

INSPECTION REPORT

**GILLINGHAM, ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY AIDED FIRST SCHOOL**

Beccles

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121140

Headteacher: Mrs Caroline Clarke

Acting Headteacher at the time of the inspection:
Mrs Linda Moyes

Lead inspector: Paul Missin 19227

Dates of inspection: 10th – 11th May 2004

Inspection number: 256211

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior
School category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 – 9 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 31

School address: The Boundaries
Geldeston Road
Gillingham
Beccles
Suffolk

Postcode: NR34 0HT

Telephone number: 01502 713425

Fax number:

Appropriate authority: Governing Body, Gillingham, St Michael's C of E Voluntary Aided First School

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Claire Legg

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Michael's C of E VA First School is much smaller than most other schools. The school serves a rural area on the border of Norfolk and Suffolk. All the pupils are from the white British ethnic group. There are 15 pupils on the school's special educational needs (SEN) register which is well above average. The most common aspects of need are moderate learning and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. There has been a continuous drop in numbers attending the school. Since 2000, the roll has almost halved, with the biggest drop between 2003 and 2004. Since 2002, there has been a complete change in teaching staff, five support staff have changed and almost the entire governing body has changed. Since 2000, there have been two permanent Headteachers and two periods of acting headship. During the time of the inspection, the substantive Headteacher was absent on maternity leave and a member of the county headship pool was Acting Headteacher. This period of significant disruption and change, which has also included a complete change of teaching staff has, made it difficult for developmental initiatives to be implemented successfully. In addition, the governing body's energy has been dissipated in dealing with other sensitive and confidential issues which were not closely related to school improvement. Although there is considerable variation from year to year, most children are achieving below average standards when they enter the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19227	Paul Missin	Lead inspector	English, science, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, personal, social, health and citizenship education.
9092	Ron Elam	Lay inspector	
10808	Alan Britton	Team inspector	Mathematics, history, geography, music, physical education. Children in the Foundation Stage. Special educational needs.

The inspection contractor was:

Phoenix Educational Consultants
"Thule"
60 Joy Lane
Whitstable
Kent

CT5 4LT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	7
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	17
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES ONE and TWO	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is not providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The leadership, management and governance of the school are all unsatisfactory. There are important weaknesses in the quality of teaching and in curricular provision which adversely affect the standards that pupils achieve. By the time they leave the school, pupils reach standards in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) that are well below those expected for their age and make unsatisfactory progress. The school gives unsatisfactory value for money.

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The standards that pupils achieve in English, science and ICT are too low and they are not making sufficient progress.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and the work set does not challenge pupils of different ages and abilities in their classes.
- The work of the Headteacher has not been sufficiently effective.
- The governing body has not provided the school with sufficient guidance or a critical evaluation of its work.
- Assessment information is not used to effectively monitor the progress that pupils are making or to set useful targets for improvement.
- The very good social and moral provision for pupils leads to very good relationships within the school community.
- The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is good.
- The work of the teaching assistants encourages and supports pupils well in their learning.
- A good range of interesting visits and visitors to the school enlivens and enhances the curriculum well.

The improvement which the school has been able to achieve since the last inspection has been poor. There has been a significant decline in overall standards attained. At the last inspection standards were in line and above average, now they are generally well below average. At the last inspection the quality of teaching was good; now it is unsatisfactory. Although aspects of the key issues from the last inspection relating to resourcing in PE and ICT have been addressed well, the elements dealing with curriculum planning, assessment and school improvement planning have not been addressed satisfactorily.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	D	E	E	E*
writing	D	E	E	E
mathematics	E	E	E	E

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E - in the lowest five per cent in the country.*

Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals

The very small year groups in this school mean that the analysis of test data must be treated with some caution. However, the trend from 2000 shows that standards in Year 2 have dropped consistently. Standards in reading in 2003 were among the lowest five per cent of similar schools nationally. Currently, standards in Year 2 are well below average in writing and science and below average in reading, mathematics and ICT. Standards in Year 4 are well below average in English, science and ICT and below average in mathematics. Across the school, pupils attain average standards in PE. Children in the Foundation Stage are likely to achieve average standards in all areas of learning. Overall, pupils' **achievement is unsatisfactory**. This is because important elements of the curriculum in several subjects are not meeting pupils' needs and the quality of

teaching is not strong enough to increase the rate at which pupils learn. Pupils with SEN and children in the Foundation Stage are better supported and achieve satisfactorily.

Pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' attitudes to school are sound and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Relationships in the school are very good. **Attendance is unsatisfactory** and has declined since the last inspection. Most pupils arrive at school punctually.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and here assessment procedures are good. Some strengths in teaching which were evident in lessons observed during the inspection were the way that teachers managed pupils and the effective co-operation between teachers and their assistants. However, the low expectations of teachers, the lack of pace in their teaching and lesson planning that does not clearly identify work for pupils of different abilities were important weaknesses. The effectiveness of pupils' learning is limited by lack of important detail in teachers' lesson planning and pupils are not always clear about what is expected of them nor how to improve their work. Assessment procedures are underdeveloped. Data are not used well to inform teaching or to set pupils' useful learning targets. Important aspects of the English, science and ICT provision are unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The Headteacher has not been able to create and secure an agreed vision for the school that is shared by staff, governors and parents. There are important weaknesses in the school development plan which mean that improvement priorities are not at the heart of the school's work. There is insufficient development of the roles of curriculum co-ordinators. Governance of the school is also unsatisfactory. Governors, until very recently, have not given the school sufficient direction and have not been able to evaluate its performance rigorously. Some statutory information in the prospectus and the annual report are not being provided. The Acting Headteacher has made a very good start to her time at school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents have a poor view of the school and significant concerns were expressed by a majority of parents over many aspects of the school's work in their pre-inspection questionnaire. The school has failed to involve parents sufficiently and the continued loss of pupils is negatively influencing the finances of the school. The school has failed to successfully address the concerns of a significant number of parents. The school has sound links with the local community and good links with other neighbouring schools.

IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Raise the standards that pupils attain, especially in English, science and ICT, and accelerate the progress that they make.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school.
- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that the school development plan is at the heart of the school's work and that it shows more clearly the important priorities to secure the improvement of the school.
- Further develop the partnership between school and its parents.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body in providing the school with clear direction and in critically evaluating its work.
- Improve the use of assessment data.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and course s

Pupils in Years 2 and 4 attain standards that are well below those expected for their age. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and most are not making the progress which they should. Children in the Foundation Stage are attaining average standards and making satisfactory progress, as are pupils with SEN. However, weaknesses in curriculum provision and teaching mean that the needs of other pupils are not being consistently met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Across the school, pupils attain standards in English and science that are well below those expected for their age and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Across the school, standards in ICT are too low and pupils do not make sufficient progress.
- The needs of most pupils, including those who are more able, are not being satisfactorily met.
- Children in the Foundation Stage are well supported by an effective teaching assistant and this helps them to make sound progress and achieve standards that are expected for their age.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory and pupils make sound progress towards their individual learning targets.

Commentary

1. Analysis of the trend of the results of the national tests and teacher assessments for seven-year-olds shows that there has been a continuous decline in standards since 2000. From standards that were above and well above average in 2000, there has been a steady decline in all areas since then. The decline has been most marked in reading and writing. The last inspection team also confirmed the high levels of attainment. In 1997, standards were judged to have been above average in English, history and geography across the school and at least in line in all other subject areas.
2. The results of the national tests in 2003 for seven-year-olds show that standards were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The findings of the current inspection indicate that the current Year 2 group is also attaining standards that are well below average in speaking and listening, writing and science, and below average in reading, mathematics and ICT. The improvements in mathematics since 2003 have been the result of the focus which has been given recently to the subject. Those in reading have been related to the effective assessment of early reading skills. Pupils in Year 4 attain well below average standards in English, science and ICT, and below average standards in mathematics. Across the school, pupils achieve average standards in PE. There was insufficient evidence for judgements to be made about standards in history, geography, art and design, design and technology and music.
3. Children in the Foundation Stage are on course to achieve the expected goals by the time they leave the Reception class. This represents satisfactory progress from the average standards which most were attaining when they entered the school. Pupils with SEN attain satisfactory standards for their abilities and make sound progress towards their own learning targets. The targets in their individual learning plans are appropriate to their needs and are formulated in small steps to ensure that they are achievable. A specialist teacher for SEN pupils visits the school at the end of each week to give extra tuition to a small group. This tuition is enhanced by the use of a trained support assistant to teach a small group each day.
4. Available data show that there is a significant variation in the standards achieved by the different groups when they enter the school. The current year group was broadly average, but other groups have been well above and well below average. The current Reception group is making satisfactory progress in their learning from an average level at the beginning of the year and most are expected

to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the year. These children achieve satisfactorily because of the satisfactory teaching they receive, the good support provided by the teaching assistant and the good assessment procedures adopted. However, the quality of the curriculum provision and the overall quality of the teaching have not been high enough to ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress in other years. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 do not make sufficient progress in crucial aspects of their learning and their achievement is unsatisfactory. The needs of higher attaining pupils are not being met because teachers do not have high enough expectations of what these pupils can achieve. Overall, there are no significant differences in the achievement between boys and girls.

5. Weaknesses in teaching and curriculum provision explain the low standards and the lack of appropriate progress in important areas. In English, the crucial aim to improve the quality of pupils' writing across the school has not been a sufficiently high priority and planning to increase opportunities for writing across different subjects and for different purposes has not been developed. In science, topics have not been consistently taught to a sufficient depth and the importance of investigational work has not been emphasised. In ICT, teachers have not followed a scheme of work by which concepts and skills are taught progressively across the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to school are satisfactory. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall. Their attendance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave well and many have positive attitudes to work and enjoy being at school. This shows an improvement since the last inspection.
- The school's provision for social and moral development leads to very good relationships around the school.
- The level of attendance is below that of similar schools around the country.

Commentary

6. The table below shows the attendance figures for the school. The level of attendance has deteriorated since the last inspection. Absences are mainly due to medical reasons but a number of families insist on taking holidays during term time. The school telephones home on the first day of any unexplained absence and the education welfare officer contacts families when necessary. The school is also starting to use a computerised system to improve its monitoring arrangements. Punctuality is generally satisfactory and any lateness is usually only by a few minutes.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0	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.

7. Pupils' social development is very good. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to interact with classmates in group work, paired discussions and acting as monitors in each class. The older pupils have a range of responsibilities around the school. In particular, pupils in Years 3 and 4 serve food to the younger ones at their lunch table enhancing the very pleasing family atmosphere created at that time. Their awareness of the wider world is increased by the visits to the church and other places and talks by representatives of charities. Pupils' relationships with

their peers and with adults have been maintained at the high level noted at the time of the last inspection, and continue to contribute to the quality of work in lessons.

