

INSPECTION REPORT

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

New Romney

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 132829

Headteacher: Mrs E A Caudwell

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Browning
1510

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th January 2003

Inspection number: 249015

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Controlled

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Fairfield Road

New Romney

Kent

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Brett

Date of previous inspection: Not applicable

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9736	John Brasier	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils? Partnership with parents
7148	Graham Hall	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Physical education	
12764	Wendy Thomas	Team inspector	English as an additional language Mathematics	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Nursery and reception English	
7813	Kevin Wood	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Design and technology Geography History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas C of E (Controlled) Primary School was formed in September 2001 from the amalgamation of the Infant and Junior Schools. The school is bigger than most primary schools nationally, with 431 boys and girls aged 4+ to 11. Situated in the town of New Romney it is geographically isolated from the rest of towns in Kent. Many pupils come from the immediate locality and 20 per cent are from neighbouring areas. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below that expected nationally. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs is above the national average, and many of these relate to emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. In the area there is also a concentration of foster families, who give homes to challenging children from neighbouring counties and from London. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils, whose mother tongue is believed not to be English, is a bit higher than in most schools. The school is vulnerable to significant fluctuation in numbers of pupils moving into the local area. The Shepway district is recognised as a rural deprived area with high social need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school that has the staff commitment to build on its current strengths and further improve standards. The school has many good features. It is a caring and friendly school where children's achievements are recognised and celebrated. From a much lower than average starting point children under five achieve well. Inspection findings indicate that the standards pupils attain are below those expected nationally in Years 1 to 6 in English and mathematics, and science. Standards are in line with expected levels in all other subjects with the exception of geography by the end of Year 2 and in religious education where standards are below those expected for the locally agreed syllabus. In music, singing is a strength across the school. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. The school benefits from good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior managers. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision, teaching and learning for children in the reception class are good.
- Teaching and learning throughout the school are good and as a result standards are improving.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and statements is good and they make good progress.
- Overall, the opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development produce good attitudes and behaviour. Relationships are very good.
- Pastoral care, support and guidance for pupils are good.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators offer good leadership, and finances are planned and managed well.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and religious education in all year groups and in geography by the end of Year 2 are not high enough.
- Standards throughout the school in writing are not high enough.
- There is no provision for swimming.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the school's first inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	n/a	n/a	D	E
Mathematics	n/a	n/a	E	E
Science	n/a	n/a	D	E

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Assessment on entry to school indicates that many children enter reception with much lower levels of attainment than are to be expected, particularly in language development and knowledge of everyday things. Standards are improving and their achievement is good. They are likely to reach the expected standards set nationally for the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development, physical and creative development. They are unlikely to reach the Early Learning Goals for children at the end of Reception Year in communication, language, literacy, mathematics and a knowledge and understanding of the world.

The table above is based on the average points score achieved by pupils and includes those who gained the expected Level 4 or above in national tests and those achieving the higher Level 5 and above. The results of pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2002 were well below those nationally and those compared with similar schools in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of the teachers' assessments in science were also well below.

Results at the end of Year 6 in 2002 in English and science were below those nationally, and for mathematics were well below. When compared with similar schools results were well below in English, mathematics and science. It is not possible to indicate a trend line for St Nicholas because a complete set of data is not yet available. Some caution must be noted concerning performance data. There is a significant element of movement within the community and it is important to note that the data is not necessarily matched to the same pupils and therefore is not secure. Also, although the school has an average number of pupils eligible for free school meals this does not reflect the deprivation in the area. This is an area of high social need. The results for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 generally reflected their attainment on entry. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are below expected levels in reading, mathematics and science; in writing standards are well below expected levels by the end of Years 2 and 6. For many, this reflects good progress from their prior attainment on entry. The school has set suitably challenging targets for improving standards. Standards are at expected levels in all other subjects with the exception of geography by the end of Year 2 and in religious education across the school where they are below the expected level. All groups of pupils, including pupils who speak English as an additional language, those with special educational needs, statements of need and higher-attaining pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to start lessons and settle down to work well. They are enthusiastic when learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well because they are well managed. On a few occasions behaviour is unsatisfactory because pupils' skills are less well developed.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Personal development is good due to the impact of the very good relationships. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance was average and close to the National average. Unauthorised absence was better than the national average for primary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and reception	Years 1 to 2	Years 3 to 6
Lessons seen overall	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.

Overall, teaching and learning are good and better. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. There are more instances of very good and better teaching in Years 1 and 2 than in other year groups. Despite good teaching, teachers are not yet able to compensate for children's low starting points on entry to the school. Characteristics of good lessons are: teachers show secure subject knowledge, planning is detailed, they share the learning objectives, very good management of pupils and good use of time, support staff and resources. Teachers' expectations of what pupils know and can do are good. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is at least good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good. Teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils well. Teachers are very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' learning. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to support pupils' learning. Pupils acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding and they are interested in learning and work hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Curriculum provision meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education with the exception of swimming in physical education. The provision for children in reception is good. Withdrawal for some pupils at the start of lessons requires review. Provision for gifted and talented pupils in the Foundation Stage is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with statements is good. Pupils are supported within the classroom but in addition, many are withdrawn for specific teaching of key skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.	The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Pupils are well supported.

Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development. Pupils value themselves and others. Good emphasis is placed on art, music and physical education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare and the pastoral support provided by the school are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and supporting pupils' personal development are very good.

The personal, social and health education programme is having a positive impact on the way the school cares for its pupils. Parental support is satisfactory. The school is making a serious effort to involve parents more in the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators. Priorities for development are very clearly identified through effective monitoring and evaluation. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses but as yet there has been insufficient time for them all to be fully embedded. Good structures and systems are in place to move the school forward. Delegation to those with management responsibilities is secure but not yet fully developed in all subject areas.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body plays an active role in shaping the direction of the school and in holding the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Priorities for development and monitoring and taking effective action in terms of the school's performance are good. Those in senior posts and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Governors apply principles to ensure that they get best value out of the resources. Educational priorities are well supported through the school's careful financial planning.

Although the accommodation provides an interesting learning environment, a few aspects are unsatisfactory. Staffing is satisfactory and resources are good. The school promotes racial harmony well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like school and they make progress.• The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best.• The school is helping children to be mature and responsible.• Pupils make good progress at school.• The teaching is good.• Feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school to work more closely with parents.• To be kept well informed about children's progress.• The range of activities outside of lessons.• The right amount of homework.• The leadership and management of the school.

The inspection team agrees with most of the parents' positive views. The school is helping pupils to make good progress and the teaching is good. However, inspectors find that the school is making a serious effort to involve parents more and tell them more about progress. Parents are involved and receive good information about their children's progress. Homework and the number of outside activities are satisfactory, and school is well led and managed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Many children enter reception with well below average levels of attainment. Many have well below expected communication skills and a lack of knowledge of everyday things. For example, in the assessments undertaken on entry in September over two thirds of pupils were below national expectations in speaking and listening. The starting point for this group of children was much lower than in previous years. The majority of children is likely to reach the Early Learning Goals set nationally for the end of the reception year in personal, social and emotional development, physical development and creative development. They are unlikely to reach the expected standards in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The progress of children with special educational needs is good. This is due to the good support they receive in the classroom from teachers and other adults. Higher-attaining children make good progress. Despite good teaching, teachers are not yet able to compensate for children's low starting points on entry to the school.
2. At the end of Year 2, National test results showed that, based on the average point score in 2002, pupils achieved standards well below those expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with schools with similar characteristics, results were similar. Standards in science achieved by the end of Year 2, on the basis of teacher assessment, were well below those expected nationally and were the same when compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher levels (Levels 3 and above) was below average in reading, writing and mathematics, and teachers' assessments in science were above average when compared with those nationally. When compared with similar schools the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was well below average in reading and writing, below in mathematics, and the teacher science assessment was above average. Results were not high enough in reading, writing and mathematics. Based on the performance data, girls underachieved. This was most marked in mathematics and English respectively.
3. At the end of Year 6, the national test results showed that, based on the average point score in 2002, pupils achieved standards well below those expected nationally in English and science and well below in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, results were well below those expected. The data suggests that these pupils made insufficient progress in English, mathematics and science based on their prior attainment in Years 1 and 2. However, because of the high numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school, this data is not secure.
4. At the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils, who achieved the higher levels, (Levels 5 and above) was below those nationally expected in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, results were below those expected in English and science and were well below in mathematics. Results were not high enough at the higher levels. This is because too few pupils achieved the higher levels.

5. Some caution must be noted concerning performance data. There is a significant element of movement within the community and it is important to note that the data is not necessarily matched to the same pupils and it is therefore not secure. Also, although the school has an average number of pupils eligible for free school meals this does not reflect the deprivation in the area. This is an area of high social need. The school has data that suggests, based on their prior attainment, pupils made appropriate progress. It is not possible to make a comparison with the national rising trend, because as yet a complete set of data is unavailable for St Nicholas school. However, the school has secure data that shows that in 2003 at the end of Year 6 more pupils are likely to achieve the higher levels than in previous years.
6. During the inspection, teaching and learning was good. However, these developments have not been in place sufficiently long to have a significant effect on pupils' attainment. Pupils with English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils attain standards in line with those of their peers.
7. The performance data at the end of Year 2 in 2002 indicated that girls underachieved. Despite this nothing was observed during the inspection to suggest that there is any significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls at the end of Year 2 and 6.
8. The school acknowledges that some pupils were underachieving, specifically in writing across the school and that too few pupils achieved the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. The detailed analysis showed some improvements, and in 2002 82 per cent of pupils achieved level 4 and above in science. This group of pupils was identified as a weaker group on entry to the school. The number of pupils that had special educational needs and behavioural needs was also relatively high as was the rate of pupil turnover. At the time of amalgamation the junior school was barely out of special measures because of pupil underachievement and related issues. The previous Year 6 would have been affected by this.
9. As a result of the tests analysis, the school has targeted good support for pupils. There is a whole school focus for mathematics, particularly in problem solving and raising boys' achievement in writing. The school has rightly focused on addressing underachievement and weaknesses by providing booster work in literacy and numeracy. It is too early yet to evaluate or make a secure judgement on the impact of this support but improvements are emerging. The school is monitoring pupils' achievement closely and is sharing this information with both parents and pupils.
10. The school set appropriate targets for raising standards in 2002. They were almost met for English but fell very slightly short in mathematics in 2002 at the end of Year 6. The school has very useful value-added data (data that shows the value the school has added to pupils' achievement) based on its on-going analysis of pupils' performance and is using this to inform predicted targets and curriculum planning.
11. Inspection findings indicate that standards are below expected levels in English, mathematics and science at the end of Years 2 and 6. In English many pupils enter the school with well below expected levels in speaking and listening. They also have a limited prior experience of books and writing. In mathematics and science pupils are making gains in their achievement but from lower starting points than expected. Standards in other subjects are at expected levels with the exception of geography by the end of Year 2. In geography, pupils have poor knowledge of location and their progress remains depressed

due to low standards in writing. Standards are below those expected for religious education. This is because their work lacks sufficient breadth and depth of study. They have insufficient experience of learning from religion. Standards in singing are above expectations.

