterns of colour in twos or more and recognised straight rows and diagonals.
69. Children have a good knowledge and understanding of regular shapes such as a circle, square, rectangle and triangle, and develop suitable language for describing the size

and position of objects. They also name three-dimensional shapes correctly, such as cones, cubes, spheres and pyramids, when reaching into a feely bag and describing a particular shape inside. They reinforce these mathematical ideas when creating their own sponge and paint patterns using different shapes. Children's learning is effectively supported through these well-planned activities involving interesting tasks and spontaneous play.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

70. Most children achieve well and are likely to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Effective teaching through carefully planned themes and activities helps children to make good progress in learning about the world in which they live. For example, as part of an investigation into the environment and farms, children showed good awareness of the names of farm animals and their young and talked happily about young lambs seen in the fields. Children's knowledge is effectively reinforced through links with science, for example when discussing the need for sunshine and rain to help plants grow and how spring is a time to look for signs of new life. In links with ICT, children use computers regularly and know that these function by using sound, text and pictures. Children confidently use the mouse control, for example to dress a teddy bear in a particular order and to their own preferences. They access an art program to create their own pictures of 'My Mum'. They use draw, fill and spray controls to design their pictures for inclusion in their Mother's Day cards. They also use controls correctly to click on mathematical shapes, including squares, triangles and rectangles, drag them into a pattern and build shapes. One child remarked enthusiastically, 'I'm building a house'. Children enjoy operating tape recorders in small groups to listen to a range of traditional stories.

Physical development

71. By the end of the reception year, all children make good progress and achieve well. Most children are likely to attain the early learning goals. Teaching is good. Teachers plan sessions for children in a rota and enable them to enjoy their learning through a range of indoor and outdoor activities. They move confidently into new spaces, giving due consideration to their own and others' safety. Children have a good awareness of space around them when moving individually and with a partner. This was demonstrated well in a dance lesson, when children created their own sequence of movements involving clapping their own hands and those of their partners and added other movements in a pattern of eight beats. By encouraging children to describe what they are doing, teachers effectively develop children's speaking and communication skills. Children also enjoy the use of large wheeled toys and show good control over these in the newly created outside area. These activities support their personal and social skills of sharing and taking turns. Suitable emphasis is given to developing hand control through early drawing, writing and painting skills. As a result of the good opportunities provided for writing, most children have a firm pencil grip and form most letters correctly. They also show good control when using the computer mouse to carefully colour spaces between the lines of the shapes that they have designed.

Creative development

72. Children make good progress in their creative development and most are likely to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Teaching is good. Children develop good knowledge of colours. They build on this good understanding to create particular shades of colour in pictures and different textures in their collage patterns. In one lesson observed, children designed their own picture frame borders for

their Mother's Day cards and pictures. Children sing regularly and enjoy different aspects of music. They listen carefully, sing tunefully and enthusiastically, clapping rhythms in time with the beat. They recognise the different rhythms in four-beat phrases such as 'fluf-fy bun-ny' and two beat phrases such as 'pen-guin' and they combine them well, maintaining their own parts. Skills are later successfully extended to play four different beat patterns together. Children enjoy working with a good range of construction kits to make model toys and vehicles. In one activity a child, on finding he only had two wheels to make a lorry, said after a moment of reflection, 'I'll make a bike instead.'

ENGLISH

73. By the end of Year 2 pupils attain expected levels and by the end of Year 6 pupils achieve well and attain above expected levels. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs have their needs identified early and make good progress during their time in the school as a result of well-planned and focused support where specific language skills are practised and reinforced. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
74. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented with well planned reinforcement of skills through most lessons in other subjects. Teachers plan the three-part lesson structure in detail and set targets for individual pupils and successfully build upon what the children know, understand and can do. The teaching and planning in Year 6 takes place in two discrete Year 6 classes which are set into groups according to pupils' capabilities. The teaching is very good and the very good subject knowledge of the co-ordinator results in high expectations and challenge for all pupils.
75. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 listen attentively to teachers and to each other. They follow instructions carefully and are enthusiastic to contribute positively and thoughtfully to discussions. They make good use of what they have learned and draw upon their personal experiences when making contributions. They have good attitudes to the subject and are confident in expressing their ideas and suggestions, knowing that they will be sympathetically listened to by adults and peers alike. This, along with the good level of teachers' questioning skills, ensures that pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is good at the end of Year 2. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to achieve well in these skills. Significant strengths are the very good quality of discussions in lessons, the confident way that pupils express their views and opinions and how they listen considerately to others. Very good examples were observed when pupils presented their work to others and read aloud expressively. Standards in both speaking and listening are above expected levels by the end of Year 6.
76. In Years 1 and 2, standards in reading are at expected levels. The range of reading ability is broadly in line with expectations. Pupils have good attitudes towards reading and are developing a love of books. They enjoy reading and many take their books home on a daily basis. They are all aware of alphabetic ordering and describe how to find sections on particular subjects in a reference book. They read storybooks accurately and with expression. When reading unfamiliar words, Year 2 pupils use strategies that include sounding out letters and using pictures to arrive at the correct word.
77. In Years 3 to 6, all pupils are taught well to use a full range of strategies to help them read and spell accurately. Reading standards steadily improve throughout the school and all pupils make good progress over time. By Year 6 standards are above expected levels. All teachers keep good diagnostic records of individual attainment and use the