8. Pupils' moral development is very good. The inspectors do not agree with the concerns expressed by parents in the questionnaire and at the meeting with the inspectors. The great majority of pupils behave well in the classroom, at play and lunch times. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They are aware of how their behaviour affects others and many are developing self-discipline. They are courteous, well mannered, polite to adults and to each other and welcoming to visitors. The school uses a variety of positive strategies to encourage good behaviour and these are used consistently by all the staff. Pupils with special behavioural needs are well supported by the staff. No pupils were excluded last year.
9. The opportunities for pupils to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to develop their spiritual awareness are good. As well as providing time for reflection, school assemblies help pupils to develop a sense of belonging to a whole school community and, each week, to celebrate the contributions and achievements of others. 'Circle time' helps pupils to start to appreciate their own worth and to raise their self-esteem. Pupils willingly demonstrate they can act responsibly and take care when helping others round the school and when carrying out tasks in the classroom.
10. The pupils' attitudes towards learning are satisfactory. This includes pupils with SEN. They are generally interested in what happens in school and they enjoy their work. They listen attentively, follow instructions well and usually settle quickly to the tasks given. Pupils are eager to answer questions and are prepared to contribute their ideas. Nevertheless, in some lessons, the work is not presented in an interesting way. This leads to a lack of attention by some pupils and limits their learning. The pupils in the Reception year are mostly attentive, calm and interested in the activities in lessons. This is partly because that is what the teacher expects and partly because of the good support from the classroom assistant. Pupils' views of the school are mostly positive.
11. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Its strength lies in the fact that various subjects provide pupils, irrespective of their age, ability or gender, with a fuller understanding of the world around them with, for example, painting and music which develop aesthetic awareness. Pupils are starting to appreciate the western cultural background from nursery rhymes and work on, for example, the Greeks and Tudors in history and European artists and composers. Since the last inspection, the school has provided more opportunities to enable the pupils to learn about the lives of people around the world with visitors such as a Chinese Dance group and visitors from different faiths. Nevertheless, such occasions are limited and the school is not fully using different subjects of the curriculum to enable pupils to appreciate the multicultural aspects of British society.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
34	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is unsatisfactory. The continuous drop in standards has not been stemmed and there are important weaknesses in teaching and curriculum provision which continue to limit the effectiveness of the school. Several parents have lost confidence in the school. Procedures for the care and welfare of pupils are good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning and of assessment procedures is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers generally managed their classes well but there are weaknesses in the teaching of several important curriculum areas as teaching and learning in English, science and ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Useful assessment data is kept of early reading skills and some work has been done across different subjects to match pupils' work to National Curriculum criteria, but overall insufficient use is made of the assessment data which is collected.
- The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, and the teacher is well supported by an effective teaching assistant.
- The teaching of pupils with SEN across the school, and assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage are good.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 10 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	3	5	1	1	0

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

12. Although the majority of lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory, the overall impact of teaching on the quality of pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. This judgement confirms the opinion of a significant minority of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire. It contrasts sharply with the judgement of the previous inspection which found that teaching was good across the school with several very good features. In the current inspection, although most lessons observed were satisfactory with some that were good, one in five was unsatisfactory and poor. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but it is unsatisfactory in Years 2 and 4.
13. Features of effective teaching observed during the inspection include lessons where teachers manage pupils well and encourage them to take a full part in lesson activities. For example, in a science lesson to pupils in Years 3/4, pupils were involved well as they talked about the leaves that they were observing. They then made sensible suggestions as to how they might set up an investigation to show how important leaves were for the healthy growth of plants. In a PE lesson to pupils in Years 1/2, the teacher planned well and had a good understanding of the health and safety issues involved in warming up properly and the safe use of gymnastics equipment.
14. An important strength in teaching is the good co-operation between teachers and their support assistants. The assistant supporting the work of the Foundation Stage children is particularly effective. The assistants support and encourage pupils well and are well prepared and fully involved with class activities. For example, an assistant in the Year 3/4 class prepared and supervised an ICT activity in the literacy lesson, and an assistant in the Year 1/2/R class was fully involved with completing assessment records as pupils took part in their physical education (PE) activity.
15. Some features of ineffective teaching were evident in the lessons observed during the inspection. In some lessons, teachers introduce too many learning points and talk about them in language that pupils do not easily understand. This limits pupils' understanding of what they have to do. In some instances, there are too many activities provided and the impact of each one is lessened. Sometimes, teachers' introductions last too long and pupils spend too much time sitting in front of the teacher. Where teaching is poor, the activities which are provided are not appropriate for the age and ability of the pupils and teachers are unsure how to organise effective group work.
16. Some features of ineffective teaching were evident through the analysis of pupils' work. Teachers overall did not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is particularly evident in the low standard of pupils' written work and the inconsistent application of

the handwriting scheme. In several aspects, such as English, science and ICT, the pace at which pupils had been expected to work was too slow. This meant that not enough elements of the curriculum were taught to a sufficient depth. Overall teachers' planning and teaching did not show sufficiently clearly the work which was planned for the pupils of different ages and abilities in each class. Teachers' planning did not show clear links to the National Curriculum level to which the work was being taught. Until very recently, teachers' marking did not show pupils how they could improve their work.

17. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall but with some good features. Separate provision is made for the young children in the mixed age class and generally appropriate activities are devised. A strength is the effective co-operation between the class teacher and her assistant. The assistant takes a prominent part in lesson planning and in teaching the Foundation Stage children within this mixed age class. Her inputs are effective and she plays an important role in assessing children's strengths and areas of development as they work.
18. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with SEN is good. All are included well in all aspects of class lessons and extracurricular activities. The targets in their individual learning plans are appropriate to their needs and are formulated in small steps to ensure that they are achievable. A specialist teacher for SEN pupils visits the school at the end of each week to give extra tuition to a small group. This tuition is enhanced by the use of a trained support assistant to teach a small group each day. However, these pupils' entitlement to the full curriculum is sometimes compromised by withdrawal for extra literacy tuition. SEN pupils' progress is carefully assessed and monitored as they move through the year groups by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO).
19. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory overall, although a good beginning has been made in developing some aspects. The most effective assessment is done with children in the Foundation Stage. Here, a good beginning has been made in assessing children's attainment in all areas of learning in preparation for the end of year profile record for these children. The assessment of spelling and the development of early reading skills across the school are good. Data are collected and maintained well. Assessment information from some standardised reading, spelling and optional national test papers is collected. The assessment co-ordinator has undertaken some useful analyses of the trends shown from recent assessments on entry to the school and the results of national tests. These have been used to set some outline targets for pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. A useful collection has been made of pupils' work in several subjects which has been assessed according to National Curriculum criteria. But this has not given teachers a sufficiently clear understanding of the levels at which pupils are working in their classes.
20. The main shortcoming in the assessment procedures is that the data collected and the analysis carried out are not used effectively either to inform teachers' planning or to set more relevant developmental targets for pupils. The assessment co-ordinator has not shared information sufficiently with the other staff, which is a serious limitation to its effectiveness. A further weakness is that there are no agreed systems for recording the progress that pupils make which is related to National Curriculum levels. This is one reason why there have been some significant discrepancies recently between teacher assessments and the results the same pupils achieve in the national tests. Overall, the school has made insufficient progress in responding to the key issue from the last inspection requiring improvements in the whole school assessment system.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is unsatisfactory overall. This is because effective provision in crucial areas of literacy, science and ICT is not being provided. The development of opportunities to extend and enliven the curriculum is good. The school's accommodation is attractive and well maintained. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curricular provision in English, science and ICT is unsatisfactory.
- The school works successfully to promote pupils' interest by a good range of offsite visits and visitors to the school.
- The school's accommodation makes a good contribution to curricular provision.
- Curriculum planning does not consistently show sufficiently clearly the work planned for pupils of different abilities across the school.
- The school is not successfully meeting the needs of higher attaining pupils and work on gifted and talented provision is at a very early stage of development.
- The school does not have a sufficiently clear view of the effect of the withdrawal of pupils from some of their lessons.