12. The National Literacy Strategy is implemented appropriately and the promotion of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils are transferring their literacy skills to other subjects and they are achieving well, but their starting points are from a low level. Standards in speaking, listening and reading are below the national average and in writing well below. There are good opportunities in science, art and history. For example, effective use is made of subject specific language in science and art. Similarly, in a Year 6 lesson, appropriate use was made of mathematical vocabulary. Good provision was made for Year 4 pupils to develop note-taking skills when watching a video about Tudor buildings. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils planned and wrote questions about toys to ask a visitor. There is a weakness in the provision for literacy in religious education. Pupils' books show an unnecessary amount of copied work. Appropriate opportunities are provided for research and when given the opportunity, pupils are confident using information and communication technology to support their learning. Generally, all pupils are enthusiastic when contributing to discussions in class. In different subjects, pupils use specific subject vocabulary and express themselves well.
13. The National Numeracy Strategy is implemented appropriately. Pupils are transferring their numeracy skills to other subjects and they are achieving well but their starting points are from a low level. Standards in mathematics, although improving, are below nationally expected levels. Teachers provide activities that are usually matched to pupils' abilities. A strong feature of the teaching is the use of specific mathematical vocabulary. Pupils' knowledge of numeracy appropriately supports their learning in other subjects as for example, in science, pupils record data in the form of charts, block and line graph diagrams to display results. Some pupils use the computer and various graphical programs. In design and technology, pupils consolidate their skills of measurement. In history, pupils have a sense of chronology.
14. Pupils with special educational needs have a wide range of behavioural, learning and physical difficulties. Most have low levels of attainment and because of this higher percentage, especially in Year 6 and Year 2, the overall standards in the school are reduced. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior knowledge, understanding and emotional development. The good achievement is due to the good levels of support provided by teaching assistants, and the overall good profile of teaching. Target-setting within individual educational plans (IEPs) is clear and positively supports all staff in the planning process. This is another contributory factor for ensuring the good achievement.
15. In the Reception Year, teachers are involved in a research project that identifies, challenges and motivates gifted and talented children. The school has a policy in place for the identification of higher attaining pupils across the school and has successfully identified more able pupils, particularly in art, music and sport. Formally planned opportunities for learning are still at early stages of development. Higher-attaining pupils are usually well supported and targeted in lessons. Pupils with English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils achieve well. The school has several 'looked after' children and settled travellers but their achievement is not monitored as separate groups.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. Relationships are very good, and attendance is satisfactory.
17. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to start lessons and settle down to work well. They are enthusiastic when learning. For instance in a Year 6 lesson about extracting essential information from factual sources, a group of pupils in the Opportunity Group, (which encourages those with lower levels of attainment), showed enthusiasm and were very ready to offer their opinions. Pupils demonstrate their good attitudes in the friendly way they talk to visitors, the care they take of their environment and the consideration they show for each other. These good attitudes relate to the good relationships between teachers, classroom assistants and the pupils, to the enthusiasm of teachers and their very good classroom management. In activities outside lessons, pupils showed enthusiastic participation and relished their involvement, however the good attitudes are not always as apparent in the playground.
18. Behaviour is good in nearly all classes, but it needs to be well managed, and where pupils' skills are less well developed it is very occasionally unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons behaviour was good or better and it was very good in one third of lessons. There is very good behaviour in assemblies. Around the school and at lunchtime in the dining hall the behaviour is good. On the playground behaviour is patchy. Many children are well behaved, but there is some rough play as shown by the injuries treated at lunchtime and the headteacher's record of unacceptable behaviour. Exclusions are rare and never permanent. Transition for pupils to return to school is well managed. Parents are involved long before the exclusion option is exercised and targets are agreed on the return to school. Oppressive behaviour is an infrequent occurrence, but there have been a couple of incidents of the use of racist language. The school has addressed these properly and has plans to further raise pupils' awareness about such serious issues.
19. Relationships are very good. Teachers and classroom assistants know their children well and enjoy working with them. Pupils are confident in speaking to members of staff about problems. Pupils help each other and give support. For instance in a personal and social education lesson about peer pressure, pupils were required to work in pairs to imagine occasions where peer pressure could be applied. The pupils responded very well to this.
20. Personal development is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. A school council is planned for in the near future. For instance, pupils in Year 6 help and play with younger children and see them safely through the school at dinnertime. They also give valuable help with the library. In lessons there are fewer opportunities for pupils to do their own investigation or find things out for themselves. Now that behaviour has improved so much, planned opportunities for more independent learning are a focus for development.
21. Attendance is satisfactory, and is close to the National average. Unauthorised absence is better than the national average for primary schools. The school day starts on time and there is good timekeeping throughout the day. The registration system is efficient. Pupils arrive on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In just over seven out of ten lessons teaching is good, and it is very good in nearly a quarter and excellent in two. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. There are more instances of very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 than in other year groups. Despite good teaching, teachers are not yet able to compensate for children's low starting points on entry to the school and standards remain below average. Teaching and learning are good, however these developments have had insufficient time to have a significant effect on pupils' attainment. Added to this is the high mobility of pupils and the previous and considerable staffing difficulties. This is the first academic year that the school has had any stability in staffing.
23. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teaching is at least good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good and as a result pupils are achieving well. Teaching meets the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language, and pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils well. Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers. Together, they provide well-focused support to help pupils to meet their learning objectives and this contributes positively to pupils' learning and achievement.
24. Characteristics of good lessons are: that teachers show secure subject knowledge; they teach basic skills well; lesson planning is detailed and well informed by Curriculum Guidance 2000; learning objectives are shared with pupils ensuring that they are clear about the task; structured questioning helps them to consolidate and build on previous learning. As a result of these strengths, pupils are achieving well. A very good example of this was observed in a Year 1 English lesson, when pupils discussed and wrote about the contents page of their own class made 'Big book'. Teachers' expectations are good. The management of pupils is very good, as for example, in a Year 3 dance lesson when the teacher used a tambourine to make movements exciting and to encourage reaction to beats. The pace of lessons can be brisk with a good variety of well-chosen activities. The use of resources is good and well managed, for instance, in a Year 5 science lesson about high and low pitch, the resources were very well prepared to encourage, motivate and to capture pupils' interest.
25. A good feature of teaching is that teachers use subject specific language consistently in lessons. Teachers' expectations of what pupils know and can do are good. Tasks are well matched to pupils' ability, as for example, in a Year 2 English lesson, about separating items on a list and writing a character profile, the teacher had provided work at different levels for the pupils to complete. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, about subtracting money and adding on, the teacher matched and changed the level of work to meet the range of pupils' ability and understanding in the class as the lesson progressed. Another effective example was observed in a Year 6 English lesson, about non-fiction texts, the pupils participated eagerly and enjoyed the teacher's enthusiastic approach, as a result, they were fully engaged and understood the objectives well. Some teachers are enthused and as a result they inspire pupils. The music specialist demonstrated this particularly when teaching during hymn practices and the choir.
26. The relatively few weaknesses in teaching are usually linked to the length of time undertaken with one activity, as for example, in a Reception Year English lesson, using 'Jolly Phonics' (*sound letters make*). In a Year 1 English lesson about headings and captions, the teacher tended to dominate at times, not enabling pupils to have a greater

input. In a Year 2 science lesson, about completing a circuit, higher-attaining pupils had few opportunities to investigate. In a Year 5 art lesson, when pupils were making small containers out of clay there were insufficient resources for all pupils to have suitable work surfaces, and the clay stuck to the table surface. In a Year 6 science lesson about scientific processes the teacher demonstrated the test with two pupils and the remainder were observers rather than being actively involved and making gains in practical learning.

27. Overall, pupils throughout the school achieve well. They generally work hard and want to learn. They can become very excited and curious, as for example in a Year 5 science lesson when pupils were introduced to an Indonesian Bamboo shaker. Pupils acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding, and they are interested in learning and work hard. Appropriate tasks are set and these reinforce pupils' learning. Information and communication technology is used effectively to extend pupils' understanding. The regular provision of extended writing lessons is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Pupils are given good opportunities to discuss and share their views and opinions during summing up sessions and they are encouraged to use subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils interact well with each other. Pupils' intellectual, physical and creative skills are also developing well.
28. Assessment procedures and target-setting are well established in English, mathematics and science, and in other subjects. The use of assessment is developing well and it is helping to secure teachers' judgement as to how well pupils are progressing. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and pupils said that they find the written comments helpful. They understand what they need to do to improve their work. The school is aware of the need to provide further opportunities for pupils to use the library, in order to increase their knowledge of books and to improve their referencing and research skills.
29. Overall, good teaching meets the specific needs of the pupils. All staff plan the curriculum together and specific support is identified for all pupils with special educational needs and statements. Learning intentions are linked to targets in individual educational plans (IEPs) and recorded assessments made regularly by teaching assistants. The school has a consistent working partnership between teachers and support staff that ensures accurate assessments and targets for development. This is an essential component of the good standard of teaching and learning throughout the school.

