

INSPECTION REPORT

BETHERSDEN SCHOOL

Bethersden

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118372

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Macey

Lead inspector: Wendy Simmons

Dates of inspection: 26th - 28th January 2004

Inspection number: 255499

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	124
School address:	School Road, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent
Postcode:	TN26 3AH
Telephone number:	(01233) 820479
Fax number:	(01233) 820646
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Keith Brannan

Date of previous inspection: 16th-18th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bethersden School is situated in a large village some 10 miles from Ashford. The school is made up of a Victorian main building, an extension, which was built approximately 20 years ago and one mobile classroom. There are 124 pupils registered at the school and they are taught in mixed aged classes. Pupils attend from several surrounding villages and overall, pupils come from favourable social circumstances, with the school having a very low percentage of free school meals. Although the number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is average, a high proportion has statements for very specific needs, such as complex physical difficulties and emotional and behavioural problems. Six pupils are identified as having Traveller heritage backgrounds. Almost all pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds and no pupils are learning English as an additional language. Overall, when pupils start the school, their skills and knowledge are above average. The school has been through an extremely difficult two years due to the illness and sudden death of the former headteacher. Throughout this period, some year groups have had a succession of supply teachers. The governors requested help from the Local Education Authority and following this, a visiting headteacher supported the school for two days a week; the school has also been assisted by specialist advisory teachers. In September 2003, a new headteacher was appointed. At the time of the inspection, two supply teachers were teaching one class. The school has established strong links with other schools under the Rural Action Zone project.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23674	Wendy Simmons	Lead inspector	Science, art, design and technology, music and foundation stage.
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32539	Elaine England	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, music physical education and special educational needs.
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bethersden School is underachieving. It provides an acceptable standard of education but more able pupils could be reaching higher standards. This underachievement is mostly due to the significant difficulties, which the school has faced in the last two years. Teaching, learning and leadership and management, are satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- There is a strong commitment to raising standards, especially by the new headteacher, who shows good leadership and has developed very good teamwork and an ethos for improvement
- The school could be getting better results in English, mathematics and science for higher ability pupils by Year 6. These pupils could be achieving better by doing more challenging work
- There is good achievement in English in Years 1 and 2 and in information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school
- Provision and achievement for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good
- Provision and achievement for children in the Foundation Stage is good
- Teaching and learning are good in Reception and Years 1 and 2
- There are good links with parents and parents feel that the school is now improving
- Assessment information is not yet used to best effect to help all pupils achieve well
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation, which limit pupils' learning opportunities

Unsatisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection in 1998. This is because of very difficult staffing problems, when for a long period of time the school was without a headteacher. Results, in national tests, did improve, but then declined. Firm recent action is enabling the school to move forward, but the school still has to address some of the key issues, which were identified in 1998. The quality of teaching, learning and progress, was higher overall in 1998 than was found during this inspection. The best progress is evident in strengths noted above and especially in the very good progress in improving the Foundation Stage and standards in English by Year 2.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

By Year 6, standards are currently average overall. The table below shows the school's results in the last three years. Standards in the Reception class are above average, because pupils are especially confident in their communication and personal and social skills. By Year 2, standards are well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. By Year 6, standards are average in English, science and mathematics and above average in ICT. The school has been successful in helping pupils to reach high standards in speaking, but overall the school has not been successful enough in reaching targets for national tests and there has been a decline in mathematics over the last three years, which shows significant underperformance compared with other very similar schools.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	B	D	B	C
mathematics	A	B	C	E
science	A	E	B	C

Key: A-well above average; B-above average; C-average; D-below average; E-well below average; E-in the lowest 5% of schools
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Achievement is unsatisfactory overall. This is because pupils' rate of progress is often patchy. Pupils with SEN achieve well, but the rate of achievement for higher-ability pupils from Years 3 to 6 is too slow. The best achievement is for younger pupils, where there is consistency in good quality teaching and learning. In Years 3,4,5 and 6, fragmented learning has affected achievement significantly in the last few years, due to staffing problems.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory. The headteacher has taken effective action to improve behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. There are notable strengths in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Further up the school, in mixed age classes, pupils do not all do equally well. Higher ability pupils do not always have the chance to make the progress of which they are capable. Across the whole school, opportunities for practical mathematical and scientific investigations are underdeveloped. The care shown by staff contributes to pupils' personal development and fosters good relationships. Teachers are skilled at praising pupils so that they mostly behave appropriately in lessons. The accommodation limits opportunities for pupils to work independently, as there is no library. A significant strength is the very good support given by teaching assistants. As yet, assessment information is not used effectively enough to guide teachers when planning lessons and setting targets for all pupils' improvement. Pupils want to do more demanding work. Links with other schools and extra activities enrich pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is satisfactory. The new headteacher has good vision and a real sense of purpose in his work. A very committed deputy ably assists him and together they have acted effectively to bring about important changes. **Management is satisfactory,** with subject leaders developing their roles. There is good management, for SEN, English, PE and the Foundation Stage. Governance is satisfactory, it ensures compliance with statutory requirements, although aspects of performance management and risk assessment are not as rigorous as they could be. Staff and governors are working very effectively together.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents like the school and feel that it is now well placed for a better future, although it has been through a very turbulent time. Pupils are happy with the school, but they do not like the misbehaviour of a few pupils, even though teachers are dealing with this effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve

- Improve the achievement of the most able pupils, by Year 6, in English, mathematics and science, so that all pupils reach the standards that they are capable of
- Raise staff and governors' expectations and knowledge of pupils' capabilities
- Make better use of assessment information to plan challenging learning for all abilities
- Track pupils' progress and set targets so that pupils know what to work on to improve
- Increase investigation and independent learning opportunities
- Continue to develop performance management and risk assessment
- Take further rigorous action to improve the accommodation

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **unsatisfactory** overall, although it is good in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with SEN. In Years 1 and 2, achievement is satisfactory, but in older classes there is underachievement, especially for the most able pupils, who could be doing better. By Year 6, standards overall are **average** in English, mathematics and science. Standards by Year 2 are above average, which reflects good teaching and learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The most able pupils do not reach the standards that they are capable of in English, mathematics and science by Year 6
- There is good achievement for children in the Foundation Stage
- Pupils with SEN achieve well for their abilities
- By Year 2, standards in English are well above average, showing good achievement
- Pupils achieve well in ICT and reach above average standards by Year 6
- Opportunities for practical investigation in mathematics and science are underdeveloped

Commentary

1. When children start this school, in the Reception class, they show a wide range of skills but the proportion that are of higher ability is significant. Children are especially confident in their speaking, listening and communication. They also show better than average personal and social skills and a broad knowledge of the world around them. These children have a good grasp of basic ideas about mathematics.