Commentary

21. Overall, curricular planning is sound. Literacy and numeracy planning follows that recommended in the respective national strategies. Individual subjects are taught on a two-year rolling topic programme to cater for the needs of the two-year age range in both classes in the school. An overall weakness in the curriculum is that effective provision for English, science and ICT is not being provided. A further important shortcoming is that curriculum planning does not make sufficiently clear reference to the needs of pupils of average and higher ability in each class. As a result, teachers are not sufficiently clear about how to extend pupils' abilities to their next level of learning and so the needs of higher attaining pupils are not being met. There is no separate planned provision for pupils who are gifted and talented. Overall, there has been insufficient curricular development. The school has not made sufficient progress in addressing the key issue from the last inspection relating to curricular improvement.
22. The curriculum is extended and enhanced by a good range of extracurricular opportunities. Visits have included trips to Duxford Air Museum, William Clowes Printing Museum and visits to a nearby farm and wild life conservation area. Visitors to school have included the Tollhouse Theatre Company, Helen Ivory for a poetry workshop and regular visits by the local vicar. Older pupils take part in a residential visit and others take part in a football workshop. The school also provides an interesting range of after-school and lunchtime clubs for activities such as first aid, juggling, recorders, writing, art and football. These opportunities extend pupils' understanding and add value to their curricular experience.
23. The school is largely successful in the way in which it ensures that all pupils have access to the curriculum which is provided. All pupils are included regardless of gender or ability. One minor shortcoming is that not all pupils have access to their full curriculum provision when they are withdrawn from lessons in order to undertake other activities. During the inspection, it was observed that pupils missed important aspects of their mathematics and PE activities. Procedures to ensure that pupils caught up with lost work were not in place.
24. The good accommodation is well organised, clean, tidy and welcoming. The Foundation Stage children have the use of a small, bright classroom with direct access to the main school playground and playing field. However, they do not have their own outside enclosed area or a covered section to enable them to work or play outside in bad weather. Outside facilities are very good. The school grounds are pleasant and spacious and contain an adventure playground, willow tunnel, large playing field and a pond. All are used extensively for various areas of the curriculum including, mathematics, science and geography.
25. The school is satisfactorily resourced to meet the needs of the curriculum in Years 1 to 4 and resources are good in the Foundation Stage. There have been improvements in resourcing since the last inspection. Good progress has been made in providing further large pieces of apparatus for PE. More ICT resources have been acquired and now the ratio of pupils to computers is now above the national average.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are good overall and support pupils' learning appropriately. Nevertheless, the provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is unsatisfactory. The involvement of pupils in the school's work through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The adults in the school are very caring and know the pupils well.
- There are effective procedures for ensuring a healthy and safe environment.
- The monitoring of pupils' academic progress through the school is limited.

Commentary

26. As at the time of the previous inspection, staff show good concern for the needs of the pupils and provide good role models to encourage development. Nevertheless, a significant minority of parents are concerned about the support provided for the younger pupils, some of whom have until recently been upset and not wanting to come to school. Parents agreed that their children were well supported when they first come into the school either into the Reception class or if they arrived in other years. This is because of the links with the local playgroup and the opportunities for the children to visit before they start. Pupils know to whom they would go if they need help either in lessons or in the playground. Pupils can express their opinions during 'circle time' and they devised the Golden Rules. Nevertheless, the school has no arrangements for consulting the pupils in a more structured way although the Acting Headteacher is aware that the pupils are ready for the introduction of a school council.
27. The school has systems in place for checking on pupils' attainments in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this information is generally not well used to monitor their progress during their time in the school and, apart from mathematics, is not well used to guide pupils to improve. In mathematics, the pupils have targets in their workbooks which are updated as the pupils achieve them. No such information is recorded for other subjects. This means that teachers do not always plan work that has the right level of challenge to take them forward fast or far enough. Teachers' marking often provides little information to enable pupils to know how they could do better. The procedures for personal development are informal but the staff know the pupils well. Their understanding is enhanced by, for example, the notes taken during lessons by the teaching assistants. In addition, the pupils' self-esteem is raised by the range of rewards such as praise and the awards of lunchtime and starworker certificates.
28. The governors are actively involved with the Headteacher in touring the school to identify any potential health and safety hazards. The school follows and regularly completes the documentation provided by the local authority. Teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science and DT. The school follows the local procedures for child protection and one of the staff has received training as the designated person. It is intended that the rest of the staff will receive appropriate guidance. The arrangements for first aid are good and all staff have received training. Records are kept of treatment and parents contacted as necessary.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are unsatisfactory overall. Links with other schools are good and they are satisfactory with the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant proportion of parents is unhappy with the school.
- The school provides a good range of information about school life.

- Links with other schools enhance pupils' education.