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

30. There is satisfactory provision for the curriculum overall. Strengths in the curriculum are: the good provision in the Foundation Stage, the quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs, the personal, social and health education programme that successfully promotes awareness, care and respect for one another's feelings. All the subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as sex education, drugs misuse and personal, social and health education are offered with the exception of swimming at the end of Year 6, and this is a statutory requirement. Religious education meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Although a few pupils are registered as being withdrawn from collective worship, they chose to attend. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are in place and are having a positive impact on pupils' learning across the school.

31. Pupils with English as an additional language, pupils with special educational needs and those statemented and higher-attaining pupils are well provided for. However, there are occasions when pupils withdrawn for additional work and specific teaching of key skills, miss essential good teaching and introductions to new topics and concepts. This hinders their learning. This issue needs reviewing by senior management in order to ensure a balanced curriculum entitlement for all pupils. In addition, consideration should be given to examining the opportunities for pupils with special educational needs and statements to be supported in class or in small groups in class or withdrawn after the essential start of lessons, and to explore the possibility of linking the subject of the lesson to the specific learning skills that are being provided outside the classroom.
32. History and geography and art and design and technology are blocked termly. This has the potential for a fragmentary experience for pupils and as a result their skill development is not continuous. In religious education, insufficient depth, breadth and a wide variation in the quality of delivery, result in attainment being below expected levels. In most subjects learning opportunities are well planned and relevant, with an emphasis on practical direct experience.
33. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. A wide-ranging programme of visits and visitors is in place to support the curriculum, and the local community provides a good contribution to the pupils' learning. The opening of the pre-school group in January 2003 is very successful. Links with pre-nursery and specialist schools are good. Links with secondary schools are satisfactory and the school prepares pupils appropriately for the next stage in their education.
34. The curriculum for children in reception is good. Children's work is carefully planned and suited to the needs of each child and the Early Learning Goals. Appropriate emphasis is placed on children enjoying their learning. Teachers are involved in a research project with the Department for Education and Skills (DFES), and Brunel University and Leuven University, Belgium. The project is concerned with identifying, challenging and motivating gifted and talented children.
35. Additional support is available for particular groups of pupils according to their need. There are additional classes such as catch-up/booster and additional literacy and numeracy classes. Higher-attaining pupils are identified and are suitably challenged; a formal extension programme is planned for. The school is participating in two initiatives for gifted and talented pupils Excellence in Cities and Ferre Leavers project with Brunel University. All pupils are encouraged to and do mix well together. The school has applied for Healthy Schools status.
36. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development are sound. Acts of worship give pupils opportunities to reflect on their own values and beliefs and on those of others. These opportunities are less well developed throughout the curriculum and are incidental rather than planned for. Teachers respond well to pupils' thoughts and questions, but formally planned opportunities for discussion are not always evident in planning.

37. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Each class has agreed a code of conduct and staff apply this consistently. Pupils know what is expected of them and respond well. Teachers are consistent in their approach to expectations of behaviour. Staff are good role models themselves.
38. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and reflects pupils' understanding of what is expected of them. In lessons, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and in groups. Pupils respond well to this. Pupils of different abilities and of different backgrounds get on well together. There are good opportunities in the curriculum to raise pupils' awareness, understanding and appreciation of the richness and diversity of cultural traditions in Britain today. Teachers and support staff encourage pupils to work co-operatively and they respond well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. Pastoral care is a major strength of the school. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good, as is the educational support and guidance given to pupils.
40. Assessment systems for pupils with special educational needs are very good. All staff have regular weekly liaison sessions to discuss pupils' progress. Learning support assistants record significant progress against lesson plans and individual education plan targets. All records are kept up-to-date for pupils with special educational needs. All teachers have good records available to support lesson planning. There is a high level of care shown by all staff. There is always an adult available to assist with specific problems and a learning support assistant who specialises in health issues. They all remain calm and professional in all their contacts with pupils, especially those with behavioural problems. Throughout the school pupils' needs are well assessed.
41. A wide range of outside agencies visits the school on a regular basis, for example, social services, specialist schools and the family liaison officer. They report on the high level of cooperation received from the school, which ensures a high level of care for pupils.
42. The school is a safe environment with all the expected safety measures in place. Safety inspections are undertaken regularly, recorded and progressed. Internet safety is good. Child protection procedures are good. The nominated person, the headteacher, is experienced in this field. She has good contacts and knows the local procedures. All staff have been trained. They know what to do if a child starts to divulge details of an abuse and know the warning signs of abuse. Children at risk are carefully monitored, as are those with poor or changing home circumstances or those who are looked after other than in their own homes. Welfare facilities are good and children with health problems identified to those who need to know, especially children identified with nut allergies. There are many first-aiders and both children and the school have derived much benefit from the appointment of a medically qualified pupil liaison officer. Her help extends beyond the strictly medical as pupils like to share their problems with her and hence she has a positive effect on attitudes and attendance.

43. Procedures for the promotion of attendance are satisfactory. The school makes some telephone calls to parents on the first day of absence. Letters are sent home requesting reasons for absence if none has been provided. Rewards are given for high attendance. The education welfare officer handles the attendance performance of a few families and collaborates well with the school. 'Attendance Ted', a large teddy bear, has proved to be a good incentive he is awarded to the younger (up to Year 2) class with the best attendance performance each week.
44. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. When the school was founded, the new headteacher found a 'rough, noisy, turbulent atmosphere where children were inconsiderate to each other'. A training day was immediately devoted to the problem and the action plan that evolved embraced Golden Rules, Golden time, (*a weekly period of free choice activity*) Circle Time (*discussion time*) and raising self-esteem. Because all staff were involved, they had ownership of the plan and every month there is a working party that examines how the plan is working and refines what is being done. Staff take it in turns to join the working party, and thus all are still fully committed. The action taken is working, as staff and pupils all confirm, and there are further improvements that are planned, such as the introduction of a school council. The Golden Rules are very simple behaviour rules. Repeated infringement of these rules leads to loss of precious minutes of Golden Time, a weekly period of free choice of activity.
45. Circle time is a structured exchange of ideas and experiences with teachers and children in a circle, each taking it in turn to speak. For example, a circle time covered actions to take if you become separated from your parents in a large store. In addition there is a Golden Lunch every week for those who are keeping especially well to the Golden Rules, and Golden Rule cups and certificates are awarded. Help is also provided for pupils to manage their anger and there is a social skills group to help those in need. Staff reinforce the Golden rules well and are good role models themselves. When problems arise, consultation with parents is regarded as important.
46. The good procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are part and parcel of the same initiatives. Teachers, through assemblies and circle time make a point of listening to pupils to hear their concerns and experiences.
47. There are very good procedures for supporting and promoting pupils' personal development, and as a result pupils are well supported. Support comes from teachers' close observation of the progress of their children and their keen interest in seeing them succeed.
48. The school assessment records are good. The school uses standardised tests well to track pupils' progress including baseline assessments on arrival. All pupils are regularly assessed in detail in English and mathematics and this information is used to target teaching and learning. At subject level, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are generally satisfactory, they are developing in most subjects, but not all as yet have portfolios of levelled work (*graded examples of pupils' work*) that would raise teachers' awareness of different levels within the National Curriculum. Teachers amend the planning of lessons so that all pupils can learn equally well. The use of assessment is good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The school makes good efforts to involve parents in the school, but parental response is varied and to some extent lacking. The school generally has the confidence of the majority of all groups in the community it serves. Management appreciates the difficulty of their situation in that they are from far away, replacing well-known and popular local leaders of establishments that merged to form the new school. They continue to work hard to build up their rapport with parents.
50. Parents have mixed opinions of the school. They appreciate that their children are expected to work hard, make good progress and are being helped to be more mature and responsible. They think the teaching is good. They are adversely critical of the leadership and management, homework and the number of activities outside lessons. Parents would like to work more closely with the school and to have more information about the progress of their children. The inspection team agrees with all the positive points but does not confirm the adversely critical points. It finds that the school is well led and managed, that homework and the number of outside activities are satisfactory, and that the school is making a serious effort to involve parents more and tell them more about progress. The headteacher plans to issue a questionnaire to explore these criticisms in greater detail and then to take appropriate action. Parents are well involved and receive good information about their children's progress.
51. The quality of information provided for parents is good. There are regular newsletters. The prospectus and the Annual Report are well presented and full of useful information. Neither publication makes the most of the strengths of the school. School reports have very good descriptions about what has been achieved, and they are very personal, that is the pen portrait of the pupil that emerges is readily identifiable. There are some targets for improvement, although not in all reports. Information about attainment reflects National Curriculum levels for the older children. The school advises parents on how they can help their children achieve their targets in the reports and progress evening. Most parents attend the consultation evenings on progress and the open days to see what their children can achieve. In the summer, parents are invited to meet the teacher for the following school year for their children. There are special evenings to discuss national testing and the welcome for new pupils. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to discuss the pupils' individual education plans when they are up for review. Details of pupils' progress is clearly recorded and shared with parents at all opportunities.
52. The school is welcoming to parents and is sensitive to their views, but the extensive effort required to bring about improvements in the school has resulted in senior staff being less evident than is desirable at the start and end of the school day. The information provided to parents is inclusive, in that the school ensures that separated parents are both mailed with information.
53. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory. There are some good aspects, some parents help in school and undertake some jobs, assist on educational visits and with sports and the choir but these are offset by some parents' failure to support reading and other homework. Parents support celebration and class assemblies and occasions such as the Harvest Festival. The school consults parents regularly through questionnaires.