2. There has been very good overall improvement in raising standards in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection, when the progress of the youngest children was judged to be unsatisfactory. Achievement in the Reception class is now good in language and communication, mathematical development, creative, and personal and social development. Children make good progress in widening their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Good achievement is due to good teaching and learning for all children in all areas of learning, except physical development. In physical development, the restricted size of their outside play area does not allow pupils to make rapid progress in mastering more demanding agility skills. Overall, teachers and assistants have high expectations and provide a rich variety of learning opportunities, which enables these young children to make good progress. By the end of the Reception year, standards are above average because a high proportion reaches the expected early learning goals in all areas of their learning and about half of the year groups are working within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. This above average attainment on entry to Year 1 is a characteristic of most classes in the school. However, this is not the case for Year 3, where attainment on entry to Year 1 was average due to the high number of pupils with significant special needs in this year group.

3. By Year 2, standards in English are well above average, due to good teaching and the consistent development of skills from Reception through to Year 2. As a consequence of this, achievement in English is good, as their higher than average standards at the beginning of Year 1 develop into very high standards by Year 2. Changes in staffing in Year 2 and professional development training have resulted in a significant improvement in standards. The current Year 3 pupils, when in Year 2, showed below average standards, which partly reflects the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, some more able pupils did not reach the expected higher Level 3 results. Currently, provision, by Year 2, has improved significantly, showing a strong emphasis on developing literacy skills. This is why standards are well above average in speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, the school is now well on track to gain more Level 3 results in the next round of national tests. Furthermore, there is an improving trend in mathematics and science, which reflects the staffs' commitment to improvement and good leadership by the headteacher in addressing past weaknesses.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.2 (17.5)	15.9 (15.8)
writing	14.6 (15.4)	14.8 (14.4)
mathematics	15.1 (15.6)	16.4 (16.5)

There were 22 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Pupils are doing well in ICT throughout the school. Good achievement in ICT is due to teachers making effective use of the resources available and in assessing what pupils can do and then using this information to give them new and interesting things to work on. Indeed, in this work, there is a good range of challenging activities, which are set at higher than average levels (Level 5 of the National Curriculum). In ICT, the needs of all abilities are well met.

5. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the good progress and achievement made by pupils with SEN. Firm action in the autumn term led to the appointment of a visiting specialist SEN teacher who works with the staff to plan and monitor pupils' progress. This is working well. However, more significantly, teaching assistants and teachers often provide very good support for pupils both in class and through focused group activities. In English, this can often result in pupils reaching average standards. Overall, pupils with SEN achieve good standards and work is well matched to their level of understanding.

6. In Years 3 to 6 there is clear evidence of underachievement. This is why the school is judged to be an underachieving school. Trends in the school's results have been variable, but show a strong downward trend, especially in mathematics results. Underachievement is evident especially for the most able pupils. Currently, in English, mathematics and science, the proportion of pupils working at, or towards the expected Level 4 by Year 6 is average. Given the number capable of doing better, too few are working at, or towards Level 5. As a result of this, the school is too far from reaching its target of 44 per cent at Level 5 in the 2004 national tests in English, and 50 per cent in mathematics. Further to this, in 2002 and 2003 the school did not do as well as other very similar schools in all subjects.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (25.9)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	26.7 (27.9)	27.0 (27.0)
science	29.7 (27.3)	28.8 (27.6)

There were 22 pupils in the year group. ,Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. The reasons for underachievement are complex and reflect the significant staffing difficulties, which the school has faced in the last two years. Pupils, particularly in Years 4,5 and 6, have had several supply teachers during their time at school, with Year 6 having six in one year. High staff turnover has resulted in fragmented learning and a slowness of pace as pupils move through the school. While staff followed termly plans, continuity between lessons, was sometimes lost and pupils worked at a slow pace.

8. Before September 2003, the deputy headteacher worked very hard to juggle two roles. He regularly had to leave his class to focus on the day to day running of the school on the days when the seconded headteacher was working at her own school. During this time, different supply teachers took his class and some pupils' began to show challenging behaviour and lost interest in learning, which had a negative impact on how well pupils' achieved. The new headteacher and deputy have worked hard to change the school's ethos, so that pupils are happy to come to school and learn.

9. The staff recognise that some pupils are underachieving because assessment information is not being used to plan lessons and track pupils' progress. Furthermore, pupils are not always clear about how to improve. While pupils have targets for improvement in English, these are not sufficiently evident in mathematics or science. Pupils would like to work harder in some mixed aged classes and as yet, teachers' expectations and use of assessment information are not yet rigorous enough to lift the quality of work and achievement for the highest ability pupils. There are missed opportunities to develop investigation activities in mathematics and science, which limits pupils' thinking and reasoning skills and thus, their overall rate of achievement. In science, girls are not always achieving as well as boys. During the inspection, teachers often missed the opportunity to focus their attention on girls.

10. The school is just beginning to get to grips with identifying and providing for gifted and talented pupils. This is working well in Year 2 and for pupils in sports activities. Equally, the school has introduced a special arts week and has just started specialist music lessons in guitar. However, opportunities for talented pupils to reach higher Level 5 results in many subjects are still underdeveloped. A strength of provision is the range of activities organised by the Rural Action Zone project, which runs exciting activities for small schools, as detailed later in the curriculum section of the report.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Most pupils like school. Their attitudes to their work and behaviour are **satisfactory** overall. Attendance is satisfactory. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has taken firm action to improve attendance and introduce an effective behaviour management scheme
- Behaviour and attitudes in Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 are good
- A few pupils, in older classes, demonstrate negative attitudes and behaviour
- The school is successful in promoting good moral and social development
- There are missed opportunities to develop cultural awareness

Commentary

11. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and find it a friendly place. Attendance levels in the school are improving due to rigorous action by the administrative staff and headteacher. Most pupils arrive on time in the mornings. The school is working hard to encourage good attendance, in particular in dissuading parents from taking family holidays in term time, which is good practice as it ensures that pupils do not miss valuable learning time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year 2002 /2003

12. Most pupils concentrate appropriately in lessons and try hard. A minority of mostly older pupils are less motivated and this affects both their achievement and behaviour, which is a legacy of experiences that they have had in the past, when staffing problems resulted in pupils not making longstanding relationships with their teachers. The headteacher's drive to raise standards of behaviour is beginning to have effect especially for pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, where pupils behave well in lessons and at breaktimes and show good attitudes to learning. Staff, pupils and parents all agree that behaviour has improved around the school in recent months. Pupils commented on this, noting the effort by the new headteacher to make the school a happier

place. They like being praised and rewarded for doing things well and following the rules. Although some bullying has occurred, pupils and parents are now confident that it will be dealt with effectively if the headteacher is made aware of any incidents. There have been no recent exclusions. Pupils are sensitive to pupils with disabilities.