Commentary

29. In the very high response to the Ofsted questionnaire and at their pre-inspection meeting, a large proportion of parents expressed their dissatisfaction with what the school provides. The inspectors confirm many of those concerns as can be seen in other parts of this report. In particular, the school has not developed a good working partnership with the significant number of parents who have lost confidence in the Headteacher. Nevertheless, the inspectors do not agree with the parents' comments about behaviour. From what was seen during the inspection and from discussions with pupils, the behaviour is good overall and any misbehaviour is dealt with well by the staff.
30. The school sends home regular news and other letters about general matters. Each term information outlining what is to be taught in each year group is sent to parents enabling them to help their children. They also remind parents about the importance of the children arriving punctually and encourage parents to help in the school. Formal meetings with parents take place only in the autumn term with the open afternoon in the spring term not including timetabled appointments. Teachers are readily available at the end of the day and come to the classroom door as pupils leave to go home. During the inspection, several brief, informal conversations were seen to take place. The annual reports on pupils' progress in the summer term generally have a good summary of what the pupils know and can do in each subject and include targets for improving achievement in English and mathematics. The prospectus and governors' Annual Report lack some of the information that is statutorily required.
31. Overall, parents' involvement with the school makes a good contribution to its work and to the achievement of the pupils. Several parents help in the school either regularly in the classroom or on trips out. Others help by, for example, testing the quality of water in the pond and organising work days to tidy the grounds. Pupils confirm that their parents usually ensure that homework is completed. The Friends' Association has successfully organised both fund raising and social events in the past although these activities have been reduced over recent months. Though discussions take place between the parents and the staff, the school has no structured approach for parents to influence what happens in school such as regular questionnaires or a parents' forum.
32. The school's links with the community and other schools help to broaden the experiences for pupils' personal, social and academic development. The cluster of local schools provides training for staff and enables them to meet and share good practice. At the end of their time in the school, most pupils go to the local Middle School and the well-established contacts lead to pupils not being apprehensive about the move. Pupils' understanding of society is enhanced by the contact with local ministers, charitable organisations and visitors from public bodies. The curriculum is enhanced by the trips out to places in the local area and further afield.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governance of the school and the leadership and management of the Headteacher are unsatisfactory. There are important weaknesses which affect the school's capacity for improvement. The acting Headteacher has made an effective start to her time at school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the school has been ineffective because crucial areas for the development of the school have not been given sufficient prominence.
- There are important weaknesses in the current school development plan.
- The roles and responsibilities of curriculum co-ordinators are underdeveloped.
- Until very recently, governors have not been critically evaluative of the performance of the school and have not provided the school with clear strategic direction.

Commentary

33. There are some important weaknesses in the leadership of the school. The Headteacher has not been able to create and secure an agreed vision for the school that is shared by staff, governors and parents. This has been made more difficult because the school has had a succession of acting and permanent Headteachers in the last few years. This lack of continuity in leadership has made the establishment of a clear vision for the school very hard to create and sustain. The morale of staff, parents and governors has been undermined by several external factors and the changes in management and staffing have continued to exacerbate the problem. The lack of confidence in the school shown through the parents' questionnaire, and at their pre-inspection meeting, indicates that the school has not been sufficiently proactive in sharing its vision successfully with most of its parents. The continuing withdrawal of pupils from the school is already having a significant impact on the school's finances.
34. Some useful management systems have been established. A detailed school development plan has been produced, regular staff meetings are held and Performance Management procedures are established satisfactorily with the teaching staff. However, several important weaknesses limit the effectiveness of the school's management. Shortcomings in the school development plan limit its effectiveness. Opportunities are lost here to include a strong statement about the school's vision for its pupils and the community. The plan does not identify the most important developmental priorities for the school. The current plan, which dates from 2003 – 2004 includes very few initiatives to be continued into the current year. The success criteria are too general to be helpful in judging the success of each initiative. These are very similar to shortcomings which were identified by the last inspection team. These weaknesses mean that the development plan cannot successfully be at the centre of the school's work. A further management weakness is that the co-ordinating and management roles and responsibilities of the other staff in the school are not sufficiently developed. Without this, it is more difficult to achieve an all-round commitment to further improvement. Some monitoring has been carried out but it has not been rigorous enough to identify some important and continuing weakness in overall provision.
35. The governing body has gone through a process of almost complete change in the last two years. The energy and commitment of the previous governing body were sapped by having to deal with a series of external situations some of which required confidentiality. The result was that governors had to react to these external pressures and were unable to monitor effectively the school's work. The Headteacher worked hard during this time to support and encourage the governing body. She was instrumental in creating the committee system and has continued to supply the governors with full and detailed written reports for their meetings. The impact has been that governors were too reliant on the Headteacher's input and have been insufficiently proactive in their work. They have not been able to provide the school with clear strategic direction and they have not been sufficiently critical and evaluative of the school's performance. Minor elements of statutory information required for parents are not being provided. However, there have been changes of late with the very recent appointment of a new chair of governors and a renewed commitment to secure the school's improvement.
36. The acting Headteacher has made an important impact on the school's work since her very recent appointment. She has introduced an interim development plan for the summer term which identifies several of the current priorities for the school's development. She has revised some school procedures and introduced new planning formats in several important areas.
37. The school's finances are managed satisfactorily. The most recent financial audit in 2001 showed that there were several significant weaknesses in the school's provision but subsequent monitoring visits have indicated that these have been successfully dealt with. Procedures for monitoring spending patterns are also sound. Some of the larger than expected budget carry forward figure is explained by the late allocation of funds for Headteacher training and monies which had been allocated for playground equipment. The school secretary is efficient and provides a useful link with parents and the local community.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	164867
Total expenditure	161679
Expenditure per pupil	3299

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	23609
Balance carried forward to the next	26797

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 **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good and all staff act as good role models.
- Relationships in the class are very good.
- The class teacher is supported well by an effective teaching assistant.
- Most children read well but their speaking ability is relatively under-developed.
- Teachers use practical, 'hands on' activities to develop children's mathematical awareness.
- Children show a good awareness of space in indoor and outdoor activities but there is no enclosed or covered area for outdoor activities