54. The Friends of St Nicholas School actively raise funds and hold several successful social events. Parents are also contacted and are involved when behaviour problems arise, usually by means of a letter home, though also through meetings on a more regular basis if problems persist.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The leadership and management of the headteacher and those in posts of responsibility are good overall. Her leadership ensures very clear educational direction. The school benefits from good leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators. The headteacher provides calm and decisive leadership. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed to open the new school in September 2001. At the time of the amalgamation, morale amongst the staff and many members of the school community was low. There were still serious issues remaining from when the previous junior school needed special measures because it was failing to provide a satisfactory education for the pupils. The many changes unsettled the school community and all contributed to a traumatic amalgamation. Staffing shortages continued throughout the first academic year. Effective team work from the headteacher, governors, staff, parents and pupils has led to a successful start for this new primary school.
56. The headteacher has maintained the right balance and led the school forward during a period of major development. An immediate action plan was put into place to cover the first two terms by the headteacher and deputy headteacher to begin addressing the needs of the school. The focus was and remains on improving teaching, learning, the curriculum and raising standards. The headteacher is a very good manager and she has done much to build what is now a cohesive team. Good use is made of advice and support the school receives from the local education authority's supported school self review programme and intensive support for raising standards. This is an inclusive school in which all pupils are valued and the promotion of this is very much a focus of management and all staff.
57. The deputy headteacher is supportive and effective. Part of his role is staff development and much has been and continues to be achieved in this area. He is fully aware of the weaknesses in curriculum and has these under review. With the headteacher, the deputy headteacher is also key to reinforcing the successful behaviour management throughout the school.
58. The senior management team is very successful and includes the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENCO, and Key stage co-ordinators. This group shares strategic issues and they are an effective group. Subject co-ordinators are clear about their responsibilities. Some are new in post and have not yet had sufficient time to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning first hand. However, there is a clear structure in place for subject development. Co-ordinators have audited resources and a few have collections of work in place to establish the levels of pupils' work.
59. The school's aims and values underpin its work successfully. New policies are in place and school documentation is of a good quality. The headteacher has collated performance data and set up effective tracking systems for monitoring pupils' achievement. With the staff she continues to analyse the progress pupils make and identifies strengths and weaknesses in their learning. This is analysed carefully against national and local data and with previous cohorts and this is then used to inform value-added judgements. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, literacy and numeracy co-ordinators and external advisors have observed all

teachers. Consequently, there is good evidence that the outcomes are informing school practices. Good procedures are in place to enable staff to discuss and determine future developments.

60. Increasingly this is a school that carefully monitors its own performance but there has been too little time since its amalgamation for all practices to be fully embedded. The action taken to meet school targets is good. This is a school that acts on its findings, for example, the headteacher and governors recognised that last year there was underachievement by some pupils. Effective measures to address this have been put into place and they are being monitored carefully.
61. The school's development plan is a well-focused document. The school's priorities for development are very good. There is a whole school focus on raising standards specifically in writing and problem-solving in mathematics. Very good systems and processes are in place to enable staff to work effectively together to further improve the school.
62. The role of the special educational needs co-ordinator has recently been taken over by the headteacher and a special educational needs administrator due to the absence of the current post holder. All documentation and organisation of special educational needs procedures is in very good order. The school staff is currently managing the system efficiently. Support staff are well managed and allocated to provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. The only issue is the level of withdrawal groups that is referred to in the curriculum section. There are good levels of co-operation and teamwork amongst all staff and outside agencies. This adds to the high level support for all pupils.
63. The school provides good additional resources to top up the allocated special educational needs funding as they identify specific needs. The staff monitors the progress of pupils well but the programme for monitoring teaching of pupils has been postponed due to staff absence. The governor for special educational needs is knowledgeable and experienced. She is in regular contact with the school. Overall, the provision is good and pupils make good progress.
64. The governing body is well informed of school developments by the headteacher and through their direct knowledge and experience. They provide strategic and secure management and act as critical friends. The governing body is a cohesive group led by a strong and dynamic Chair of Governors, who is very clear about her role. All governors have benefited from training and they also have considerable experience and expertise. They are regular visitors to the school and therefore are directly informed when making decisions. The governors meet their statutory requirements with the exception of the provision of swimming at the end of Year 6. They are committed, proactive and make a very valuable contribution to shaping the direction of the school.
65. For the first time the school is experiencing stability in staffing. The school has suffered from severe staff shortages in the past. Although temporary relief teachers taught two classes during the inspection, there is sufficient and well-qualified staff. Their qualifications and experience enable them to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Effective arrangements are in place for two teachers to share the responsibility for a class of pupils. Together with good support staff, the smooth running of classes is ensured. Trained and experienced support staff for children in the reception makes a strong contribution to learning. Teachers and non-teaching staff show a very strong commitment to the school, they are hardworking and dedicated. Morale among staff is good.

Performance management is effective. Governors have increased the number of teaching assistants and there is a good level of teaching support. The good deployment and support of teaching assistants and of volunteer helpers are contributory factors to the rising standards. The administrative staff, usually the first contact for visitors at the school, are most welcoming and are very efficient and ensure that the day-to-day organisation of the school is smooth. The midday supervisors are friendly and are well liked by the children.

66. Accommodation meets the demands of the National Curriculum. When the new school opened in September 2001 the planned link building had not started and was not completed until January 2002. This prolonged and hindered the integration of the two sites. The school now successfully operates as a cohesive school. Since the amalgamation, there has been an ongoing refurbishment programme both internally and externally. The school has two libraries that are adequate but are currently underused, two spacious halls and various small areas used for teaching and offices. Reception children do not have good access to an appropriate and suitably equipped outdoor area to encourage physical development, although the school has appropriate plans in hand to address this. There is no provision for food technology. There is good access for wheel-bound pupils in Key Stage 1 but not in Key Stage 2. Displays about the school celebrate pupils' achievements. The school and surrounding grounds are kept clean, and the site is very well maintained.
67. Resources are good, are used well and contribute to pupils' learning. The libraries, although well organised, are under review for improvement. Resources for information and communication technology exceed the national target. The school continues to invest carefully in software and associated equipment. Resources are well managed, organised and are accessible. The school makes good use of outside resources, for example the local area, visitors and parents.
68. The school development plan is an effective document, and to the point, embracing the most important challenges facing the school. It is fully reflected in the budget, but inevitably, with a new leadership team, discoveries are made that lead to changes to the plan and hence variations to the way in which funds are spent.
69. Educational priorities are well supported by the school's financial planning. The governors and the headteacher manage the school's budget effectively and income and expenditure are well balanced. Specific grants are well used for their specified purposes and special educational needs funding is put to very good use. Day-to-day financial control and administration are efficient. There is good use of new technology, and almost every potential use being employed.
70. Governors apply principles to ensure that they get best value out of the resources. Options for expenditure are challenged and evaluated, particularly in the budgeting process and in drawing up the development plan, in which staff and governors all have an opportunity to put their views. An example of consultation is the new senior management structure, which was thoroughly debated before it was agreed. Comparisons are less well developed because of the recent foundation of the school, but the senior management team is keen to seek out comparable establishments, to compare costs and practices. Some useful comparisons for gifted and talented children and for music and sports have already been made. Quotations are sought routinely and already a much more competitive (in terms of both price and service) contractor has been found for grounds maintenance and development. Governors have been particularly supportive in obtaining competitive quotations. Parents are regularly consulted through questionnaires, as are staff and pupils about any contemplated changes that affect them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and senior managers should:

- (1) Improve standards and the rate of progress for pupils in English, mathematics, science and religious education in all year groups and in geography for Years 1 to 2 by:
 - building on the good teaching and learning and improving standards seen during the inspection;
 - developing further pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills;
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of, know and can do;
 - providing more planned opportunities for speaking and listening;
 - ensuring sufficient breadth, depth and variety of study in religious education so that pupils have a greater depth and understanding of the subject;
 - implementing the scheme of work for geography in Years 1 to 2.
(Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 26, 31, 32, 64, 66, 67, 68, 59, 70, 73, 75, 76, 81, 94, 97, 98, 99, 102, 119, 120).
- (2) Improve the standards and rate of progress for pupils throughout the school in writing by:
 - building consistently on the opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of grammatical structures through extended pieces of writing for a range of different purposes;
 - consolidating good lesson planning, good practices and teacher skills and ensuring that progression is built on and established in all lessons;
 - improving the quality of handwriting and presentation skills.
(Paragraphs 2, 12, 26, 64, 68, 69, 97).
- (3) Ensure that pupils learn to swim by the end of Year 6 by:
 - undertaking a record of pupils who can and cannot swim;
 - exploring opportunities for swimming lessons by the end of Year 6.
(Paragraphs 31, 64, 136).

Minor weaknesses

- Address the unsatisfactory aspects of the accommodation.
(Paragraphs 66, 80)
- Review the curriculum access for all pupils.
(Paragraphs 27, 31, 32, 57).

The school is fully aware of the Key Issues and minor weaknesses identified above and have plans in hand to address them.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	14	38	22	0	0	0
Percentage	3	18	50	29	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	431
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	67

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	133

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days session 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	33	25	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	25	25
	Girls	19	19	22
	Total	45	44	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (n/a)	81 (n/a)	85 (n/a)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	27
	Girls	22	25	22
	Total	49	54	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (n/a)	83 (n/a)	92 (n/a)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	30	31	61

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	19	26
	Girls	22	17	24
	Total	41	36	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67(n/a)	59 (n/a)	82 (n/a)
	National	75	73	86

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (n/a)	n/a (n/a)	n/a (n/a)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

No relevant data exists prior to 2002 as the school was not in existence.