13. The school provides well for pupils' moral and social education. This is especially successful in the Reception class, where adults have a good understanding of how to develop co-operation. Furthermore, there are opportunities for children to make decisions for themselves and to work independently and in small groups, as seen when the children worked on building a sand tunnel. The school has introduced a school council, which is beginning to be effective in giving the pupils the chance to share their concerns and ideas for the school's improvement. There are missed opportunities to develop cultural development in some lessons and through widening multicultural learning. However, links with the Rural Action Zone project are especially helpful in widening pupils' wider cultural and social development, as pupils enjoy different musical, art and drama activities, which reflect a wide range of cultural traditions. Of note is the staffs' action to raise the self esteem of pupils, following a very difficult time in the school's history. This is having a positive impact on learning and their wider spiritual development. For example, pupils delight in sharing their achievements during the parents' weekly assemblies.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll
White – British	109
White-Irish	1
White – any other White background	2
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2
Black or Black British	1
Parent/pupils preferred not to say	3
Information not obtained	5

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. The strongest features of the provision include the good teaching and learning for pupils in the Foundation Stage, in Years 1 and 2 and for those with SEN. Improvement is needed for higher ability pupils.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory** overall. Assessment is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staffing difficulties have impacted on pupils' learning since the last inspection
- Opportunities in the mixed age classes are too inconsistent
- There is too much variation in teachers' expectations for higher ability pupils
- Assessment is beginning to be well established in English but in other subjects it is not sufficiently developed
- There is not enough good teaching of mathematics to raise standards
- Investigation and research activities are underdeveloped
- Throughout the school, teachers have established good relationships with pupils
- Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 22 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	5	5	10	1	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

14. At the time of the last inspection, 89 per cent of teaching was found to be satisfactory or better. Reports from parents and staff note that the quality has fluctuated since then, with some periods, when parents and pupils were concerned about staffing difficulties and the impact of these on learning opportunities. Parents, staff, pupils and monitoring by the Local Education authority, note that teaching and learning have improved significantly since September 2003. They are all pleased that the school is back on track and improving. Currently, the quality of teaching and learning remains inconsistent, as in 1998. Really, the strengths and weaknesses are now in different places. Since the last inspection, the quality remains good in Years 1 and 2 and has improved significantly in the Foundation Stage, whereas in Years 3,4,5 and 6, it is now satisfactory, rather than good, as when last inspected.

15. The teaching and support staff work very well together and have created good relationships with the pupils. There is a drive from the headteacher and deputy to create a team. Pupils want to come to school and learn. Pupils commented in discussions "The school has changed for the better, but they would like to do some harder work in mathematics". Almost all pupils understand that they have to behave well in lessons. Furthermore, they especially respect the headteacher.

16. During the inspection, teachers worked hard and effectively to ensure that pupils were encouraged to listen attentively in lessons. Some pupils are not self-starters and need much support. As a result of staff building good relationships with pupils and using praise, pupils often become motivated to get on with their work and show improved concentration. Here, there are very strong links with pupils' spiritual development in the promotion of their self esteem, which thus helps them to be more successful learners. The pace of learning is better in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 than in older classes.

17. One of the key strengths of the school is the improvement in teaching and learning in the Reception class since 1998. Now, work and activities are well planned to make learning interesting. Time is used effectively to ensure that children learn by listening to adults and then investigating

things for themselves. Group activities are carefully thought out to enable the children to talk about what they are doing with other adults. High priority is given to developing reading, writing and wider communication and social skills. Of note, is the very good range of opportunities for young children to learn how to play and to improve their span of concentration while learning how to work with others. Children are helped to grow in confidence, so that they take sensible risks, which is so important for their further success in learning and development of their self esteem. Sometimes, because the class is mixed with older Year 1 pupils, some introductory activities are too long for the youngest children.

18. Careful thought has gone into the planning of learning for children in the mixed Year 1 and 2 classes. Teachers are keen to get their planning right, so that it meets the needs of pupils. For example, during the inspection, teachers altered their lesson plans to ensure that pupils in the mixed Year 1 class were suitably challenged. This works best in English and science work, but in mathematics, there is still some variation in the length of time allocated to formal numeracy lessons. On occasions, Year 1 pupils in the Reception and Year 1 class, have less formal numeracy teaching time than Year 1 pupils in the mixed Year 1 and 2 class.

19. From Reception through to Year 2 language, communication and English are consistently well taught. This is because pupils are reading very regularly and they are encouraged to write interesting and longer pieces of work. Very high expectations and effective use of assessment information is having a direct impact on the speedy pace at which pupils learn and understand new skills. In mathematics and science, there is good emphasis on developing basic skills, but investigation activities are underdeveloped. Learning is best, when pupils are inspired, excited and bubbling with ideas that they can quickly relate to, as evident in the excellent literacy lesson, which is detailed in the main English section of this report.

20. Pupils in Years 3,4,5 and 6, have experienced considerable upheaval in their learning due to staffing difficulties. Learning has been erratic and this has slowed the rate of achievement for pupils. Added to this, there is still some inconsistency in learning opportunities in the mixed age classes. For example, in mathematics and literacy, pupils in Year 5 can miss or repeat sections of work depending if they are with Year 4 or Year 6 pupils and so, the pace of learning slows and more able pupils are sometimes not sufficiently challenged. Teachers' planning identifies clear learning intentions, but these are too often pitched more correctly for average and lower ability pupils, without a focus for the higher ability. This is a factor in why fewer pupils reach the higher Level 5 results than would be expected. The school recognises this, and is now planning time for teaching assistants to help higher ability pupils, as seen in the good lesson when pupils described the characters in *Odysseus and the Cyclops*.

21. In mathematics, learning is not rigorous enough. This is partly because pupils have missed sections of work and staff have to fill in gaps. However, teachers are not yet using assessment information well enough to give targets for pupils to work towards to improve their understanding and in some classes there is over reliance on a commercial scheme of work. Pupils commented that they would like to work harder. In the lessons seen and from the sample of work, pupils are not learning how to manipulate numbers quickly, both mentally and in their recorded work. Teachers are not helping pupils to understand new ideas by approaching the same skills in different, interesting and practical ways.

22. Teachers are beginning to recognise that pupils learn in different ways and are just beginning to help pupils to work more independently. Opportunities to develop independent learning skills are best in the Foundation Stage. However, within the school as a whole, the constraints of the accommodation limit learning opportunities. Most significantly, the school does not have a well stocked and quiet library. Furthermore, in science, pupils are beginning to do more experiments for themselves but the space is often very restricted for group work and thus, teachers are sometimes inclined to over direct activities, which hampers pupils' opportunities to explore things for themselves, as evident in the jelly making experiment when all pupils were given the same sized jelly moulds, rather than letting the pupils make decisions for themselves and thus predict if the size would speed up, or slow down the setting process.

23. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good because work is usually well matched to pupils' needs and assistants give very good support, especially in special group activity sessions. Very occasionally, pupils are not as well supported in class lessons, when the assistants are working with higher ability groups and the class teacher does not give them sufficient attention quickly enough, so that they know what to do.