Commentary

38. The needs of children in the Foundation Stage are met satisfactorily. At the time of the inspection, there were four children in the Foundation Stage and they were being taught in a class with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Most of the current Reception group were attaining standards that were in line with those expected for their age when they entered the school. Most are likely to achieve all the goals children are expected to reach by the time they enter Year 1. This represents a decline since the last inspection when standards were judged to have been above average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and provision is supported by the good accommodation and an effective support assistant. The outdoor facilities have been improved since the previous inspection.
39. Appropriate provision is provided for these young children through experiences which match the goals children are expected to reach. Lessons are planned appropriately and detailed records of children's progress and individual development are used well to plan future lessons. These records are also used to identify children who need extra help or those of higher ability. A wide range of activities is provided and children are beginning to select tasks for themselves for part of the day. There are good induction arrangements for introducing children to school and this means that they all quickly get used to their daily routines.
40. The provision for **personal, social and emotional development** is good and it is evident in all areas of learning. The quality of teaching and learning in this area of learning is good and all children achieve well. Good emphasis is given to children's personal, social and emotional development through all aspects of the school, for example, when they attend whole school assemblies and eat their lunches with the older pupils. The routines established in the classroom help children to feel secure and begin to develop independence, for example, as they register themselves each morning on arrival at school. They quickly learn to share equipment and to listen when others are speaking. Relationships between children and adults are very good and all adults are very positive role models. Children are generally attentive. They are also well behaved, are growing in confidence and have the ability to co-operate with others. All children are on course to meet the nationally expected standards in this area of learning by Year 1.
41. All children are likely to meet the nationally expected standards in **communication, language and literacy** by the time they leave the Reception group. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress in developing new skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Not all children are confident speakers and staff, therefore, make every effort to engage them in conversation both in formal and informal situations such as registration and role-play periods. All adults make effective use of literacy activities, for example, when the teacher discussed the author of the 'Katie Morag' books and put her 'pen picture' on an advertising poster

to encourage their writing. The support assistant used a tape of recorded rhyming words for children to associate sounds with patterns of words like 'five friendly frogs feast on fleas'. Most children read well and are encouraged by the example of the older pupils in the class.

42. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and all children achieve appropriately in their **mathematical development**. The teacher used the numbers involved in registration to encourage children's number awareness. All mathematical activities are planned well to be practical and give children 'hands on' experience of number to enable them to develop their mathematical skills. Children's knowledge and understanding of direction were enhanced when koala bears were strategically placed around the school grounds for children to find using 'forward', 'right' and 'left' instructions. All children count to ten and beyond and two are able to add mentally two single digit numbers. All Reception children attend the beginning of the numeracy hour with their older classmates and this has the effect of giving them confidence in answering simple numeracy problems. All children are likely to meet the required standards in their mathematical development by the time they enter Year 1.
43. There was limited evidence during the inspection of **children's knowledge and understanding of the world**. However, a scrutiny and analysis of planning, children's work and classroom displays indicate that all children will reach at least average standards by the time they enter Year 1. No judgement could be made about the quality of teaching and learning. The outdoor and indoor areas provide a colourful and stimulating environment throughout the year to ensure that children's natural curiosity about their immediate locality is satisfied. Elements of this area of learning were observed when children were involved in role-play with the teaching assistant in the post office and shop. Children had also made their idea of an island using plasticine models on a cardboard base. Computers are used and children have produced coloured pictures of Teddy Bears with support. An awareness of religious and cultural traditions is developed through special seasonal festivals and attendance in whole school assemblies.
44. The overall quality of teaching and learning in children's **physical development** is satisfactory but with some good elements. Observations of a lesson in the hall, classroom observations and free play on large wheeled toys in the playground indicate that all children will achieve this area of learning by the time they leave the Reception class. Children have direct access and the use of the main school playground for large wheeled toys and an adventure climbing and balancing area on the playing field. However, they do not have their own enclosed area and there is no outside cover. In the lesson observed with other infant pupils, the Reception children showed a good awareness of spacing in a confined area and used sound control and co-ordination when performing balancing and climbing activities on large and small apparatus. The teacher and support assistant were actively involved to encourage the youngest members of the class and give them confidence to attempt activities on large apparatus. Children are provided with a wide range of experiences to help develop their finer manipulative skills like jigsaws, construction activities and the opportunity to paint, glue and cut a variety of materials.
45. There was insufficient evidence for overall judgements to be made about children's **creative development**. Evidence from wall and table displays shows examples of exploration of colour and the encouragement for children to use a variety of colours and media in their creative work. Children are able to choose activities for themselves and staff participate in active role-play to encourage children to use their imaginations which are now well developed.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall standards in Year 4, and standards in speaking and listening and in writing in Year 2 are well below average and most pupils are not achieving as well as they should.
- The quality of teaching and learning and the impact of assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.
- The leadership of the subject has not been rigorous enough to identify the priorities needed to secure the necessary improvement.
- Higher attaining pupils read well and enjoy books and detailed assessment records are maintained of pupils' spelling and early reading skills.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills across different areas of their work.
- Handwriting skills are not applied consistently across pupils' other writing to help to improve the presentation of their work.
- There is insufficient planned opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

46. Currently, pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 achieve standards in reading which are below average and standards in speaking and listening and writing which are well below average. These inspection judgements are broadly in line with the school's own assessment of the respective year groups. These findings are similar to the results achieved in the tests for seven-year-olds in 2003 in writing but represent an improvement in reading. This has been the impact of the effective early reading skills assessment tests which have been introduced. There has been a continuous drop in the overall standards attained in literacy since 2000 and a significant drop since the last inspection when standards were above average in Years 2 and 4. Pupils with SEN are making sound progress in reaching their individual language targets. Other pupils are not making sufficient progress in most aspects of their language work, and their achievement overall is unsatisfactory.
47. Standards in speaking and listening are well below average across the school. Younger pupils lack confidence in speaking formally in class discussions and several are reluctant to answer their teacher's questions. In a Year 1/2 literacy lesson, most pupils were unable to talk in detail about the characters and events of a story that they had read together previously. Many were more comfortable in giving short replies using restricted vocabulary. Older pupils were more confident and some talked in detail about things that interested them but most used a very limited vocabulary in a narrow range of contexts.
48. Standards in reading are below average, although higher attaining pupils reach average and, sometimes, above average standards. These pupils enjoy reading and read well for pleasure and for information. They talk confidently about books they have read and enjoy the development of the story and characterisation in books. Other pupils do not have confident procedures for working out unknown words or letter sounds in their reading. Most pupils take their books home regularly and the support that parents provide in hearing their children read encourages the progress that most are making.
49. Standards in writing are well below average across the school. Across the school, pupils write for a limited range of purposes. For example, younger pupils explain how they make salt dough and write poems about winter. Older pupils write stories about the Pied Piper and Polly and the Wolf, book reviews and small playlets. Older pupils have used an extension writing book. However, this has not been developed sufficiently and pupils have not had enough opportunities to write longer pieces of work. Too much of their writing has been completing formal grammar exercises. A