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	419	14	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Balance brought forward from previous year	54818
Balance carried forward to next year	49153

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.09
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.34:1
Average class size	28.40

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	529.96

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.6

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	420
Number of questionnaires returned	100

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	58	1	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	47	5	7	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	55	10	5	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	56	22	5	0
The teaching is good.	38	44	10	3	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	47	23	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	33	11	6	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	54	5	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	46	24	9	0
The school is well led and managed.	27	39	12	11	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	60	8	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	36	22	7	7

Other issues raised by parents

19 written returns were received. These were mainly supportive of the school, its standards, quality of leadership, teaching and curriculum offered. However, a few parents had concerns about the standards their children achieve, the behaviour of some pupils and how the school dealt with such behaviour issues, the few activities offered outside of lessons, and the lack of any shelter for parents waiting to collect children at the end of the school day.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE RECEPTION

72. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. There are two Reception classes. Children begin school in the autumn term of the academic year in which they have their fifth birthday. There is a three-week period in which children attend on a part-time basis and after that they attend full-time. During the inspection there were 46 children in the Reception classes and of these, 22 children were under five years of age.
73. When they enter school, children's attainment is well below average. Many children have well below expected levels of communication skills and a lack of knowledge of everyday things. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, and in their physical and creative development. They are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The achievement of children with special educational needs is good. This is due to the good support and teaching they receive in the classroom from teachers and other adults. Higher-attaining children make similar good progress.
74. Procedures for assessing children when they enter school are good and the information supports teaching and learning well. Teachers and other adults in the classroom keep detailed records of individual children. This ensures that progress is carefully monitored. Teachers are aware of the "stepping stones" for children before they achieve the Early Learning Goals and make good use of these when assessing children's work. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good. Teaching is good and helps children start learning effectively. All teachers in the Reception classes provide good teaching and ensure that children make progress in their learning. Children's work is carefully planned and suited to the needs of each child. Appropriate emphasis is placed on children enjoying their learning. Very good use is made of other adults in the classroom and they make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Liaison with parents is good. The Early Years co-ordinator provides effective leadership, and has a clear understanding of the way that the provision is to develop. Teachers are involved in a research project with the DFES, Brunel University and Leuven University, Belgium. The project is concerned with identifying, challenging and motivating gifted and talented children.
75. The resources in the Reception classes are good both in quality and range and are readily available to children. The outside area is unsatisfactory as it lacks space for children's physical development. The school is aware of this and plans are in place to improve this provision.

Personal, social and emotional development

76. The majority of children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals for personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Reception year. Children quickly settle into the routine of the classroom and feel secure. They play well together, learn how to take turns and show a caring relationship with each other. They know the class rules and behave well. Teaching is good. In a circle time (*discussion time*) lesson, the teacher asked children to think about being a special friend. They took turns to talk about the way they would be kind and helpful to each other. In a class assembly, children listened to a story

from the Christian Bible that was told by Jesus. They heard how Jesus calmed the storm. The teacher helped the children to reflect on their own busy day at school and the need to be calm and quiet at some time during the day.

Communication, language and literacy

77. By the end of the Reception year, most children are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goals for speaking and listening, reading and writing. Many children find difficulty in speaking clearly when expressing their ideas. Occasionally, they are reluctant to speak for any length of time and answer questions very briefly. Children use a limited vocabulary and many find it hard to speak clearly. A few show very poor articulation. Some children listen attentively to stories and follow instructions well. There are a few however, who find this difficult. Most children enjoy looking at books. They talk about the pictures and the different characters. A few children can read and recognise simple words, but some lack confidence to try to read. Children's writing development is unsatisfactory. Many cannot control a pencil well and this affects their ability to write or form letters. Most children can write their own name, but some have to be helped to do this. Children's knowledge of correct letter shapes is limited. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the words that children try to write. A few children use scribble to convey their ideas. Teaching is good. Attention is given to the teaching of different sounds to help children with both reading and writing; as a result children make good progress. Plenty of opportunity is provided for children to speak and answer questions in class. Follow-up activities are carefully structured to ensure that children's learning is promoted further. This was evident in a lesson when children learnt the letter "L" and the sound associated with it. In the afternoon session, children looked for objects in the classroom that began with the same sound. They found a toy lion and used play dough to make a ladder. The Write Dance programme is being used well in Reception classes in order to develop children's writing skills.

Mathematical development

78. By the end of the Reception year most children are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in mathematical development. Many can count securely to ten, but some are insecure when counting beyond. Although they recognise and know different numbers to ten, they are a little unsure when seeing these out of sequence. Children understand the idea of number combinations to ten, but find difficulty in working these out by themselves. In one lesson, children looked at the contents of a bag of shopping. They had to say if the things in the bag were heavier or lighter than the others. Several children thought that bigger things were always heavier in weight. Children know about a repeated pattern and can make up their own short patterns. Many children know two-dimensional shapes and can identify them correctly. Teaching is good. Effective use is made of the subject's vocabulary to re-enforce children's learning. Teachers provide appropriate resources to ensure that mathematical skills are developed well through practical experiences.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. By the end of the Reception Year most children are unlikely to achieve the goals in knowledge and understanding of the world. Although many children enter school with a limited knowledge of the world around them, they achieve well in their learning. In a lesson, children followed instructions to make a sandwich. They spread the butter, added a filling and carefully cut their sandwiches into fours. A few children were unsure about the

correct order to be used, and wanted to add the filling first. Children talk about the things that are used to build a house. They looked at a brick and said if was rough or smooth, heavy or light. They understand that bricks are used to keep out the rain. Some children show confidence when using the computer. They know how the mouse works and use this to complete simple programs. They successfully printed off their work. Teaching is good. Activities are used well to extend children's understanding. All adults in the classroom have good regard for the health and safety of children. Displays are used well to celebrate children's achievement. A large display in a corridor shows different buildings made by the children out of cartons and containers. A "Building Company" office is used well for children's role-play.

Physical development

80. By the end of the Reception Year, most children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals for physical development. Children move their bodies well in different ways. They move around the hall quickly and then slowly, showing a good awareness of space. They make large shapes and pretend to be robots with straight arms and legs. They are developing body control by playing simple games using balls and quoits. They use the outdoor equipment and ride scooters and bicycles, controlling them well. Teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared, well organised, and care is taken to ensure children's safety.

Creative development.

81. By the end of the Reception Year most children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in creative development. Children enjoy using different coloured paints. They can add sawdust and sparkles to paint to make it thicker. They can talk about the way the paint feels when they use it for their picture. They can use bright coloured paper and material to make a collage. Children's drawing skills however, are not so well developed. Children sing well and enjoy playing percussion instruments. In a lesson, children showed skill at writing their own simple notation to indicate the sounds that they wished to make. They wrote long and short lines and then played these on the instruments. They understood how sounds could be made louder or softer according to the way that the instrument is played. Teaching is good. Careful planning ensures that children's skills are effectively developed and that they gain confidence in what they do. Imaginative play is used effectively and where appropriate. Resources are used well to promote children's learning.

ENGLISH

82. Standards are below the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Achievement is good as a result of the good teaching and learning. At the end of Years 2 and 6 standards in speaking and listening and reading are below the national average. Standards in writing are well below the national average. No significant difference was seen in the attainment of boys and girls during the inspection. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests in reading and writing for pupils in Year 2 were well below the national average. They were well below the national average when compared with similar schools. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6 were below the national average. They were well below when compared with similar schools. There has been a high turnover of staff recently. Many classes have pupils with a wide range of differing abilities. A large number

of pupils in the school have special educational needs. All these factors have had an effect on the standard of pupils' work.

83. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well in lessons. They make good progress in gaining confidence as speakers and readers. They are beginning but not yet confident to sound out words to aid their spellings. Pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils make good progress. Regular support in class from teachers and learning support assistants has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
84. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in speaking and listening are below average. Many pupils enter school with well below expected speaking and listening skills. By Year 2 some pupils begin to show more confidence when talking in front of others. Although many pupils make good progress, some still do not speak clearly and well and have difficulty in communicating their ideas with any fluency. A minority of pupils in Year 6 is reluctant to answer questions in lessons. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to express their own ideas, but a few pupils have to be encouraged to do so. These pupils' answers are often short, use a limited range of vocabulary and lack impact. There are a few pupils, though, who show better skills and are capable of expressing their thoughts clearly and fluently. Pupils' listening skills are slightly better than their speaking skills, although they do not match the expectations for their age. The majority of pupils listen well in lessons and in assemblies. There are, however, a few who cannot concentrate for long. They do not always listen with understanding or respond in an appropriate way.
85. At the end of Years 2 and 6 achievement in reading are below average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy looking and talking about books and are eager to describe what is happening in the pictures. However, several pupils find difficulty in reading with any degree of fluency and expression and do not always understand what they read. A few pupils in Year 6 are not enthusiastic readers. They have difficulty in understanding the meaning of some of the words in the text. Although well taught, pupils are unsure about the strategies to use to work out unknown words. They have a limited knowledge of books and authors. There are a few better and more confident readers in Years 5 and 6 and they use expression well to make their reading come alive for the listener. They re-tell stories and make predictions about the endings. They show a good knowledge of books by different authors and an understanding of the way a character might be developed.
86. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in writing are well below average. Many pupils in Year 2 lack confidence in writing. They find difficulty in thinking of ideas to write and occasionally forget to use spaces between words. Some letter shapes are inaccurate and spelling skills are not well developed. There are a few Year 2 pupils who show a better standard of work. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils listened to a fable told by the teacher. They wrote their own short fable, using adjectives to make the writing more descriptive. A few pupils began their fables well. One pupil wrote about a "juicy carrot" and a "boastful rabbit". However, many pupils found difficulty and could only think of short, commonplace adjectives to use. In Year 6, a small proportion of pupils write in brief sentences and show a limited understanding of the correct use of punctuation. They make little use of new vocabulary and do not use dictionaries sufficiently to aid spelling. Their handwriting and presentation skills also show some weaknesses. However, a few higher-attaining pupils have improved writing skills. They write fluently and at length. They use their imaginations well and structure their work so that it is logical to the reader.