24. Overall, there are too many inconsistencies in how teachers mark pupils' work. It ranges from very high quality in English at the lower end of the school to unsatisfactory in some books in other year groups and subjects. This is because there are too many congratulatory comments, when the work is of mediocre quality. Added to this, when occasionally, teachers make suggestions on how to improve or develop ideas, not enough time is allocated to pupils to act on comments and so this hampers better learning. Where marking is of high quality, it not only checks that pupils understand new ideas, but also gives praise and asks pupils to apply this knowledge in different and new situations. Pupils are not regularly involved in helping to assess their own work in mathematics, although some good examples of target setting are clearly evident in English. In the Reception class, all staff keep very detailed informal and formal assessments, which is very good practice and particularly helpful in evaluating children's progress while in the class. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are tracking pupils' progress from year to year, but as yet, class teachers are not sufficiently involved in this process to understand the implications of this information when planning lessons and targets for pupils.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. It is adequately planned and provides **good** opportunities for pupils' learning to be enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is **unsatisfactory**. Staffing is good. Resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is enriched well by after school activities and visits
- There are a good number of skilled teaching assistants
- The provision for pupils with SEN is good
- The needs of the most able are not yet sufficiently well met in the curriculum
- Some accommodation does not meet the needs of the pupils and the curriculum

Commentary

25. The curriculum has developed suitably since the last inspection. Staff and governors have been especially successful in widening opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage. Throughout the school, work has been planned mostly on a two year programme to meet the needs of the mixed age classes. Although this has merit, there are still occasions when pupils, in older mixed age classes, repeat work, which gives them limited scope to learn new and inspiring things from year to year. This impacts mostly on the most able pupils, who sometimes repeat work or are not further challenged in lessons. The school is best at meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, where provision is good and pupils are often very well supported by skilled teaching assistants.

26. Provision for pupils who are identified as gifted and talented is developing and is generally suitable for those up to the age of seven. However, from then on, it is not sufficiently well thought out. Some useful developments have resulted in very good provision for able pupils in sports. The gifted and talented policy is not yet used throughout the school to raise achievement. There is still considerable scope for making the curriculum more creative to further raise pupils' achievement. The school is best at doing this in the Reception class, where teachers plan the curriculum to link learning in fun, imaginative and creative ways.

27. The quality of after school clubs and visits is good. Good links are in place with the main feeder secondary school and with the local playgroup. Links with the wider community are developing steadily, with particular strengths in the school's involvement with the Rural Action Zone (RAZ), which offers opportunities for pupils to work with pupils from other small schools on a range of activities that would not normally be available. This is enhanced by good extra-curricular provision

for older pupils, which includes a wide range of sporting events and competitions, a range of arts events and a large number of visits and visitors. Since September this has included an arts week, building a specially designed shelter in Challock Woods, Le Club Francais, an inter-house sports afternoon, and a visit by the Magic Music Company.

28. There have been some significant improvements to the building since the previous inspection. The new information technology suite is now appropriate for the needs of the pupils and the extension to the Year 5 and 6 classes has a positive impact on the curriculum and pupils' learning. The quality of accommodation has improved in the Foundation Stage, but the outside play area is not large enough for the requirements of these young children's curriculum. Accommodation for the school as a whole is unsatisfactory and hampers learning opportunities. The library provision is unsatisfactory and young pupils have to walk around the outside of the school to gain access to the toilets, which are in a different teaching block. The Year 2 class is in a poor state of repair and this prevents pupils from using the space effectively for large art and design projects and scientific activities. Several classrooms have damp patches, which make it difficult to display pupils' work. The main office facilities and staff room are also in a poor state of repair and do not meet the needs of the staff. The school is suitably resourced but storage and accessibility of resources in the upstairs rooms of the main house is unsatisfactory and this prevents pupils for being able to select resources for their own learning, particularly in science, art and design and technology.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for all pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring of pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to air their views on the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know pupils well and have a caring approach
- There are good procedures for child protection
- There are good procedures to support pupils with SEN
- There are good procedures for the induction of new pupils
- The school council is beginning to work well
- Risk assessment is implemented, but is not yet rigorous enough

Commentary

29. Staff have a caring approach to the pupils and get to know them well; this ensures their general well being, although the weaknesses in assessment result in patchy support for higher ability pupils and missed opportunities to set all pupils challenging targets for improvement. Thorough procedures are now used for dealing with child protection issues, which shows good improvement since the last inspection, when this was unsatisfactory. The headteacher is the person designated to deal with any concerns and all staff are made aware of the necessary procedures. Although a system of risk assessments has been introduced at the school, which was a key issue from the last inspection, formal and recorded assessments do not yet take place regularly enough. The governors recognise this and are in the process of gaining training to make this more rigorous, especially in light of the poor condition of some mobile classes and the constraints of the accommodation in the Victorian section of the school.

30. There are now effective arrangements for ensuring that pupils get to know the school and are made welcome when they first arrive. As a result, they settle quickly and happily into life at the school. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils and as a result pupils feel safe and supported, this is especially successful for pupils with SEN, as staff are particularly sensitive to the needs of these pupils. The recently formed school council is beginning to work well and this enables pupils to air concerns and make suggestions for improving the school and its facilities. For example, by suggesting that they would like displays in the hall to make it more attractive and better systems to celebrate and reward pupils' efforts when working. Overall, the care of pupils has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a **good** partnership between the school and parents. There are **satisfactory** links with the local community. The links with other schools and early years providers are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are now happy with the education and care their children receive
- Effective recent efforts by the new headteacher have improved links with parents
- There is a very strong parents association
- There are effective links with local schools
- Pupils' annual reports do not give targets for improvement in all subjects

Commentary

31. The school has worked hard recently to develop good links with its parents. Parents are supportive of the school and happy with the care and education it provides, especially since the arrival of the current headteacher. Parents are generally kept well informed about their children's progress although the setting of targets for improvement, in pupils' annual reports, is inconsistent. The best practice is evident in the provision for pupils with SEN, where parents of these children are involved in setting and reviewing the targets for their children's development within their individual education plans. Overall, parents feel the needs of their children are well catered for. Parents also receive useful information on what their children will be learning each term and good general information through well - presented newsletters, information booklet and the governors' annual report. The school's prospectus, by contrast, is less attractively presented and its wording does not fully reflect the welcoming ethos of the school. The parent teacher association is very active and well organised with frequent fund raising and social events. These events are well supported by parents and the community and help to raise funds for extra resources for pupils, which has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The involvement of parents in and around the school is developing well. Links with other schools are well established, especially the links with the playgroup and local secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Headteacher provides **good**, leadership and is well supported by an able deputy headteacher. Management is **satisfactory**. Governance is satisfactory. Other staff provide satisfactory support, although aspects of their management roles are underdeveloped.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement
- There is a shared commitment to improving pupils' achievement
- Leadership of the Foundation Stage, SEN, English and PE is good
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- Performance Management for staff is not fully in place
- Progress since the last inspection has been hampered by staffing difficulties

Commentary

32. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and, together with the very supportive deputy head and senior managers, has identified the strengths of the school, areas for development, and the measures needed to achieve them. He has created an effective team, which is already having a positive impact on all aspects of school life. For example, since September, pupils, parents and visiting advisory teachers commented that pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved, moreover, a positive ethos for learning is now a feature of the daily life of the school. In order to raise standards, assessment and monitoring of pupils' achievement is being established. This is most successful in English, where management is good. The development of staff expertise and their performance management have been identified by the headteacher as factors that will contribute to the improvement of standards in the school. Performance management of staff, which

was suspended on the advice of the Local Authority during the long-term illness of the previous headteacher, has re-started, but is only in very early stages of development. Firm action is being taken to develop training on literacy and behaviour management, especially through links with two Local Education Authority advisors, with whom the staff have now developed a trusting and positive partnership for continued improvement. Parents appreciate the good leadership created in recent months.