further weakness in the school's approach to writing is that handwriting skills are not consistently applied to pupils' other written work. As a result, much of pupils' work is not presented accurately and attractively.

50. The quality of teaching and learning across the school is unsatisfactory. Lessons follow the format recommended in the National Literacy Strategy. However, some elements are not followed successfully. Teachers' planning and the introduction to lessons make reference to the learning intended in the lesson, but sometimes, too many objectives are defined and explained to the pupils using terms which are too difficult for them to understand easily. The effect of this is that the lesson loses a clear focus and too long is spent on explaining what is going to be learnt. In some lessons, too long is also spent on introducing activities and insufficient emphasis put on the completion of accurate written work. Further shortcomings evident from the analysis of pupils' previous work is that the teachers have not had sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially more able pupils, and the pace of all pupils' learning has been too slow. Until very recently, the marking of pupils' work had not shown them sufficiently how they could improve.
51. The leadership and management of the subject have not been effective in identifying and addressing important weaknesses. There is no overall programme for the progressive development of pupils' speaking and listening skills and insufficient emphasis has been placed on the crucial drive to improve standards in writing. Aspects of assessment in the subject are done well. Clear and detailed records are kept of the progress that pupils make in spelling and in their understanding of key words in their early reading. Some useful collections of pupils' writing which have been assessed to National Curriculum criteria are maintained. However, the impact of the assessment procedures is limited by the ineffective use of the data collected. Data are not used adequately to inform planning or to set learning targets for pupils. ICT skills are not used sufficiently in this subject. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been poor.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Language and literacy skills are not used sufficiently across the wider curriculum. There are some examples of the good application of writing skills as, for example, older pupils write interesting accounts of aspects of their World War 2 history project. However, opportunities are generally missed to develop writing and presentational skills across other subjects. This is inhibited by the overuse of photocopied worksheets.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 2 and 4, pupils attain below average standards but most make sound progress in their learning and achieve satisfactorily.
- The subject co-ordinator does not have an effective whole school management role.
- The teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils are provided with a wide range of practical resources to develop their mathematical understanding.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not always high enough.
- Pupils with SEN are supported well.
- Assessment procedures are not fully developed throughout the school to improve standards.

Commentary

53. Standards are below average in Years 2 and 4. This represents a decline from the findings of the last inspection but is slightly higher than the results of the 2003 national tests for seven-year-olds. Standards in comparison with similar schools were well below average at the time of the last national tests. In all the lessons seen, pupils who have SEN were given good levels of support by teachers and support staff which enabled them to make sound progress towards their own learning

targets. There are no significant gender differences in standards of attainment.

54. In Year 2, more able pupils work confidently with numbers up to 100 and are beginning to know some multiplication tables. Other pupils work with addition and subtraction using numbers up to 20. In Year 4, pupils use simple fractions and are becoming more confident in telling the time using analogue and digital clocks. Pupils' achievement, which takes into account their capabilities and previous levels of attainment, is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 4 make sound progress from their achievement in the national tests when they were seven.
55. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good elements. This is confirmed by the analysis of pupils' work. The strongest teaching and most effective learning observed were in Years 3 and 4. A strength in teaching is the way in which teachers use resources well to give pupils important practical experiences. For example, in the Year 1/2 lesson observed, pupils used small analogue clocks to develop their knowledge and understanding of hour, half-hour and quarter hour times. Pupils in Year 3/4 estimated, measured and recorded the capacity of various sized containers in litres and millilitres. The teacher used a good range of apparatus and equipment to enhance their learning and took the opportunity to link the capacity measures with pupils' knowledge of fractions. Pupils' work is generally well matched to their abilities with evidence of extension work provided for high achievers and appropriate work for pupils with SEN. An important weakness in teaching is that expectations of pupils' progress are too low and some lessons lack pace and challenge. Homework is regularly set and is appropriately matched to pupils' work in their lessons.
56. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has been instrumental in formulating assessment tasks for Years 3 and 4 pupils which relate to the key objectives which have been taught. However, he does not have a sufficiently clear view of work in the subject in the different phases in the school. The problem solving and investigative aspects of mathematics have been identified for development. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of work during the inspection indicate that this emphasis is already happening and pupils are now being encouraged to explain their methods of working. Some work has been done on recording the progress that pupils make but this has not been incorporated into an effective whole school document. Assessments are not fully used to improve standards through the school and data are not used to set targets for improvement. Overall there has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum.

57. Several examples of the use of mathematics in other curriculum subjects were evident during the inspection. These included pupils' work in science and geography. In science, some pupils drew bar charts to show the favourite food of class members and others used a variety of standard measures to record the size of different parts of their bodies. In geography, pupils collected data and produced graphs in their work on environments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 2 and 4, pupils attain standards that are well below average and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Across the school, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the importance of investigational work and on producing clear, accurate recorded work.
- Some topics are not taught to a sufficient depth for higher standards to be reached.
- The leadership and management of the subject have been ineffective in ensuring that the subject has had a sufficiently high profile within the school.
- Older pupils enjoy their work and apply themselves well.