information to ensure that each pupil is placed on the correct book to match attainment level. Good teaching of key skills maintains progress at the correct pace for every pupil. In Years 3 and 4, pupils read text accurately, and confidently express opinions about events in their story. They sensitively identify with different characters in books that they read. Very good achievement is maintained in Years 5 and 6 with pupils gaining greater enthusiasm for books and having preferences for favourite authors. Some good teaching in the reading support programme was observed when pupils were skilfully taught the basic skills of reading and the strategies required were reinforced.

78. Year 6 pupils read a wide range of novels with enjoyment, reading parts dramatically. They note different ways in which the author has used print expressively and raise their voices, for example, when the print is highlighted. Pupils make perceptive comments about the feelings of different characters. These feelings are not always explicit in the story and the ability displayed by many pupils to use deduction is higher than that expected of eleven-year-olds. Pupils in the lower attaining range read well and show good knowledge by their clear explanations of different types of text and authors. This range of attainment from average to well above average in relation to age is found particularly in Year 6 and stems from the school's strong focus on literacy.
79. The combination of carefully planned lessons together with well-focused literacy sessions and good teaching have had a beneficial effect on pupils' writing. By the end of Year 2 most pupils are at least at expected levels with a significant minority achieving above expected levels, particularly in developing individual skills in writing creatively. The development of writing skills such as spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting are emphasised throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average with a small minority well above average.
80. All pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop their writing skills year by year. In Year 2 a good lesson was seen where the teacher encouraged the pupils to discuss the story of *'The Turtle Who Danced With The Crane'* so far, and then challenged them to write their own endings. In discussions, pupils showed a good understanding of the differences between present tense verbs and past tense verbs. In their writing, pupils used interesting phrases for effect. One very good account included, 'He was really sad. Out of everything in the whole world, what he loved best was his mother.' In another lesson, seen in Year 4, pupils used wordprocessing skills effectively to add adjectives to sentences written in a previous lesson in order to make the text more descriptive.
81. By Year 6 all pupils write for a range of different purposes and audiences, including their own lyrics for songs to the tunes of well-known television programmes, formal letters and poems. In lessons observed, Year 6 pupils presented two sides of an argument about whether animals should be kept in zoos. They identified key features, focusing on the correct structure and vocabulary. High quality comments included, 'Although some people may not be happy about animals being kept in cages, it must be said that without zoos many species of animals would die out.'
82. The quality of teaching is good in all year groups. In Year 6 it is very good with one lesson being excellent. Teachers plan carefully, assess pupils' progress throughout the lesson and work hard to ensure that the task set is appropriate to the current level of the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Marking is of good quality, often offers praise and ways to improve and is closely linked to each pupil's targets. The pace of learning each week is adjusted in relation to the recorded observations and assessment. Teachers make good use of the school's good assessment procedures and good planning to meet the needs of all pupils, with a strong focus on the specific skills

requiring improvement. Relationships everywhere are excellent and bring a happy and co-operative spirit to learning activities, within which pupils enjoy learning. All teachers use questions skilfully to promote further understanding of tasks. When relevant, they use prompts very effectively to stimulate different ways of thinking and encourage pupils to explore their own ideas through discussion. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management of the subject, giving good support to colleagues which includes training, maintaining the good resource provision, assisting with planning and helping to assess pupils' levels of attainment.

83. A particular strength in Year 6 is the regular involvement of pupils in self-assessment and peer-assessment in lessons. This increases subject knowledge, interest in literacy, recognition of their own achievements and appreciation of the efforts of others. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress in relation to set targets, due to the very good support received from teaching assistants.
84. All teachers and pupils work together in a climate of high, but achievable, expectations. These are evident in the consistency of marking, teachers' constructive comments and the challenges they set. Another key development is the planning of stimulating literacy opportunities across the curriculum. Pupils develop a greater range of language skills by using them very imaginatively in different contexts and settings. Suitable links are made with ICT in developing wordprocessing and research skills using programs such as 'Thesaurus' and various reference sources. The use of homework to support learning is satisfactory. Resources are of good quantity and quality and are used regularly to support learning very well.