33. Management of the school is satisfactory. The School Improvement Plan, to which staff and governors are committed, identifies the key priorities for the school and, in part, the finances needed to implement them. The school recognises the need to improve some areas of the curriculum, particularly mathematics, and has begun to implement the strategies needed to achieve this. All staff have responsibility for one or more areas of the curriculum and some have received training as coordinators to help them, especially to enable them to monitor their subject more ably throughout the school as a whole, although this is still underdeveloped.

34. Special educational needs is well led. There have been recent improvements to ensure that suitable systems and procedures are in place for all pupils and communication with parents is much improved. A newly appointed special educational needs tutor ensures that all pupils have an up to date individual education plan and a thorough assessment of their needs. Some staff training has already taken place, including support staff training in literacy. Good use is made of the available resources especially computers to support spelling development.

35. The Governing Body is committed to the well-being and education of the pupils at the school. Most governors have a good understanding of the past and current strengths and weaknesses, and are supportive in developing the school, raising standards and improving the overall quality of provision. They have worked hard to ensure that staffing difficulties have been largely resolved, so that there is a broadly satisfactory climate for learning. They take responsibility for an area of the curriculum and visit the school to observe and discuss matters connected with these areas. They have recently evaluated their role, in order to better support the school, which was a good initiative because this has helped them to establish small committees to focus on specific subjects, so that their work is more focused. They fully understand that the curriculum and pupils' achievement are at the core of their role, but as yet they have not had sufficient guidance in helping them to understand how the achievement of pupils develops from assessments of children's capabilities in the Reception class (Baseline Assessment), through to Year 6. A few governors are aware and understand that there is underachievement in the school, but this needs more attention. As yet, they are not sufficiently recognising the needs of the most able pupils. However, recent appointments to the governing body are proving very helpful in widening governors' skills, which is a factor in why governors are clearer about the strong provision for pupils with SEN and why it was important to finance a specialist visiting SEN teacher. Equally, they are clear about the need for development in mathematics. Governors have a very good relationship with the headteacher and are very supportive of him and the staff. Although several aspects of risk management and performance management are in their infancy, nonetheless, statutory requirements are met overall.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	368,285	Balance from previous year	21,393
Total expenditure	348,962	Balance carried forward to the next	19,322
Expenditure per pupil	2,623		

36. Finances are managed efficiently and governors understand the importance of using funding to raise standards. They are now involving parents and pupils in spending decisions. Finances are allocated to the key priorities for school improvement.

37. Since the last inspection there have been significant barriers to improvement and this is why improvement is judged to be unsatisfactory overall. Sadly, the headteacher, who was new at the time of that inspection, suffered a long period of illness and died last year. The school experienced a stressful and uncertain period, and had two acting headteachers and supply staff. The governors took firm action and requested the support of the Local Education Authority during the difficult period and since the spring of 2003, advisors have supported the school. The appointment of the current headteacher has marked the beginning of a more positive period in the school's history and an aid to better progress in the future. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the provision in the Foundation Stage shows very good improvement due to good leadership.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Commentary

38. When children enter the Reception class they benefit from a good induction programme, which helps them to settle and also fosters strong links with parents and carers. Parents speak highly of the support that they and their children receive from the Reception staff. The quality of teaching, learning and leadership and management are good, due to a firm commitment to raising standards. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The school is sensibly considering inviting all children to start school in the autumn term on a full or part time basis. This is a good decision because this is a mixed age class and when the new children join routines and procedures have to be re-taught.

39. Standards are above average overall when children start school in the basic skills of language and communication, mathematical development, personal and social skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. In creative and physical development, skills are average. Children make good progress and achievement is good overall. A higher than average proportion reach the Early Learning Goals by Year 1. There are very good relationships, which make the children happy learners.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Achievement is good and this reflects varied learning opportunities and good leadership
- Children's behaviour is good

Commentary

40. Standards are currently above average, reflecting consistently good teaching and learning, which helps the children to grow in confidence and feel secure in the class. Adults place a strong emphasis on social education, which has improved since the last inspection. During the course of the day, children have many opportunities to explore their emotions and learn how to play alongside other children showing good concentration, negotiation and opportunities to share tasks. Adults sensitively join in games and plan activities, which enable the children to develop skills of independence and cooperation. Behaviour is good and this is due to the emphasis that adults place on setting routines and rules, which the children quickly learn and follow. Sessions are carefully planned to help children to think and make decisions for themselves and show their initiative.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths

- Children achieve well, and make good progress, which reflects good teaching
- Staff work very effectively to help children to learn basic skills in reading and writing

Commentary

41. Standards are above average and achievement is good. The teaching in this area of learning is good overall and sometimes very good. The children are very talkative and confident in sharing their ideas. Adults help the children to improve the quality of their spoken language, by helping them to use new and exciting words and also, by extending sentences, so that they have greater clarity. A

very strong emphasis is put on developing early reading and writing skills and this is a significant strength of the provision in the Reception class. Children can choose to make their own little books/letters and cards, but also benefit from formalised literacy activities, such as whole class reading using a very big book and then following this by reading in groups of four or five. The teacher has high expectations and really encourages children to think and learn for themselves, as evident in their writing about *Farmer Duck*. Regular daily reading activities, games and phonic activities help pupils to make good gains in their knowledge and skills. Children quickly master simple spellings and delight in beginning to try spellings for themselves. Learning is supported by teachers using a good range of resources, such as targets on cards, magnetic letters and simple word books. Sometimes, adults write for the children, as seen when collecting words to describe characters in their storybook. This helps the children to see an expert at work, while they concentrate on thinking of the ideas. This sets a good standard when they try to write for themselves. Adults note what the children can do and use this information well to plan children's further learning, which is good practice.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths

- Basic skills of number, shapes and measurement are introduced in interesting ways
- Mathematical ideas are usefully explored through children's play activities

Commentary

42. Standards are above average. Teaching, learning and children's achievement are good. Basic skills are introduced and gradually built up from day to day in lessons and through many practical activities. Activities are challenging, which helps the children to learn new knowledge quickly. For example, they counted to 44 accurately, when using the building bricks. Good challenges are also evident in work on shapes and positional language. For example, the teacher introduced a good range of mathematical vocabulary, such as 'higher', 'lower', 'next to', 'beside' and then the children had to place soft toys on bookshelves following particular instructions. Most children are learning how to write numerals with some accuracy due to good support from adults and regular practice.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strength

- Learning is rooted in carefully planned practical activities and investigations

Commentary

43. Standards are above average, and children achieve well. Teaching and learning activities are well planned to use visits and visitors to bring learning alive. Play areas in the class are carefully organised to help pupils to learn about jobs that people have; currently they have a fire station. They talk about people in their families and this helps them to get an idea about simple history. The surrounding environment supports learning about nature and pupils enjoy visits to family farms to learn about lambing. When using computers, the children learn good mouse control skills and use relevant programs on the computer, showing perseverance and concentration. Children have access to a variety of construction materials and develop their designing and building skills appropriately. Opportunities to make models in the art area are good. During the inspection, children really persevered with ideas, such as making a working dog's lead from scrap materials. Outside, children delighted in the touch of ice and loved exploring its strength, when trying to crush it. These learning opportunities really enrich their spiritual development. Currently, the outside growing area is constrained by the limitations of the space. There is a good emphasis on helping the children to learn about different religious beliefs and cultural traditions. For example, they celebrated Chinese New Year and visited a Synagogue.