87. Many pupils' handwriting skills throughout the school are insufficiently developed. However, higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 develop a good cursive letter formation. Letters are well formed and handwriting is legible. There are a few pupils though who show weaker skills. Their work is often untidy, their handwriting is inconsistent in size and their writing is difficult to read.
88. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 to 6. There has not been a sufficient length of time for the good teaching to have an impact on the standard of pupils' work. Teachers plan lessons well, and have secure class management skills. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils, and clear explanations promote further pupils' learning. For example, in a good Year 6 lesson, pupils wrote their own limericks as part of a project on short poems. The teacher clearly explained how a limerick was structured and gave specific ideas for writing. As a result, a few pupils produced short, witty limericks, which fitted the required syllable pattern well. Information and communication technology is used effectively to extend pupils' understanding. In one lesson, several Year 6 pupils used a program to assist in writing their limericks. The regular provision of extended writing lessons is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Occasionally, the worksheets provided for written tasks in Years 1 and 2 require pupils to add very short answers and give insufficient opportunity for developing sentence-writing skills. The provision for homework is good. Appropriate tasks are set and these reinforce pupils' learning. There is some inconsistency in the marking of pupils' written work in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 marking is good.
89. Leadership and management are good. The two co-ordinators have a good overview of the provision for the subject and regularly monitor pupils' work. The school makes good use of literacy withdrawal groups in order to raise further pupils' attainment. An action plan is in place to develop boys' writing. Assessment procedures are good. Detailed assessment is made of pupils' progress and this is used to set targets for individual pupils. The learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' work. Resources are satisfactory. The school is aware of the need to provide further opportunities for pupils to use the library, in order to support their knowledge of books and to support their referencing skills. The provision for reading books is appropriate and has been improved. However, pupils underuse the two libraries. Plans are in place to improve the library accommodation and to ensure that pupils use it regularly. Visitors to the school have included a theatre company, a storyteller and a poet. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory.
90. The subject makes a good contribution to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

91. As this is a newly combined school there is no previous report with which to compare standards. In the national tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2002, results in mathematics were well below standards expected of pupils nationally and for similar schools.
92. Despite good teaching and learning, standards remain stubbornly below average. While boys performed better than girls in national tests in Years 2 and 6 there is very little difference between their attainments in work seen.

93. The school has recently worked on developing the investigative aspects of mathematics. This is improving but teachers recognise the need to develop it further. In Years 1 to 2, the emphasis is on number and algebra. Pupils have some opportunities to work on other aspects of mathematics but these need to be developed further. The aspects of number, algebra, shape, space and measures are well covered in Years 3 to 6, but there is little evidence of data handling. Some work on this aspect of mathematics was seen in Year 6 books, and in science lessons pupils used graphs, charts and tables to present their work. This was less well developed in other year groups and the school recognises that this aspect of mathematics is in need of development.
94. At the end of Year 2, most pupils do not have a secure understanding of place value to 100. They find difficulty in solving problems using larger numbers. Pupils remember the different pairs of numbers that equal twenty. However, they do not have well-developed strategies for solving number problems. Pupils in Year 3 know some of the properties of 2-dimensional shapes and some of the names of 3-dimensional shapes but many of the lower-attaining pupils still confuse the two. When looking at drawings of a sphere, most referred to it as a circle. The higher-attaining group in Year 3 could identify prisms and describe their various properties.
95. At the end of Year 6, higher-attaining pupils can work out mental calculations quickly in their heads and can explain the strategies they have used. They use and interpret a range of diagrams and charts and they also use this knowledge in their recording of science experiments. The lowest-attaining pupils found it very difficult to group 2-dimensional shapes according to their properties. They found it hard to explain their reasons for grouping shapes together. As a result of very good teaching, more able pupils were able to use coordinates to draw different shapes, using four quadrants. Pupils showed good knowledge of the properties of 2-dimensional shapes, for example by describing the properties of scalene, isosceles and equilateral triangles. The higher attaining pupils used coordinates in four quadrants to plot shapes showing reflective symmetry.
96. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school are good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and in two lessons teaching was very good. The good teaching seen during the inspection has not yet had an impact on overall standards. Teachers are secure and familiar with the National Numeracy Strategy and implement it effectively. They are very concerned to develop pupils' skills in mental calculation. Teachers use mathematical language well and encourage pupils to explain the strategies they use to solve problems. In a good Year 2 lesson, the teacher made good use of role-play, encouraging pupils to plan a menu and pay a restaurant bill. A strong feature of teaching is the use of specific mathematical vocabulary. This was evident in a very good Year 6 lesson, where pupils were challenged to describe the properties of different kinds of triangles.
97. In the best lessons, teachers made good provision for pupils with different learning needs. They adapted their plans well as a result of good assessment. In all the lessons, teachers explained the focus of the lesson very well and reviewed learning well at the end of lessons. This helped pupils to understand their learning. Teachers use questions well to check pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking. Teachers plan their lessons to include information and communication technology but during the inspection, this aspect was hampered by a network failure.

98. The subject leader for mathematics was absent at the time of the inspection. However, the documentation available indicates that management of mathematics is effective. The plans for development of mathematics are well linked to the school improvement plan. The school has recently worked with a consultant to develop opportunities for the investigative aspect of mathematics. Pupils' test results are rigorously analysed to identify areas of weakness and the information gained is used to inform planning.

SCIENCE

99. Standards in science are below average by Year 2 and Year 6. In the 2002 national tests, results were well below average when compared with similar schools. In lessons, which were mainly investigative and focussed on devising and carrying out fair tests, standards of all pupils were closer to average levels. The sample of pupils' work indicated that although some pupils achieve the higher Levels 3 and 5, the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in Years 2 and 6, impacts negatively on the results in national tests. Consequently, they found difficulty reading and understanding the test questions. The overall good standard of teaching and the good level of support for pupils with special educational needs ensure that all pupils make good progress. The school has recently focused on raising the profile of scientific enquiry in all aspects of the science curriculum and this has had a significant impact on raising standards.
100. At the end of Year 6, because teaching is good, pupils have a secure knowledge of scientific enquiry. They know how to plan and record data arising from their experiments. They understand the need for a sequential approach to planning fair tests and use a range of recording methods such as charts, block and line graphs and diagrams to display the results. Some pupils are using spreadsheets on the computer and various graphical programs to support their questioning of the data. Pupils have used these skills well in their studies of plant growth, the effect of microorganisms on humans and animals, the names and functions of bones and human organs, the effects of gravity and friction and the essential nature of electrical circuits. Recently, Year 6 have studied the classification of materials and particularly explored methods of separating a range of aggregates, such as rock, pebbles, shingle, sand and salt from "Farmer Giles's" field. This study has led to good links with mathematics as some pupils investigate the economic benefits of selling natural materials.
101. At the end of Year 2, pupils are beginning to use a good range of scientific vocabulary and choose appropriately from a range of equipment as in their investigations of electrical circuits. In addition, they are beginning to ask scientific questions, make predictions and carry out fair tests. Pupils have also classified a large range of materials. They recognise the physical changes on materials when they are heated and cooled. Practical experiments using different size parachutes have assisted pupils' understanding of the nature of gravity and air resistance. The recorded work shows that pupils have an understanding of the learning objectives of each lesson and of using simple charts to record results. There has been a higher focus on the more practical aspects of science this year and this has resulted in less emphasis on recorded work to support pupils' learning.
102. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their science lessons as a result of the good teaching. They listen well and can follow instructions and carry out a sequential range of tests. In a Year 5 lesson, when pupils were introduced to the new concept of pitch, they listened intently to an orchestral piece of music identifying all the instruments playing. They were excited and

very curious about the Indonesian Bamboo shaker, which the teacher took apart for individual observations. Throughout this inspirational lesson, pupils' behaviour was outstanding.

103. The quality of teaching and learning is good with examples of very good teaching and learning. This is a consistent factor in improving the achievements of all pupils. The following strengths are the major contributory factors in raising standards and maintaining pupils' interest and concentration:
- detailed planning identifying clear learning intentions which are shared with the pupils;
 - appropriate resources which enable maximum pupil involvement in testing situations;
 - clear demonstration skills which encourage pupils to question and to make decisions;
 - good subject knowledge and use of scientific language;
 - good use of support staff, especially with lower-attaining pupils;
 - good relationships with pupils, resulting in high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
104. In a Year 1 lesson about testing materials for their waterproof qualities, the use of good questioning techniques encouraged pupils to make predictions about the suitability of different materials. In addition, the pupils were encouraged to use scientific vocabulary when giving answers about the uses of various materials. This lesson also illustrated how pupils with special educational needs in literacy could be successful in investigative science. In Years 3 to 6, teachers encourage pupils to make accurate recordings of the scientific process of enquiry. In one Year 6 lesson, the teacher facilitated the use of computer skills to record and analyse the data collected during the experiments.
105. The leadership of science is good. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and well organised in her approach to the subject. She has monitored standards using a range of information including work scrutiny, teachers' planning, and a comprehensive analysis of test results to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. The resources are well managed and in good supply which is essential to support pupils' learning. The assessment strategies and records are detailed and enable the school to identify any weakness.

ART AND DESIGN

106. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are in line with nationally expected levels. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those of higher attainment, make good progress. Progress overall is at least satisfactory and on occasion good. Work displayed successfully demonstrates their knowledge and experience of a range of different media. Pupils in Year 2 explore paint well whilst painting batteries for a science focus and create firework paintings. They study light, dark and textures when painting objects in shadow. Pupils in Year 3 are inspired by the work of Georges Seurat and created their own good pointillist 'winter scenes' using information and communication technology. Some make collages based on the same theme. Year 6 pupils design large-scale posters using information and communication technology. Others explored card printing, depicting figures in motion highlighting the Winter Olympic games.
107. Younger pupils enjoy communicating their ideas and feelings, as for example, when studying a painting by well-known artists such as Breugel. They carefully observed and talked about selected paintings. Using a magnifying glass and information and communication technology they studied parts of the painting, and drew around prepared

enlarged outlines of figures. They attempted to take up the positions of the children in the painting while other pupils drew them. All of these activities give them a good insight into decoding what is happening in the painting and it relates well to their toy topic. They are developing critical and observational skills. The use of information and communication technology also helps pupils to research paintings. In a good Year 2 lesson, pupils painted lighthouses they had made from cylinders and modroc and they explored the qualities of paint. Due to the good teacher intervention they were able to use specific terms well, talk about lighter and darker shades of the same colour and experiment mixing and blending to match the colours of rocks and the sea.