MATHEMATICS

85. Standards are at expected levels in Year 2 and in Year 6. They are the same as they were at the time of the previous inspection although there have been some fluctuations from year-to-year as a result of the fluctuating balance of higher and lower attainers in the year groups. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. With carefully planned work and the very good support of teaching assistants, they make good progress towards their targets. Although most other pupils are also achieving well, higher attaining pupils frequently do not make sufficient progress because not enough is expected of them. There are no differences between the achievements of boys and girls.
86. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in the school's provision for mathematics. Teaching has improved largely as a result of the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Two years ago, the co-ordinator identified from mathematics test results that the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 and above was 14 per cent below that in English. New strategies were developed to raise standards in mathematics, including better joint planning by teachers and the use of assessment procedures to track pupils' progress more closely. As a result, the gap between results narrowed to five per cent last year, although the proportion gaining the higher Level 5 is still lower than that in English. Many of these strategies are fairly recent and, therefore, there has not been enough time for them to have the full desired effect of raising standards.
87. The school has identified problem solving as an area to be improved. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in this aspect of mathematics are not as high as they should be. There is insufficient focus on building these skills systematically year-on-year, especially in order to provide greater challenge for higher attaining pupils. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and

understanding in other subjects such as science and design and technology. Although examples were seen in ICT, they are not sufficiently planned into the curriculum framework and, therefore, do not always build on pupils' earlier experiences. As a result the work from different age groups was similar. There was little evidence of classroom computers being used to support pupils' learning in mathematics.

88. By the end of Year 2, most pupils develop a secure knowledge of the place value of each digit in numbers to 99, confidently adding and subtracting to 20 and beyond. They are familiar with the associated symbols and use them correctly to make up number stories. They estimate and measure with reasonable accuracy and tell the time to the half-hour. They recognise the properties of common two- and three-dimensional shapes and construct block graphs to record their favourite meals. By Year 6, most pupils have acquired a range of methods to add, subtract, multiply and divide and show a sound understanding of the relationship between these operations. They calculate area and perimeter and construct and interpret line graphs. In the current age group a significant minority is well set to attain higher standards by the end of the year. A similar proportion is working below these expected levels although, as a result of sensitive teaching and encouragement, they demonstrate very good attitudes to their work and apply themselves well.
89. Teaching and learning are good overall. In lessons seen they ranged from satisfactory to very good. The main issue now is to achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching throughout the school. Teachers are in a strong position to do this. They reflect thoughtfully about their work and carefully evaluate each of their lessons. They are very receptive to feedback and are fully committed to refining their skills.
90. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons thoroughly. In some cases, such as the mixed-age classes, defining more precisely what pupils are expected to learn would help to add clarity to teachers' explanations. A major strength is the variety of strategies used by teachers to assess the levels of understanding of different pupils. In the best examples these include careful questioning, involving pupils in checking their own work and that of their classmates, written tests, practical activities and helpful marking that suggests ways to improve. Frequently, as in a Year 2 lesson when the teacher decided that most pupils were not ready to move on, this results in plans being adapted from one day to the next.
91. Very good teaching was seen in lessons in Year 6. One was highlighted by the pace and enthusiasm of the teacher that successfully motivated the pupils. In the other, the teacher showed great skill in questioning, teasing out what pupils knew and deepening their thinking with challenging follow-up questions. She ensured that all were fully and actively engaged in learning and they responded confidently when explaining their strategies to the rest of the class.
92. Mathematics is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator rigorously monitors all aspects of planning, observes teaching and learning, scrutinises samples of pupils' work and carefully analyses the results of annual tests. This gives her a clear awareness of what needs to be done in order to raise standards further and results in helpful feedback and advice to colleagues. Satisfactory use is made of homework to support pupils' learning in a range of skills. Resources are satisfactory in quality and quantity and are used effectively to support pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

93. The previous inspection found that attainment was about average by Years 2 and 6. The school has made satisfactory progress in science, maintaining broadly average standards. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. The development of pupils' scientific skills is improving, but this has not yet resulted in many opportunities for the oldest pupils to design their own experiments to answer questions they have raised. The attainment of pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 is at expected levels.
94. During Years 1 and 2, pupils acquire satisfactory knowledge and skills. By Year 2, pupils know that to be healthy they need to eat a range of foods and they interpret bar charts, showing pupils' eating preferences, with good understanding. They correctly describe the differences between night and day, and describe different sources of light, although not always the distinction between natural and artificial. They draw and test simple electrical circuits and know that forces can be 'push' or 'pull'. There is little difference in the work of boys and girls or different groups of pupils. Those with special educational needs are supported well to record their findings, but there is little attempt to extend the challenge for higher attaining pupils.
95. During Years 3 to 6, teachers build satisfactorily on the skills and knowledge developed by Year 2, so that, by the end of Year 6, attainment is at expected levels. However, throughout Years 3 to 6 insufficient thought is given to challenging higher attaining pupils enough; too much of the recorded work is similar for all pupils. Good attention is given to developing pupils' skills so that, for instance, pupils understand when a test is fair. Results from investigations are recorded accurately. However, too many of the recorded results are the same and pupils do not experience how to design an experiment after having raised a scientific question. Year 6 pupils understand some of the features of day and night and the movement of shadows, but explanations lack precision. They understand the nature of different forces and how forces are measured in Newtons. Pupils understand the basic features of magnetism and the dissolving of materials. The improved attention being given to the development of scientific skills is having a positive effect on the work of pupils in Years 3 to 5. Increasing opportunities are being provided to complete a wide range of experiments and to record and interpret the results. The work in a Year 5 class is especially impressive. In most year groups, none of the pupils' work showed evidence of an understanding of the need to repeat tests in science. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of the good support given by teaching assistants.
96. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school, but ranges from satisfactory to very good in lessons seen. In good lessons in Years 1 and 2, enthusiastic teaching and the effective use of resources enabled pupils to investigate whether different materials floated or sank. The well-organised sessions enabled pupils to have great fun and summarise their observations in the form of generalisations such as, wood floats and metals sink. In a very good lesson in Year 6, the dynamic teaching moved pupils' understanding about the skeleton and its role on at a good pace. The use of self-assessment during the session was especially effective at promoting pupils' understanding of their learning. In all lessons, relationships with, and the management of, pupils are positive features. Two important weaknesses prevent teaching from being better than satisfactory overall. Teachers' planning does not give sufficient attention to meeting the differing needs of pupils within the mixed-age classes or to ensuring that higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently. Although marking is completed, it lacks precision and errors in pupils' knowledge are not corrected. In Year 6, for instance, misconceptions about the movement of shadows 'being due to the sun moving around the sun' were not always corrected. For pupils in Years 1 and 2, their suggestion that, for instance, glass is a natural as opposed to a man-made material, was not questioned.