Physical development

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main weakness

- Opportunities to develop agility skills and co-ordination are limited

Commentary

44. Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory. Standards are average. The children master fine hand skills well but their achievement in large body movements are only satisfactory. This is because there is not enough space in the play area. Added to this, they do not have any climbing agility apparatus or wheeled toys. The lack of a larger outside play area limits children's opportunities to develop spontaneous running, jumping and clambering skills.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strength

- Opportunities to enjoy a range of activities are good

Commentary

45. Standards are average overall. Achievement and teaching and learning are good. Children enjoy and experience a wide range of well planned activities, which they have had limited experience of before school. There are good opportunities for the children to play and make decisions about activities for themselves. Added to this, adults assess what pupils are choosing and this helps them to ensure that children experience different things during the term. The classroom is well organised to help children to enjoy playing, with a satisfactory range of dressing up clothes to foster their imagination. Good attention is given to enriching children's appreciation and enjoyment of painting, modelling. Children are encouraged to be creative and use their imaginations.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is improving, reflecting good leadership
- By Year 6, higher ability pupils are not always achieving their full potential
- There is inconsistency in marking and ongoing assessment
- Spelling, punctuation and presentation could be improved in writing in Years 3 to 6
- Speaking and listening skills are very well developed
- Reading skills are well developed
- There is very good provision in Years 1 and 2
- The development of literacy skills are planned for and used well in other subjects

Commentary

46. Standards in national tests for pupils at the end of Year 2 and 6 have fluctuated in the recent past. In 2003 they were above those expected nationally for pupils in Year 6 and below average for pupils in Year 2, which was partly due to this year group having a high percentage of pupils with significant SEN. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are now above the national average by the end of Year 2 and these pupils achieve well. Good leadership, training and changes in staffing, are resulting in good teaching and learning. The introduction of target setting and tracking of pupils' progress leads to good achievement.

47. Currently, standards for Year 6 pupils are in line with those expected nationally, but pupils of higher ability are under-achieving, particularly in writing. Much of the work seen is pitched at average, Level 4 skills, with limited planning for higher, Level 5 skills. There are not enough opportunities for writing based on independent research, and debate founded on reasoned argument, to enable higher ability pupils to extend their abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported to achieve well.

48. One of the key strengths of the provision is its attention to the development of speaking and listening skills, which are very well promoted throughout the school. Pupils are very confident speakers and use a wide range of vocabulary in discussion. Good opportunities to further develop their vocabulary are provided throughout the school. In a Year 6 lesson, where they built up word banks of appropriate language to develop balanced arguments about whether or not a local skateboard park would be good for their village. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and there are good opportunities for group and paired work. Pupils read very well and enjoy both the daily 'guided reading' sessions and reading alone for pleasure. Pupils in Year 2, use dictionaries independently and confidently and older pupils look up information on various topics. However, they do not have the skills necessary to find reference books in a library. Pupils write for different purposes, such as stories, reports, play dialogues and poetry. In Years 3 and 4, pupils are writing their own class myth based on classical myths, and use good imaginative language, while Year 5 pupils have written very imaginative river poems. Presentation of written work however, is inconsistent, with some work very poorly presented and many inaccuracies in both spelling and punctuation, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

49. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but range from excellent to satisfactory. It is very good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory for those in Years 3 to 6. However, higher ability pupils are insufficiently challenged to achieve their potential, for example, by drafting and redrafting work. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and plan their lessons with an appropriate variety of strategies to ensure good achievement by all ability groups. Here, work is well planned and effective use is made of assessment to help pupils to make quick progress, particularly in their writing.

Example of excellent teaching

An example of excellent teaching was seen in a Year 2 literacy lesson.

Pupils worked with the teacher to make their own collection of words on the theme of snow.

Learning was of a very high standard because of the way in which the teacher started the lesson by reading several poems using her voice to contrast the feel of words and to introduce new vocabulary. The meanings of words were carefully explained and emphasis was placed on looking at and identifying the spelling patterns of rhyming words. The teacher carefully wrote useful words as they were discussed on a very large writing board, which helped pupils to think for themselves, learn spellings and create a useful class word bank. Emphasis was placed on reading and reciting sections of poetry together, which aided pupils' reading skills, as the teacher encouraged them to look at the way punctuation and text suggests how they should use their voices expressively to create the mood and feel of words and phrases. These activities, when joined together, resulted in pupils having a very firm basis upon which they would be able to write their own creative and imaginative poems in the next lesson.

50. Teachers review what pupils have learned by asking searching questions, which pupils answer thoughtfully. They mark work regularly, and the best marking offers pointers for improvement. However, this is not consistent in all classes, as some marking, by offering only praise for mediocre work, results in missed opportunities for pupils to develop their learning. This is especially true of higher ability pupils in Years 3 to 6. Targets are set for each pupil, which means that pupils know what they are aiming for.

51. The subject is well led. Careful planning, target setting, monitoring and tracking of progress has led to the improvement in standards at Key Stage 1 and in some year groups at Key Stage 2. Although there are enough good quality resources to support the curriculum in classes, the library is unsatisfactory as it is a thoroughfare, which impedes reading activities. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Pupils' literacy skills are well promoted in other subjects. For example, in history older pupils compared the lives of rich and poor boys and girls in Tudor times. They imagined themselves to be Drake and wrote letters to England describing their adventures. In geography, they wrote detailed information notes about the world's highest mountains. In Religious education lessons, they imagined themselves to be Mary, the mother of Jesus, and wrote letters to their mother Ann, telling of the news of the birth and its significance. In ICT, pupils with SEN made effective use of the computer to help them with spelling practice.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematics is correctly identified for significant improvement
- There is underachievement in mathematics by Year 6
- Assistants give good support to pupils with SEN
- Expectations and challenges are not high enough for more able pupils
- There is poor use of assessment to set targets for improvement
- There is narrow coverage of the mathematics curriculum

Commentary

53. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have fallen over recent years. The school has been working to improve standards. Currently, standards in Year 2 are higher than average, which reflects the drive to raise standards. In relation to pupils' prior levels of attainment, achievement by Year 2 is satisfactory, with a growing proportion of pupils working at higher Level 3 skills. Pupils are able to count forwards and backwards in 20's and most are confident in adding and subtracting tens using numbers up to and beyond 100. More able pupils make their own addition sums to 100, recognising the importance of place value in their work.