108. At the end of Year 6, pupils are more confident and use a range of media and equipment. Pupils in Year 4 developed and improved their design skills by designing a chair for a wizard or magician, linking well with their English work. They prepared detailed, annotated drawings using various symbols and some pupils extended this by using information and communication technology. Pupils in Year 5 explored design ideas in clay. They designed containers and investigated the qualities of clay. Some pupils found this very difficult and the teacher had to support pupils extensively. She successfully demonstrated how to knead the clay, not thump it and how to use and apply different mark making effects and joining methods. They decorated these carefully and selected and applied different materials. As a result of the good teaching, they increased their control using tools and explored the malleability of clay. In discussion, pupils are aware of the work of influential artists. They are able to talk a little about Seurat and Matisse. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrated a good understanding of the designs of William Morris and knew a little about the Art Nouveau movement, and particularly about the artist Rennie Macintosh. This relates well to their topic on the Victorians. Pupils' work is often influenced by their knowledge of different art. Sketchbooks are used regularly across the school for drawing and painting but they are not yet used as ongoing notebooks to record and collect creative ideas that would support further work.
109. The quality of teaching and learning are at least good in Years 1 to 2 and it is at least satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of art. Learning objectives are shared with pupils, and they are reinforced throughout lessons. Expectations of what pupils can do are good, and pupils are encouraged to try out their ideas and explore different media. Teachers use correct terminology, and ensure that pupils understand and use it too. Oral evaluation of work is a good feature of all lessons, and as a result, pupils develop their critical skills well. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of art from different periods. In planning documents there is evidence of opportunities to study different cultures, although, this was not observed during the inspection.
110. Pupils' attitudes are at least satisfactory and in Years 1 to 2 they are good and this contributes to their good learning. Pupils enjoy art and they work hard. Pupils are encouraged to use equipment safely and they do. Pupils work well together and help one another.
111. Leadership of the subject is appropriate. The co-ordinator has undertaken an audit of resources but not yet an audit of teacher skills with a view to addressing any gaps in their knowledge and experience. She has adapted planning and has an overview, but has not yet monitored teaching and learning, this is planned for later this year. A collection of work is in place and photographic evidence is developing; this helps teachers to compare levels attained. The co-ordinator has appropriate plans to extend the use of information and

communication technology. Resources are good, although teachers supplement items for use as a stimulus or for a still-life focus. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop and raise awareness of art from non-western cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

112. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are at the expected level in the work seen. By the end of Year 2, pupils design and make simple models that need careful work with Modroc and cylindrical cartons, consolidating their skills of joining, fixing and assembling. Boys and girls, including pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately. Pupils in Year 1, develop and build on their skills of modelling with containers and collage learnt in Reception. In Year 2, pupils of all abilities practise ways of assembling and joining materials and equipment to construct lighthouses to good effect, after their investigations on the Internet. They consolidated their skills of measuring, marking out and cutting shapes. By the end of Year 6, pupils accompany their work with plans on paper, annotated with justifications for their choices or ideas, for example in designing and testing vehicles, 'the engine will be first and then the lights and heater'. After testing, pupils of average ability made the judgement that, 'it did not travel 5 metres'. Achievement is good. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 5, investigated materials for the design of packages for biscuits, producing clearly labelled original drawings. Average and lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs produced attractive recipe books following their attempts at food technology. Painted features are clearly added for effect, and to impress an audience.
113. Overall, teaching is very good. The work seen indicates that teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2, and very good in Years 3 to 6. Activities are planned and managed well to promote pupils' interest, and to support the progressive development of design and technology skills through the scheme of work. In a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher consolidated pupils' skills in joining, fixing and assembling, through the provision of an appropriate variety of resources. In a very good lesson in Year 6, pupils were given opportunities to plan and draft their own ideas for the design of controlled vehicles, leading to the assembly of the first prototypes. Pupils were encouraged to use the equipment safely, the drills, saws and glue guns, with the effective support of the teacher assistant. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided is good and will inevitably give impetus to clearly rising standards. Good links with science and information and communication technology have been identified through the pupils' construction of balloon-powered cars, and their investigations on the Internet to identify lighthouses like the local one at Dungeness.
114. Although assessment of pupils' progress in design and technology is satisfactory, a collection of levelled work, possibly photographic evidence, would give teachers an even clearer understanding of what to expect from each ability and age group. Alternate blocking of the subject term by term leads potentially to a fragmentary experience for pupils and their skill development. The topics in the Years 1 and 2 are not yet planned precisely enough to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of designing and making. Leadership and management of design and technology are satisfactory. Leadership and management of the subject, limited recently by staff changes following amalgamation, are now in the hands of a keen co-ordinator. There have not been any opportunities for recent in-service training for staff. The accommodation lacks a designated area for food technology. There is a good range of learning resources.

GEOGRAPHY

115. Standards are at expected levels overall and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, in Years 1 and 2 standards are often below national expectations and this slows pupils' achievements. Most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2; they make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' attainment in geography remains depressed due to low standards in communication and language and writing which is due to their lower than average starting points. In Years 2 to 6, pupils appreciate that New Romney can be contrasted with places further afield such as Llandudno or India. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a poor knowledge of location. In Year 6, pupils celebrate the physical and human features of Romney Marsh and contrast them with places further afield, such as Llandudno or the Ganges' riverside in India.
116. The work seen indicates that teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. The geography lesson in Year 3 was good. The teacher's enthusiasm and good relationship with these pupils promoted good learning about the location of India and the United Kingdom. In Year 5, the teacher's coherent planning enabled pupils to both explore and understand the main key words associated with the development of river features such as waterfall and erosion. In Year 6, the teacher's careful and detailed discussions supported the pupils' efforts to describe different landscapes, drawing on their knowledge and understanding of the similarities and differences between Llandudno and New Romney. Teachers generally use appropriate geographical vocabulary to develop pupils' understanding. Teachers often draw a class together to reinforce their teaching point. This has a positive impact on learning. Teachers manage pupils well. They provide satisfactory resources such as atlases and globes. For example, in Year 4, aerial photographs of the locality are accompanied by large scale Ordnance Survey maps. Indeed, teachers create opportunities to develop pupils' geographical understanding by the use of increasingly complex maps.
117. Co-ordination of geography is satisfactory with some good features. The recently appointed co-ordinator has checked the adequacy of resources. She has attended training. The curriculum is well planned, including fieldwork in local streets in and around New Romney, and at a residential school journey based on an activity centre. However, delivery of this curriculum has been disrupted, especially in Years 1 and 2, through staffing changes following the amalgamation, so the co-ordinator's good work is not yet fully effective. The alternate blocking of both geography and history has the potential for a fragmentary experience for pupils and their continuous skill development. Assessment is developing; as yet, there is no collection of levelled work that would raise teachers' awareness of different levels within the National Curriculum. Accommodation, including the school grounds, is good. There are sufficient resources and good links with information and communication technology, as when pupils use the Internet for their investigations of other places.

HISTORY

118. Standards in history are in line with national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils achievement is good overall. As pupils move through the school, they make very good progress in the development of their skills, knowledge and understanding in history in Years 1 and 2. Achievement is good in Years 3 to 6. The mismatch between good or very good progress and only average standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 is attributable on the one hand to the low communication and language skills and writing standards in

pupils' previous work; and on the other to the strength of teaching, especially in Year 2. At the end of Year 2, pupils have a developing sense of chronology derived from their handling and classifying a collection of kitchen artefacts as 'old' or 'modern'. Similarly, in Year 1, pupils discuss the ages of a range of teddy bears. Pupils in Year 2 find out about the past from various sources, including a Victorian photograph illustrating the young boys in dresses. This led one pupil to exclaim, "Oh, my Lord, it's a bit scary for boys!" At the end of Year 6 pupils use their research skills and use primary sources such as photographs to investigate the changes in the locality since Victorian times, noting features that have disappeared whilst others have been added, such as traffic lights and sign posts.

119. The work indicates that teaching in history is good in Years 1 and 2, and very good in Years 3 to 6. In a very good lesson in Year 2, effective discussion of objectives related very well to pupils' earlier work. Because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge, pupils deepened their knowledge and understanding of historical sources, including Victorian clothes that pupils could try on. In Year 4, the teacher's good questioning focused pupils on the different homes for rich and poor in Tudor times, so that their learning about Tudor practices in building and food was good. Teachers generally use appropriate historical vocabulary to develop pupils' understanding. Pupils in Year 6 followed up their previous investigations into local changes in New Romney, where the teacher's good questioning stimulates their thinking about changes caused by the bombing in World War II. Teachers' planning is generally good, for example the extension of pupils' learning about the Victorians to their physical education dance, and the use of Victorian waltz music that prompts their steps and movement well. Teachers' good organisation encourages pupils to work cooperatively in their groups, or support their peers with good questioning and develop their ideas with their 'talking partners'. However, the needs of pupils of different abilities are not always taken fully into account.
120. Leadership and management of history is good. The co-ordinator monitors the development of the subject with a clear understanding of pupils' learning needs. History is promoted effectively, as seen in the quality of the displays around the school. Fieldwork is a feature, both locally and on residential school journeys for older pupils. History is enhanced by visits to museums such as Dover, and other important historic buildings such as Canterbury Cathedral. The alternate blocking of both history and geography potentially can lead to a fragmentary experience for pupils and their skills development. Assessment is developing, for example; as yet there is no collection of levelled work that would raise teachers' awareness of different levels within the National Curriculum. Accommodation is good. Resources overall are satisfactory but those in Years 1 and 2 group require boosting if the topic form of organisation is to continue, and the range of artefacts for older pupils requires updating. There are good cross-curricular links with information and communication technology, including searching the Internet for information on Victorian homes, and with science where pupils in Year 1 consider a time before electricity.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are broadly comparable with nationally expected levels. This judgement is mainly based upon an analysis of pupils' work, because no direct teaching was seen at the end of either Year 2 or 6. Pupils' overall progress has been satisfactory. This includes those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. No differences were seen in the attainments of boys and girls.