97. The pupils follow a broad curriculum, which has an improved balance between the development of pupils' knowledge and skills. The school bases its work on commercial guidance and good links are made with other subjects, including design and technology and literacy. Numeracy and ICT are not used as extensively as they could be. Careful planning ensures undue repetition of work owing to the way the mixed-age classes are organised. However, not enough thought is given to meeting the needs of the full range of pupils in each class. Assessment, which was introduced in a formal way about a year ago, is satisfactory and developing. A range of methods is being used and will be evaluated to develop a consistent approach. The use of self- and peer-assessment is a positive development. Science makes a good, and improving, contribution to pupils' personal development. In particular, in the best lessons, such as floating and sinking work in Years 1 and 2, they experience the excitement of finding out for themselves and they have to develop the social skills of working co-operatively and supporting each other. The co-ordinator, who took over the role about a year ago, leads the subject well. She has already taken action to improve the organisation and provision in science, and monitored some work and planning. She is due to observe teaching next term. Resources are adequate, but not extensive enough to aid the development of accurate, scientific measuring skills.

ART AND DESIGN

98. By Year 2 and Year 6, standards of attainment are at expected levels and all aspects of the National Curriculum are now taught. Attainment and the teaching of all aspects have improved since the previous inspection when attainment was below average and provision in the subject did not meet requirements. Improvements are due to the clear guidance given to teachers about what should be taught and how to plan their lessons. Teaching is good and pupils are interested and make good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, especially when supported by additional adults or their peers.
99. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 produce satisfactory examples of drawing, painting and using charcoal. Their use of ICT when making a self-portrait shows good colour blend and they demonstrate sound pencil control and use of colour when they draw objects in the classroom. They know what a sculpture is and demonstrate improving skills at drawing when they draw details of some of the statues they have seen, for instance at Whitstable swimming pool. They also explore the textures of different buildings. They observe well, for instance when they draw details of parts of pictures such as 'Sitting on History' by B Woodrow.
100. Older pupils build systematically on their skills. Year 4 pupils successfully make small sculptures of animals on poles and Year 5 produce a colourful and detailed wall collage on the theme of 'talking textiles'. Year 6 pupils are given opportunities to explore patterns in the brickwork of their school and combine techniques in an abstract way to produce satisfactory pencil drawings of aspects of the school. They know a limited amount of how art is used in different cultures such as African masks and native American head-dresses and this makes a sound contribution to their cultural development. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and are very keen to learn.
101. Teaching overall is good, with an example of an excellent lesson taught in a Year 6 class. Resources are well prepared and teachers give very clear introductions to lessons, which set high expectations for pupils and allow them to understand what they are to learn. Through carefully targeted questions, teachers check if pupils remember what they have previously learned. Teachers make good use of demonstrations of

techniques to be used during the lesson. In a very good Years 1 and 2 lesson the teacher showed how to scrunch up paper and how to layer different types of card and paper to experiment with texture and, as a result, pupils made good use of this during the lesson. In a good Year 3 lesson the teacher successfully encouraged a minority of pupils who lacked confidence and, as a result, they tried even harder and were successful. In the excellent Year 6 lesson, the teacher was dynamic and knowledgeable and made pupils look very closely at their own and other pupils' work and used excellent questioning skills to help pupils know how to assess their work and how it could be improved. Assessment procedures are good and are used effectively in their early stages to track pupils' progress.

102. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has developed a sound scheme of work, which systematically maps out the necessary skills pupils need to learn. She monitors pupils' work and teachers' planning and has plans to observe teaching in the near future. She is developing a good portfolio of pupils' work that will help teachers in their future planning and is developing the use of sketchbooks. There is an adequate range of resources available for the subject to enable pupils to experience working with a range of media. A wide range of competitions, for instance the school Christmas card competition and one related to the Turner exhibition, give pupils a good opportunity to practice and show their art and design skills to a wider audience. Although there are some good examples of art around the school, these are mostly by western artists and pupils need to experience a wider range of cultures within art. Time allocated to the subject needs to be reviewed to provide better opportunities for the development of skills. Sometimes there is a lack of continuity, as in one class where the lesson is cut in two by the lunch-break.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils' attainment is at expected levels. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were below expected levels and provision did not meet requirements. Statutory requirements are now met, and attainment throughout the school has improved. The time allocated to design and technology, however, remains low. This limits the opportunities for higher attainment and to cover all topics in sufficient depth.
104. By Year 2, pupils have achieved standards in their work at the level expected. They designed and made a model of Incy Wincy Spider. The best examples involved quite complicated winding mechanisms to move the spider up or down the drainpipe. These pupils also produced some well-designed finger puppets.
105. A well-planned study of bread enabled Year 5 pupils to make good progress. After tasting and evaluating bread that had been bought, pupils followed a recipe to make their own. This again they evaluated well. Pupils then designed their own bread, using the same basic recipe. This was then subject to tasting and peer assessment. Comments included that it was 'too garlicky' or it 'had a lovely cheese flavour'. A weakness of some of these evaluations was that the bread was often described as 'nice'.
106. By Year 6, pupils make satisfactory progress, and attainment is similar to that expected. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Attainment is strongest in the aspects of 'making' and 'evaluating', but limited in the aspect of 'designing'. The slippers designed and made by Year 6 pupils illustrate this very well. The care and precision evident in the sewing, and use of different fabrics and fillings, demonstrate considerable skill. However, the design element is limited to how to personalise slippers that are made to

the same basic design. Evaluations included comments about what changes could be made to the fillings or external decoration. Pupils followed a recipe of instructions, and did not produce their own detailed design brief or explore different slipper designs.

107. Teaching of design and technology is satisfactory. In Year 1 there was good attention given to teaching particular skills, such as folding paper to create a hinge, or making sure the amount of glue used in some paper sculpture work was not excessive. In most teaching, good guidance is given to help the 'making' and 'evaluating' processes, but not enough thought is given to developing the 'design' brief. This occurred in Year 1 when pupils used plastic building bricks to create a room; they were not encouraged to consider, before they started, what might go in the room or where it might be placed. The support of class teachers, classroom assistants and other adults helps to ensure all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make similar progress. Curricular planning is based on national guidance, although a restricted number of topics are covered each year. Careful planning helps to ensure undue repetition of work is avoided as the differing pattern of mixed-age classes works through the school. The assessment system used by the school follows that incorporated in the national guidance. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are encouraged to persevere to produce good quality artefacts and in some topics to consider cultures from the past, as demonstrated when making Tudor musical instruments. Pupils evaluate their own work thoughtfully and that of others well.
108. Links with literacy are good, but numeracy skills are not always used to best effect. Estimating and measuring skills are not used enough. Opportunities to use ICT have not been developed sufficiently. Resources are of sufficient quantity and quality and are used effectively to support pupils' learning. The co-ordinator has given good support to colleagues and has led the subject well to ensure a good improvement since the previous inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

109. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils make good progress and attain expected levels. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection when standards were judged unsatisfactory. Improvements are due to teachers having better guidance for what skills and activities should be covered. As a result, teachers plan their lessons in more detail and provide a better quality of teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good additional support they receive from teaching assistants. Boys and girls achieve equally well. The quality of teaching for the subject overall is good.
110. Years 1 and 2 pupils make effective use of both Barnaby Bear and Snowy Bear to learn about places in the world because these bears accompany families on trips to different countries. Upon their return, information about the trips and the countries is then displayed in classrooms. Year 2 pupils know where the Isle of Struay is and compare it with Whitstable, and say which place they prefer. Pupils in Year 1 know that if they lived on Struay transport is very often by tractor, foot or by boat.
111. Throughout Years 3 to 6 pupils' skills are developed systematically. Pupils in Year 4 begin to understand the landscape of India when they study the Indian village of Chembakoli and this makes a sound contribution to their cultural development. Pupils in

Year 5 learn about village settlers and how place names, for instance Chatham and Rainham, indicate Saxon origins and Margate indicates a Viking settlement. These pupils also use simple grid references to find places and contribute satisfactorily to their mathematics lessons when they construct a graph to show leisure activities for young people in Whitstable. Pupils in Year 6 know about rivers and the effect they have on landscape. Pupils have a sound knowledge of associated vocabulary such as 'erosion' and 'deposition'. They investigate how they use water in their homes and at school and the rate at which water in different places of the school site evaporates. This work is linked well to their work in science about the water cycle. They make sound use of their ICT skills when they use the Internet to find out about rivers of the world.