54. By the end of Year 6, standards are about average. The majority of pupils can convert improper fractions though many find quick mental calculation difficult and they do not look to find different ways to solve problems. Pupils have few chances to work on more demanding mathematical activities needed to reach Level 5, which puts able pupils at a particular disadvantage. As a result, they are not doing as well as they could, so there is underachievement in mathematics. Planning for pupils in mixed aged classes requires very careful planning and use of assessment information to help teachers to plan work, which meets the needs of all pupils. Currently, provision for pupils of the same age in different classes is too variable. In some mixed aged classes, work in books shows very similar coverage, leading to poor achievement by the older pupils, particularly where aspects of work are repeated.

55. Teaching and learning are good at the lower end of the school. Here, basic number skills are well taught, with pupils of all abilities making good progress within lessons. For example, in a mixed Year 1 and 2 lesson, the lesson was planned to meet the wide range of abilities and the support of a classroom assistant enabled all children to learn well. Pupils were given adequate thinking time to explain their answers, which is good practice. Here, very good provision for two able pupils enabled them to make significant progress within the lesson and remain very motivated due to the challenging work. Year 1 pupils from the mixed Year 1 and Reception class also made good progress when working with a classroom assistant. However, they do not always get the same amount of formal numeracy time as other Year 1 pupils.

56. In Years 3 to 6, although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is not enough good teaching and learning to raise standards of achievement more quickly. Satisfactory lessons meet the needs of most pupils in the class but can lack real challenge for more able pupils. Occasionally, a lesson is unsatisfactory. In specific cases only a small amount of work is completed during lessons. Lessons are generally conducted at a steady pace, but sometimes this slows due to groups not being sufficiently focused on the task. Where teaching is good, the work is matched carefully to each pupil's ability level and all pupils have enough work to do, which makes them think about new and challenging activities. For example, a pupil commented on how much he enjoyed the challenge of mentally subtracting 25p from £1.30: "It's nice and hard". In the same class, another pupil found taking 20p away from 94p difficult, but persevered to find the correct answer and was very proud of her achievement. Where learning is unsatisfactory, pupils are not adequately challenged and do not develop skills systematically over time. Records show underachievement and a lack of progressive development of skills. This fragmented learning reflects the fact that staffing difficulties have interrupted pupils' learning. Older pupils commented on the fact that work was sometimes repeated and that they would like to work harder in mathematics lessons. Mathematics resources are good.

57. Assessment procedures are not yet developed enough to help pupils to achieve their best. Work is usually marked with a tick and a positive comment. Teachers do not use marking to inform pupils of their levels or to set targets for improvement. However, where assessment is used well, it leads to good learning. For example, a teaching assistant used her assessments well to pick up and deal with misconceptions about numbers using two decimal places.

58. The management of mathematics is satisfactory, as action is being taken to raise standards and the senior management team and the governor responsible for mathematics are very well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. A new mathematics scheme has been introduced and ICT software is now well used for assessment purposes. Senior staff have made a start to raising standards by tracking pupils' progress, although this is not yet being done consistently. The targets in the school improvement plan are appropriate but are very broad. The school has made insufficient progress since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Teachers use mathematics satisfactorily to support learning in other subjects across the curriculum, but there is scope for further improvement in this, especially as there is too much emphasis on number work and insufficient investigational work and problem solving activities. Graphs are used in science, and in art, pupils explore shape and pattern. Effective use is made of ICT to help pupils to develop basic number skills and to assess their level of understanding.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning of basic factual knowledge is good
- Investigations are underdeveloped and this leads to underachievement by Year 6
- There is good support for pupils with SEN
- Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are not high enough
- There is insufficient tracking of pupils' progress from year to year
- There has been slow progress in improving the subject since the last inspection

Commentary

60. Standards are average by Year 2 and by Year 6. Although a higher than average number of pupils reach the expected level for their age, the school is not getting enough pupils to the higher levels, especially by Year 6. Some higher ability pupils are underachieving by Year 6. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 2. Since the last inspection, improvement has been too variable and this is unsatisfactory. Standards were best in 2001, but declined to well below average in 2002. Since then science has been improving steadily.

61. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory. There is good teaching and learning of basic factual knowledge. Also, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' use of scientific vocabulary and discussion, which helps pupils to understand new things and explain their ideas more scientifically. However, teachers do not plan enough challenges to enable higher ability pupils to start thinking and learning about more complex aspects of science. Furthermore, pupils do not do enough practical investigations for themselves. When pupils do find out things for themselves, teachers do not always help them to record their ideas in such a way as to explore reasons for their findings; as a result they miss the chance to further develop their thinking, understanding. Sometimes, work is not finished. Almost all lessons seen were satisfactory. These lessons are characterised by steady development of knowledge but lacked pace and really good challenges, to stimulate pupils to think and be further inspired to find out more. Sometimes, boys receive more attention in discussions than girls, who then find it harder to achieve their best. Pupils are interested in learning and sometimes show perceptive ideas for problem solving and fair tests, as evident in the work in Years 5 and 6, on separating liquids and solids. Links with literacy, numeracy and ICT are satisfactory. There is good support to ensure that pupils with SEN are included in all activities. As a result, they often reach average standards; and achieve well.

62. Assessment is an area for improvement. Although teachers evaluate pupils' work at the end of topics, targets are not set for pupils' further improvement. There is no system for tracking pupils' progress and achievement over time from year to year and so it is difficult to know which pupils are making best progress. Teachers tend to mark work with ticks and crosses, or give a congratulatory comment, which is over generous. There is not enough careful marking, which helps pupils to know what to do to improve their skills and understanding. Due to staff illness, it was not possible to evaluate the management of science. However, the improvement plan has identified the need to raise the profile of investigation work and to widen links with ICT. Some training has already taken place to further develop assessment skills and monitoring.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning leads to good achievement
- Information and communication technology is used well to support SEN pupils
- Pupils are keen to learn new skills
- The subject is well led and managed
- The computer hardware is unreliable and is not yet fully connected to the school network and the school does not yet have a web site
- Assessment is not consistently used to extend pupil learning

Commentary

63. Standards in ICT are above average by Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils achieve well throughout the school for their ability. The curriculum is well planned to ensure all pupils have good access to computers both within the classroom and in the computer suite.

64. Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement. This is the result of effective teaching of basic computer skills and good provision. For example, Year 1 pupils worked with a classroom assistant on a computer programme to test their mathematics skills. In a Year 2 group, they used a range of editing methods to present their work well, including speech marks, underlining and italic print. Pupils responded well to the challenges asked of them and were very proud of their achievements. Pupils with SEN make effective use of ICT.

65. Teaching is well planned with clear objectives for lessons. Pupils think for themselves and learn new knowledge and skills effectively. For example, Reception and Year 1 pupils use the mouse confidently to produce drawings based on the artwork of Jackson Pollock. In Year 2 they change the text font, size and colour and use a simple database to present information about themselves. By the end of Year 6, pupils can find information on the Internet and present their own work in many different ways, using sound, words and moving images to different effect. As expectations of good pupil behaviour are maintained throughout the lessons, pupils concentrate well and make good progress.