122. At the end of Year 2, pupils have used information and communication technology effectively to organise and classify information, generate and record their work and plan instructions to make things happen. At the end of Year 6, they have correctly added to, amended and combined information from different sources, for example, a multimedia presentation. They have used equipment well to sense physical data and have produced simple, but effective web page designs. Pupils' keyboard skills are not always as well developed and this can slow progress in lessons.
123. Pupils' work indicates that teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in Years 2 and Year 6. In Year 2, pupils have covered an adequate, but not wide range of work. Achievement is satisfactory and teachers' expectations are appropriate. Pupils' work is not marked conventionally. However, a good system of assessing their competence gives them and teachers, clear indication of their level of proficiency and the progress that they have made. In Year 1, pupils have learned how to assemble text, use a word-bank and access information. In Year 6, pupils have covered a good range of work and have acquired appropriate computer skills. Teachers' expectations have resulted in work that has been done with care and interest. Sometimes good progress in learning has been made by pupils. A good lesson in Year 4 was taught by an 'information and communication technology manager.' Pupils had a good understanding of the objectives. These were to use an Internet programme to place historical scenes in chronological order. They made good efforts, learned functions such as the use of buttons and menus and worked with sustained concentration because the challenge was appropriate to their needs and interest.
124. A scheme of work is well established and used to enable teachers plan interesting work for pupils. Good use has been made of specific funding to establish well-equipped computer suites, but each is small and whole classes of pupils cannot be taught at the same time. To overcome this, pupils are withdrawn from other lessons for small group teaching. This is not always a satisfactory arrangement because they can lose access to their full curriculum entitlement. Pupils in the computer club have produced some well-designed posters for school functions such as a Fete and a Family Disco. Information and communication technology is used in other subjects, for example, in English, mathematics, science, art, history and geography. Pupils have used digital cameras, email and have been taught with the use of data projectors. A good policy and clear procedures have been established to protect pupils from undesirable Internet material. Their progress in learning is checked regularly and recorded. Some use is made of this to plan curriculum development. The co-ordinator leads the subject well. He is very enthusiastic, has identified priorities for development and has begun to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. A good link is established with a governor who provides helpful advice when requested. Resources are good and this contributes well to pupils' progress. The subject meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.

MUSIC

125. Standards are satisfactory overall. Singing is a strength throughout the school. All pupils including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils make at least appropriate progress.
126. In assemblies pupils really enjoy singing. Younger pupils thoroughly enjoy singing the music specialist's own song about the golden rules 'penguins they are very good-penguins do things they should' and 'I've got a body, a very busy body' especially when

the teacher showed the pupils a baby and adult furry penguin too. They build on their repertoire of new and familiar songs and hymns; for example, older pupils during hymn practice sang and mimed 'He's got the whole wide world in his hands', 'Dear Lord and Father' and 'This little light of mine' and they followed directions carefully. Pupils are enthused by the specialist music teacher and enjoy chanting and miming and through her very good questioning they are helped to understand the meaning of the words they sing. Following the teacher's directions they paid good attention to their breathing and voice projection as a result the quality of their singing improved. During lunchtime the choir with over sixty pupils sang a range of songs from a three-part calypso to 'Skye boat', they were quite able to reach the high notes and demonstrated clear diction.

127. In lessons, younger pupils sing different words to 'Wheels on the bus'. They improve their listening skills when they handle and play different tuned and untuned percussion instruments to create and match different moods whilst listening to a poem about a toy shop 'midnight in the toyshop'. This was a good and successful lesson in which pupils explored the different sounds they could make using instruments. Pupils in Year 2 experience a balance of practical music-making skills and techniques. They recognise long and short sounds, and use and follow graphic symbols. They perform well, and when it is their turn to be the audience they are attentive and supportive. Pupils in Year 6 listened to Paul McCartney's 'Yesterday' and they could identify the verses and chorus. After discussion about the lyrics, pupils wrote their own version based on everyday events. They came up with some interesting and very personal accounts. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate each other's work and they do this well. Another Year 6 class studied 'Imagine' by John Lennon as a result of the good prompting by the teacher they recognised that this was a song about peace. One pupil said 'it sounds like a song about dreams'. Pupils are also aware of, and have evaluated, the work of influential composers from different periods such as Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata'.
128. As a result of the good teaching, pupils' attitudes are good and at times very good. They enjoy music lessons, are keen to play the instruments and enjoy opportunities for performance. When working in pairs or groups they are considerate, wait their turn and handle the instruments with care.
129. The overall quality of teaching in music lessons is at least satisfactory. The teaching by the music specialist teacher is very good and on occasion excellent. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are shared and are reinforced throughout lessons. Teachers use good questioning techniques to promote and consolidate further learning. Good opportunities are provided for pupils who wish to learn to play instruments. Peripatetic lessons are offered for violin, viola, double bass and keyboards, and about 10 pupils receive lessons in school. Pupils have good opportunities to perform with other musicians. A music centre has been established on the site since 1987 so there is a long tradition of music. There are two very popular and well-attended orchestras: a junior and a senior string orchestra. Pupils from St Nicholas and other local schools can attend these.
130. In order for music to develop and retain its good profile, the school will need to appoint a music co-ordinator. Plans are in hand to appoint a co-ordinator in the very near future. Meanwhile the music specialist is providing considerable help and support within the school. With the headteacher and teachers she shares the vision for raising standards and the music provision. Together, with the teaching staff they are successfully raising the

profile of music. Resources are good and are constantly being increased, for example there are plans to increase the range of ethnic instruments in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131. Standards are in line with the national expectations for pupils in Year 2 and 6. Pupils' achievement is good overall.
132. At the end of Year 6, pupils know about the need to warm up before any physical activity, and how to behave safely when taking part in games and carrying equipment in gymnastics. In games, pupils enjoy learning new skills as in the Year 5 and 6 lessons when volleyball was introduced. During the lessons, pupils developed skills of moving into position in order to be more successful when throwing and receiving the ball. When practising these skills they are beginning to devise strategies to challenge their opponent. In dance, pupils use their listening skills well when reacting to different musical beats and rhythms. They show a range of different gestures moving from angry movements to more gentle and softer reactions. In a Year 3 lesson, using a radio programme, pupils reflected the changing nature of 'Quetzalcoatl' an Aztec God in their sequence of movements. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils were learning the complexities of a Viennese Waltz as part of a series of lessons studying the development of dance through the centuries. These dance lessons made useful links with the history scheme of work. In gymnastics, pupils use the space efficiently and develop good cooperative movements in pairs. They have good balancing techniques and understand how to change positions maintaining good posture. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 5 lesson, when pupils moved creatively through a sequence of movements working symmetrically together. Pupils are also developing evaluative skills and identifying good achievements in others, which they transfer to their own movements in order to improve.
133. At the end of Year 2, pupils have a full range of physical education curriculum planned throughout the year. Only one games lesson was seen during the inspection. Pupils know that they need to warm up in readiness for physical activity. They were very active and enthusiastic about their lesson. They cooperated well in pairs when using hockey sticks and balls. They showed careful control of the sticks, knowing the safety rules, and are at an early stage of dribbling and passing the ball accurately. They listened carefully and watched with interest as the teacher and support staff demonstrated improvements they could make.
134. Generally, pupils have good attitudes in lessons. They demonstrate good levels of concentration and work well with each other and this is a positive contributory factor to their learning. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils responded particularly well to the challenge of the lesson. They showed enthusiasm and enjoyment at the opportunity to react to different sounds and instructions. In most lessons pupils changed into kit but there is inconsistency in practice of when pupils have bare feet or wear trainers. This is particularly noticeable in dance and gymnastics lessons
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. All teachers share the learning intentions with pupils and in many instances relate to previous lessons. This provides continuity for pupils and enables them to progress over time. Teachers have good control of the pupils although in some lessons, their voices are too loud. In a Year 5 lesson, some pupils needed constant monitoring and intervention to enable the lesson to progress well for the other pupils. This was achieved with great success and the pupils made good

progress with the basic skills of volleyball. In dance and gymnastics lessons, teachers encourage pupils to work cooperatively and to be creative in their movements.

136. The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed to the post. However, she is enthusiastic and involved in evaluating the needs of the subject. She has ensured that sufficient resources are available for the successful development of all aspects of physical education. Monitoring of standards is at an early stage of development but is identified in the school improvement plan. There are no planned swimming lessons this year or recorded information about pupils' abilities in this area of the curriculum. However, the review of swimming provision is to be brought forward.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

137. By the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, standards are below expectation because their work lacks sufficient breadth and depth of study, although it meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, and English as an additional language is unsatisfactory. No differences in achievement were observed between boys and girls.
138. In both Year 2 and Year 6, pupils have a basic understanding of some of the elements of the planned curriculum, that is, they learn about religion. However, they have insufficient experience of learning in any depth from religion and therefore the subject does not make a significant contribution to their understanding of the spiritual, moral, social or cultural aspects of life.
139. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory in the one Year 2 lesson seen. The teacher kept the interest of pupils, explained the principles of infant baptism and used pupils' own knowledge to develop the lesson content. However, analysis of pupils' work in Years 1 to 2 indicates that overall, learning is unsatisfactory. This is because there is little evidence that pupils make appropriate progress in gaining understanding of the effect of religion in the lives of ordinary people. They have worked on Festivals, Christmas, and the theme of 'Belonging' and the stories of Jesus. Much of this has superficial coverage and the quality of work produced does not suggest that teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve. No lessons were seen in Year 6, but analysis of work produced, reveals an insufficient range and depth and wide variation in its quality. Marking is not completed consistently neither does it help pupils to improve their work. Too much written work is copied. Because of this, pupils do not have enough opportunities to think about important issues and record their own thoughts and understanding. This hinders their ability to learn from religious ideas or practice. Work done by pupils in other years in Key Stage 2 has very similar characteristics.
140. There is a partly completed scheme of work based upon the locally Agreed Syllabus. The school has been advised by the Diocesan Board of Education that it can take up to two years to complete this. This is because of the relatively recently adopted church school status. The co-ordinator has monitored teachers' planning and this has led to some understanding of what needs development in the curriculum. Pupils' work is not assessed and therefore its use to guide curriculum planning is not established. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, but this tends to be incidental rather than carefully planned. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has a good improvement plan for the subject in which appropriate priorities are identified. Significantly, completion of the scheme of work, the assessment of pupils'

attainment and in-service training to improve the expertise of teachers are the main priorities. However, currently there are insufficient opportunities to monitor teaching systematically and therefore, the professional needs of teachers in this subject cannot be fully known. Resources are adequate except those for information and communication technology. The school has made good use of educational trips to the local Church and to Canterbury Cathedral. The subject meets statutory requirements.