112. Teachers plan their lessons well. They have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they are to learn. Pupils respond enthusiastically, behave very well and are keen to learn and make good progress. Teachers use questioning skills well and thereby increase pupils' geographical vocabulary. In a good Year 3 lesson pupils used e-mail to request information from various sources and this effectively developed their ICT skills as well as their geographical skills. In a good Year 6 lesson the teacher prepared good resources and these enabled pupils to start work immediately after a clear introduction to the lesson. Pupils then worked well with each other to begin preparation of a travel brochure from a variety of sources. The lesson also made sound links with literacy and ICT. Teachers use teaching assistants very well and this allows all pupils to be included in the lesson, helps maintain their interest and enables them to make good progress. However, there is insufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils.
113. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has successfully developed and supplemented the nationally recommended guidance and there are clear and relevant priorities in her action plan. Units of work have been allocated to each class allowing the systematic teaching of geography skills. However, the time allocated to the subject is limited and not always used efficiently. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans and pupils' work in order to monitor progress in the subject. Teachers routinely assess pupils' work at the end of each unit and during lessons. Satisfactory use is made of planned trips to Whitstable Museum, the locality around the school, the coast and trips to Canterbury to visit the environmental centre; these make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Resources are adequate, but some of the books in the library are out of date.

HISTORY

114. Standards of attainment for pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 are at expected levels. This maintains the average standards from the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress overall, because the quality of teaching is good overall. Recent improvements ensure that pupils are now systematically taught a wider range of skills, knowledge and understanding identified in the national guidance for the subject. Pupils with special educational need also make good progress when additional teaching supports them. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
115. Year 2 pupils learn about the Great Fire of London and link this work well with present-day emergency services. They compare the lives of famous people from the past with current day celebrities such as Neil Armstrong and Buddy Holly. They know about the work of Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War and know that Mary Seacole did not receive, at the time, the recognition she deserved because she was black. This work makes a sound contribution to their moral and cultural development. Pupils in Year 1 have a developing sense of chronology when they study

new and old toys and one boy proudly wrote, 'This is my daddy's toy. He is thirty-two years old. The toy must be very old.'

116. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 make satisfactory progress, know about the Ancient Greeks and have a satisfactory sense of chronology. They know about the Greek alphabet and how it has formed the basis of many English words. Pupils in Year 3 know about the Anglo-Saxons, their clothes, artefacts and leisure and some myths and legends of Ancient Greece, which makes satisfactory links with their literacy.
117. By Year 6, pupils have sound understanding of chronology, the skills of historical enquiry and make good links between the periods of history that they have studied. Their good and sensitive writing about people's lives during World War Two shows good levels of empathy with the situation. One child, writing about being in a bomb shelter wrote, 'I am in the shelter. It ain't half wet in here. I wish the war would end today'. Another, in a poem about the Holocaust, sensitively displaying the writing within the Star of David, wrote,
 'You must feel humiliated.
 This war is just leading to wreckage and hatred.
 Don't be pessimistic, you've won,
 You can let your strong faith carry on ...'
118. Teaching of the subject is good overall with some very good teaching seen. Teachers plan lessons well and assessment opportunities are carefully planned into the lesson. In a very good Year 1 lesson, the teacher made good links to the classroom display, used a variety of questioning techniques and kept pupils focused very well on their work. In a good Year 5 lesson the very good attitudes and relationships within the class, combined with the very good pupil management skills used by the teacher, enabled pupils to make good progress. Teaching assistants are used effectively to make good contributions to pupils' progress. However, in mixed-age classes, teachers' planning does not always provide for the full range of attainment and higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged by the tasks set.
119. Leadership in the subject is satisfactory. The national guidance is soundly adapted to the needs of the school and ensures pupils do not repeat work. However, the time allocated to the subject is not sufficient for teaching the full range of skills to all pupils. The co-ordinator regularly sees teachers' plans and monitors samples of pupils' work. There are plans for teaching observations as part of the school's monitoring process. Pupils' work is assessed carefully after each topic and planning takes account of this. The co-ordinator's action plan reflects the necessary priorities. Resources are satisfactory and include a small collection of artefacts. Staff make sound use of visits to places such as the Roman Museum in Canterbury to extend pupils' learning opportunities and make history come alive. These experiences contribute satisfactorily to pupils' cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

120. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils' attainment by Year 2 was 'barely in line with expectations' while in Year 6 attainment was below expected levels. Little direct teaching of ICT took place and statutory requirements were not met in Years 3 to 6. Since that time, progress has been very good and the school has responded positively to the increased demands now made in ICT. A training programme has resulted in most teachers having increased confidence in their abilities to teach the subject. A computer suite has been developed, which is used regularly by pupils from Year 1 onwards. The curriculum follows national and commercial guidance and has been

introduced in a sensible way, which took full account of pupils' previous low skills. Attainment in ICT has risen and is currently in line with levels expected by Years 2 and 6. There is little high attainment. Pupils' skills in Year 6 reflect the low standards in their previous work, rather than current weaknesses in provision.

121. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in ICT. They have suitable wordprocessing skills, although they are often quite slow at finding letters on the keyboard. They are building up confidence when using computers. Pupils skilfully draw and paint pictures on screen using an art program, such as work in the style of Mondrian. They use data about children's favourite drinks to produce a bar chart. Year 1 pupils know examples of how information can be communicated using different technologies. Mouse control skills are satisfactory, as evident when drawing the features of a pet on screen. In this respect, higher attaining pupils are more confident and accurate than many with special educational needs who make more limited progress. All pupils correctly select features such as brush, pencil and eraser, and also change the colour they are using.
122. The attainment of pupils by Year 6 is similar to that expected for their age, but with little higher attainment. This is because of the phased introduction of the subject guidance to match the level of pupils' prior skills rather than their ages. All pupils' progress has therefore been good, although keyboard skills now range from fast to rather slow. Pupils have good experience of wordprocessing. Year 6 pupils understand control, copy, cut and paste instructions. They use spreadsheets correctly and websites to carry out research. They show good mouse control skills when drawing a house to demonstrate three-dimensional perspective. They have developed pictures and patterns using an art program, having previously looked at some work by Matisse. Good use of ICT was made in a creative challenge to design their ideas of a new office for the headteacher. However, the design and technology opportunity offered was not developed. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 showed good skills in using websites and search engines to investigate where to find information about space.
123. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers have the good subject knowledge necessary to help pupils develop their ICT skills. The ICT suite is used to particularly good effect, both to teach particular skills and to link work with other subjects. Literacy skills are developed well through the good use of ICT facilities, such as the Thesaurus. Computers in the classrooms were rarely used during the week of the inspection. One exception was the very effective use of a graph program when two pupils with special educational needs, supported by a teaching assistant, collected and entered hair colour data. Laptop computers are available and being used regularly. Good links are developed in many subjects when ICT skills are being taught, for example the use of e-mail in geography, website searches in science and art programs. An effective aspect of the teaching is that pupils are usually supported by a number of adults. In one less effective lesson, the teacher had to cope with the whole class on her own. Despite her good knowledge and expertise she could not devote enough time to each group, especially as she had to cope with unexpected problems with the program. One weakness of teaching is that too often care is not taken to ensure that both members of a pair experience all the key objectives planned for the lesson.
124. The curriculum is based largely on national guidance and a commercial scheme, which ensures adequate coverage of the subject. The scheme has been introduced gradually according to the prior attainment of pupils. Currently, therefore, both Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are working on the Year 5 programme. Careful attention has been given to ensuring all relevant skills are developed as pupils progress through the school, whatever mixed-age class they might be in. The subject makes a good contribution to

pupils' personal development. They learn to work co-operatively, find out about other locations in England and overseas using e-mail and are encouraged to explore websites to appreciate the wealth of information available. Care has been taken to ensure pupils understand the rules relating to restricted Internet access. Satisfactory assessment is in place, which is based on national guidance. Management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has taken effective action to improve provision, introduced the new curriculum in a logical way and has plans to improve provision further. Resources are much improved following the opening of the computer suite.

MUSIC

125. By the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well and attain standards which are above expected levels. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when standards in Year 2 were at expected levels and in Year 6 were below expected levels. The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils benefit from good subject knowledge amongst staff. Pupils perform their own compositions and take part in concerts and festivals with confidence and enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs also enjoy the subject and make good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well and with high levels of enthusiasm.
126. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 learn about the differences between short notes and long notes and practise repeating these in different patterns. Year 2 pupils extend their skills by playing tuned and untuned percussion instruments, including chime bars, bells, shakers and drums fitting the beats together in different ways. They practise and refine their ideas in small groups and play short phrases to each other, describing what the sounds represent. Very sensitive prompts by the teacher and good use of praise encourage all pupils at this early stage of learning to gain in confidence, develop an enjoyment of the subject and show good levels of appreciation for each other's efforts. In two hymn practices, one for reception and Years 1 and 2, the other for Years 3 to 6, pupils sang very tunefully and enthusiastically with good attention to the different levels of sound required to emphasise key lines. The older pupils sang in two parts maintaining them and combining them with good pitch and dynamics.
127. In addition to class lessons, all pupils are given opportunities to learn the recorder from Year 3. They learn to play in small groups at different times of the day, some in their own time. Many pupils choose to do so and the tuition in these sessions is very good. Pupils who play individual instruments including recorder, piano, guitar and flute, are encouraged to take associated board music examinations. In one lesson observed, pupils in Years 4 and 5 extended their knowledge of pulse, repeating patterns or ostinato, to sing and play in harmony. They practised songs in two parts, singing in different tempo with very good pitch and rhythm. They correctly named the different notes – crotchets, minims and semi-breves – recognised an octave of eight notes and talked with interest and understanding about notes that went together well in harmony and those that contrasted. The excellent subject knowledge of the teacher was very evident and was used in a sensitive but challenging way to stimulate all pupils.
128. By Year 6 all pupils, including those who do not play individual instruments, participate with enthusiasm. Pupils were observed developing different clapping rhythms and responding well to a range of challenges that required them to create different rhythms and introduce the playing of percussion instruments. In small groups they composed their own phrases, recording the notation with symbols in patterns of eight-beat timing. Each group performed to others demonstrating their ability to maintain their own part while performing. Some improvised rhythmic phrases within the group performance.