66. There is good leadership in the subject, which is seeking to improve provision, especially relating to the replacement of unreliable hardware, as the school is working to set up a new web site and install more suitable spreadsheet, data handling and word processing software. The subject is well managed, but as yet systems to assess how well pupils are doing are underdeveloped. Schemes of work are in place for all age groups and are being adapted to better suit the needs of the school. Plans are also in place to extend cross curricular links. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. There are effective links with other areas of learning. Year 2 children used a word processing programme to make signs for their display on sounds, covered in science lessons. Year 6 pupils made presentations on mountain ranges, linked to the geography curriculum. However, links were less evident in the pupils' work sample.

HUMANITIES

68. No geography or history lessons were seen. The only religious education lesson seen was a visit to the local church. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, looked at pupils' written work and teachers' planning documents. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision, standards and teaching and learning in these subjects.

69. In **history**, from the evidence of past work, older Key Stage 2 pupils, have a good understanding about life in Tudor times and in **geography**, pupils know about a range of the world's physical features, such as the highest mountains. These subjects contribute well to the development of language and literacy skills.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths

- Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity and also the beliefs and similarities of world religions
- Links with spiritual, cultural and social education are good
- The subject is well led and managed

Commentary

70. By the end of Year 2 and 6, from the sample of work seen, standards are average. By Year 2, pupils have a sound knowledge of Christianity. They understand that people belong to families and groups, such as the Christian community. They know some of the stories from the Hindu religion and from Jewish tradition. In their work on the importance of the Passover, Year 1 pupils made unleavened bread in preparation for their celebration of a Passover meal. Year 3 pupils have a sound knowledge of the place of the Bible in the lives of both Christians and Jews, and through role-play, know some of the stories of the Old Testament, such as Rebecca at the Well and The Battle of Jericho. They understand the significance of the Torah to the Jewish faith. Year 4 pupils understand the place of the Bible, especially the New Testament in the life of the Christian Church. Through a visit to the local church, they understand some of the key features of a church, such as the lectern, font and altar, and the links between Holy Communion with the Passover meal and Jesus' Last Supper. Year 5 and 6 knowledge of Christianity is further developed, by understanding the place of worship and prayer in the daily life of Christians. They made their own very good versions of the Lord's Prayer. They understand well that belonging to a community involves both rights and responsibilities. They can identify aspects of Sikhism and compare them with Christianity.

71. Teachers use resources very well to enhance pupils' learning. These include visits to the local church and other places of worship, and knowledgeable guest speakers. The subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural education as they learn with wonder about various aspects of religious traditions. They widen their knowledge and understanding of different cultures by learning about world faiths. The subject is well led and managed. All aspects of the Locally Agreed Syllabus are well planned and taught throughout the school, but assessment is not used to measure standards. There are very good links with English. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

72. The main focus areas for the inspection were English, mathematics, science and ICT. Thus creative aspects did not receive as much inspection time and this is why teaching and learning and provision overall are not judged in each subject. No art and design and technology lessons were seen, as they occurred at the end of the week. It was not possible to see sufficient music to judge provision. Two PE lessons were observed. Evidence from teachers' planning indicated that appropriate topics are covered across both key stages. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils, held discussions with teachers, sampled pupils' work and photographs.

73. In **art**, standards are average by Year 2 and Year 6 from the work seen. Strengths include the better than average standards reached in some of the work completed during arts week. Here, the painting of sunflowers; collages in the style of Victor de Vasarely; and Simpson's pop art, were of a higher than average standard, showing good achievement and strong links to cultural development. The subject supports pupils' spiritual development well. For example, pupils were inspired by the work of Andy Goldsworthy when they explored environmental art to develop their

own imaginations and creative ideas. Pupils are beginning to use ICT successfully to support their art work. Links with the local community art projects help pupils of all abilities to develop a wide range of skills and new knowledge. Displays are best at the lower end of the school and in the hall. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. Resources are satisfactory and improving. Sketchbooks are underused to support learning.

74. Limited information was gathered on **design and technology**. The work seen showed that pupils use a range of materials to design and make moving objects, such as crazy creatures. Some ideas and modifications to designs are recorded on paper, but overall the designing aspect of the subject is underdeveloped.

75. With the arrival of the new headteacher, the school is working to develop **music**, which was identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection. Progress has been very slow until recently, as this has not been a priority for the school. Pupils enjoy a suitable range of concerts and plays and there are good links with a local secondary school. This gives pupils opportunities to learn about music from skilled teachers and older pupils. The school now has a visiting pianist and specialist instrumental lessons for guitar. The school is in the process of finding a suitable scheme of work to use with staff and pupils, as no member of staff has specific music skills. During assemblies, pupils sang enthusiastically and tunefully, showing average skills and potential for even better performances. The headteacher is developing the range of CDs to widen pupils' musical appreciation, as this is underdeveloped.

76. In **physical education**, the school offers many opportunities both within the curriculum time and as extra curricular activities. It was not possible to observe a wide range of lessons during the inspection. The lessons seen were at least satisfactory, with some good aspects. Achievement is satisfactory, pupils link movements into a sequence, showing accuracy and control in their movements and give constructive comments on each other's work. Pupils are given instructions for improvement, which leads to pupils making progress. The subject is well led and managed. There is a drive to raise standards as evident in the very comprehensive range of training for staff including football, rugby, tennis, dance and skipping. The school is well resourced for physical education. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities, which enhance the learning and the provision for higher ability pupils. The school's involvement with other local small schools and the Kent Rural Action Zone also provides additional opportunities to the pupils including taster sessions in tai chi and yoga. Good systems are in place to recognise and reward sporting achievement. Pupils who show a particular ability are included on the school's 'Gifted and Talented' register. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection, especially in addressing the weaknesses in health and safety. The hard surface games area slopes too much to be suitable for matches and to practice ball skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

Main strength

- There is good leadership, which is working effectively to improve the provision

Commentary

77. Some aspects are taught as individual subjects, especially at the top end of the school, but most work is covered within subjects such as science or during circle times and incidentally within the school day. Circle time is very well used by some teachers to promote pupil's personal and social education. Pupils, especially the older ones, respond well to the new behaviour systems and are positive about the high expectations from the new headteacher. They like being involved in making decisions about their school; especially through the new school council and they enjoy opportunities to take responsibility. Staff at the school are dealing with a legacy of poor behaviour and new systems are still settling into the ethos of the school. New procedures focus on developing a more positive whole school ethos include the introduction of 'Golden time' (a time set aside each

week, when pupils can choose activities if they deserve to be rewarded for their work, care of others or good behaviour). Additional events to enable all pupils to be involved in teamwork include a sports house team event. The reward system, introduced in September 2003, is well used to develop social skills. Year 5 and 6 pupils respond very positively to the well earned praise, which is given. This leads to raised pupil self esteem and motivation to succeed. There is a clear policy with appropriate arrangements for sex and health education and attention to the misuse of drugs.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	4
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).