Other groups listened attentively and selected pupils suggested ways to improve their own and others' work. In other lessons, in good links with literacy, pupils chose their own tune from popular television programmes and wrote their own lyrics.

129. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. Teachers with particular expertise often take more than one class for music lessons or help colleagues in their year group with planning lessons. These lessons are very good. Some teaching assistants have good musical knowledge and skills and contribute effectively to lessons. The new subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership and has built very well on the work of the previous co-ordinator. By the end of Year 6, standards of composing, listening and performing are above those expected for pupils of their age, with a small minority of pupils well above expected levels.
130. Teachers use the subject very well to promote pupils' personal development. There is a strong emphasis in lessons on evaluating performance, so that pupils are used to telling others about how they might improve their composition or the quality of their singing. Pupils work in small groups, taking turns to play whilst others listen. Levels of discussion are good as pupils work hard to improve their performances. Teachers lead successful whole-class discussions and develop pupils' self-esteem. Pupils speak confidently and accept the helpful criticisms very well.
131. Pupils have many opportunities to perform. Concerts and drama productions each year involve all pupils. The many pupils who learn to play recorders and other instruments play in an orchestra at school concerts. Talented pupils play together in a recorder group called 'St Mary's Swingers'. They have competed in national competitions and festivals with considerable success. Pupils have also performed on local radio. The curriculum is broad and pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are largely informal, but are effective. Resources are of good quantity and quality and used regularly by pupils of all ages and capabilities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

132. Standards reached by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are at expected levels showing that levels have been maintained by the end of Year 6 since the previous inspection. This includes swimming, with most pupils reaching or exceeding the expected 25 metres before they leave the school. There is a broad and balanced range of activities that ensures pupils experience all aspects of the subject. Provision is based on national guidelines supplemented by a commercial scheme that teachers use well to plan individual lessons. The programme has been carefully thought out to support the development of an appropriate range of skills. However, there have been no opportunities for the whole staff to discuss and agree strategies to ensure that skills are developed year-on-year by building on pupils' earlier experiences. Although most pupils achieve well in most lessons this slows their progress over time. As a result, some pupils are not attaining the standards they are capable of reaching.
133. Teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, are fully and actively involved in their lessons. Often this is with the valuable support of other adults, including teaching assistants, students and parent helpers. There is no difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.
134. In gymnastics, pupils in Years 1 and 2 explore basic actions and begin to think carefully about the direction and height of their movements. In games, they listen attentively to the teacher's instructions and enthusiastically repeat the planned practices to improve

their catching and throwing skills. In Year 3 they consider the need for rules and methods of scoring in the games they devise. Good links with history were seen in a dance lesson in Years 4 and 5. Pupils used their knowledge of the different cultures of the Spartans and Athenians gained during their study of Ancient Greece to interpret two contrasting pieces of music. They demonstrated controlled vigour and aggression in the opening phase followed by a more cultured and demure response in the main part of the lesson. In games, pupils in the parallel class showed above average skills in netball as a result of good teaching. Pupils in Year 6 worked well together, collaborating in a very mature way to create sequences of movements involving bridges, balances and rolls.

135. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although examples of good teaching were seen. In almost all lessons the skilful management of pupils' behaviour was a strength. In the most successful lesson, the teacher gave pupils in Years 4 and 5 clear guidance on how to use their catching and passing skills in different situations, for example in attacking and defending. This led to good gains in the basic skills of netball as well as extending pupils' knowledge of the rules and their understanding of tactics. In a gymnastics lesson in Year 6, very good relationships were evident from the outset with all pupils co-operating fully with the teacher and with each other. This led to high levels of activity with pupils moving successfully from individual practices to interesting group sequences. Pupils were given every encouragement to plan and perform but opportunities to evaluate their movements in order to help them improve were more limited. This was also the case in more than half of the lessons seen, restricting pupils' progress in refining and polishing the quality of their work. As there are no formal systems in place to help assess pupils' progress it is difficult for teachers without specialist knowledge to identify what pupils need to do next in order to improve.
136. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about her subject and provides effective leadership. In order to improve teaching and to raise standards she is aware that she needs to carry out a careful analysis of teachers' training needs in the subject. With the support of colleagues and parents, she organises a very good range of after-school activities where pupils practise and extend their skills in informal situations. These sessions also contribute effectively to pupils' personal development by encouraging them to pursue their own interests and to work with pupils from other classes. There is a good range of teams which compete successfully against other schools and there are also opportunities provided for pupils to sample activities at local sports clubs. Based on the obvious enthusiasm and commitment of both teachers and pupils, the school is in a strong position to move forward. Resources are of satisfactory quantity and quality and are used effectively by teachers to support pupils' learning of skills.