Commentary

58. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 achieve standards that are well below average. These judgements represent a drop in standards in Year 2 since the 2003 national teacher assessment tests and a significant drop across the school when compared with the findings of the previous inspection. Across the school, pupils with SEN are achieving satisfactorily, but other pupils are not making the progress that they should.
59. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 name several of the external features of the human body and are aware of our main senses. They consider processes such as stretching, squashing, twisting and bending relating to the properties of materials and they know how ice changes when it is melted and an egg when it is cooked. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 know some of the conditions required for plants to grow well and the effect of putting a switch into an electrical circuit. An important weakness is that the importance of investigations and the understanding of variables and fair testing are not emphasised sufficiently. As a result pupils are not developing a full appreciation of scientific procedures. Insufficient emphasis is put on the importance of accurate, well presented written work and the application of literacy skills in this subject. By contrast, a strength is the way in which numeracy skills are used. Pupils use measures accurately to record the length of different parts of the body and bar charts to show the class's favourite foods.
60. Teaching and learning across the school are unsatisfactory. Some strengths in the lessons observed during the inspection were the way in which teachers reminded pupils of their previous learning at the beginning of the lesson, and the good management of class discussions. In a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils were enthralled to discover, with the aid of a magnifying glass, that some leaves that they were observing had hairs on them. Later, pupils made some sensible suggestions about how they might investigate the importance of leaves to a healthy plant. Across the school, teachers have not ensured that topics are developed to a sufficient depth for pupils to reach higher standards. This is especially true for higher attaining pupils. Where teaching is poor, the focus of the lesson is too broad and the teacher is not able to intervene to re-direct and challenge pupils in their thinking. Activities provided are not appropriate to the age and ability of most pupils in the class.
61. The co-ordinator has an insufficiently clear view of the work of the subject across the school to lead it effectively. He has not ensured that science has been a recent focus for attention and the development of the subject is not a current school improvement priority. Procedures for monitoring the quality of pupils' work and the effectiveness of teaching have not been developed. As a result, the school is insufficiently aware of the need for crucial improvements in the subject. Interest in the subject is promoted as pupils visit a nearby farm and water marsh Wild Life Trust area for their work on life processes and habitats. There is inadequate use of ICT in science and the school has made insufficient progress in science since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Across the school, the standards that pupils achieve are not as high as they should be.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory because pupils are not systematically taught the concepts and skills which they need.
- Opportunities are not taken to use ICT skills widely in other subjects or to use computers to improve the presentation of pupils' work and as an information tool.
- The leadership and management of the subject have not been rigorous enough to identify the need for crucial areas of improvement in this subject.
- The provision of computers has improved since the last inspection.

Commentary

62. Pupils in Year 2 and 4 attain standards that are below and well below average. At the last inspection, standards were judged to have been average. Across the school, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and they are not making sufficient progress in this subject.
63. Across the school, pupils do not use word processing facilities effectively. Younger pupils have designed a poster to advertise their own taxi service while older pupils have written and printed their own giant stories. Older pupils are aware of some word-processing techniques such as highlighting and moving text, but most of the skills were acquired at home. There is very little use of computers to provide information for history, geography or other topics. Pupils use art and drawing programs effectively. Younger pupils use clip-art pictures in their decorated Christmas cards, and produce colourful firework pictures while older pupils draw pictures made from patterns of coloured dots. However, pupils' use of computers to control equipment by instructions and to share ideas and information in different forms such as tables and images, is underdeveloped.
64. Teaching and learning in the subject are unsatisfactory. There is no overall scheme of work which is followed consistently to enable teachers to cover the required concepts and skills. Teachers have generally provided some opportunity for computers to be used but have not systematically taught the necessary skills. No teaching of specific skills was observed during the inspection, but groups of pupils were using computers in literacy lessons. Pupils in Years 1/2 were identifying 'ea' sounds in words which were generated by the computer. Pupils in Years 3/4 were using computers to write different rhyming words. These activities were only partly successful. The younger pupils were sharing a single computer in groups of three and four which limited their involvement and commitment. Some older pupils' success with their program was limited by their lack of ability to write the basic words they needed.
65. The role of the co-ordinator is underdeveloped. A useful start has been made in producing a co-ordinator's file which contains some relevant and helpful information. Among these are pieces of pupils' work which have been assessed according to National Curriculum criteria. At the moment, this makes reference to pupils' work on art programs. However, the co-ordinator's file and her work have not been effective in identifying some important shortcomings in the provision for the subject across the school. There are no assessment records which monitor and track pupils' achievement in the subject. Although the level of resourcing has improved since the last inspection, overall, insufficient progress has been made in raising the standards achieved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. ICT skills are not used sufficiently across other curriculum areas. Opportunities to use computers as an aid to improve the presentation of pupils' work and to support their appreciation of number patterns are not developed sufficiently.

HUMANITIES

There was insufficient evidence for overall judgements to be made on the quality of provision in history and geography.

67. Although no **history** lessons were observed during the inspection, pupils' work and classroom displays indicate that standards in the subject are as expected for the various age groups. No judgement was possible about the quality of teaching and learning. Years 3 and 4 pupils have been studying the Second World War. The interesting and comprehensive classroom display shows artefacts from that time and examples of pupils' writing. Pupils were given a homework task to carry out independent research on that time in history and several relevant topics were explored including evacuees and Victory in Europe day. Pupils' workbooks also indicated work on Tudor times, comparing the lives of rich and poor at the time and the education of children then, with their own. Both of these studies indicated a sound development of factual knowledge and understanding of some of the events and people's lives at that time. There is also evidence of most pupils being able to use information sources to find out about the past, although the use of

ICT for independent research is relatively under-developed. A scrutiny of pupils' books from Years 1 and 2 indicates work on the Great Fire of London giving these pupils the opportunity to compare long ago with today. The history curriculum is planned on a two-year cycle and the school follows the guidance of the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency for its syllabus to ensure progression in pupils' learning.

68. No **geography** lessons were seen during the inspection but a scrutiny and analysis of pupils' work, classroom displays and planning indicate that a sound range of topics is being studied. The subject is planned over a two-year cycle. An analysis of pupils' workbooks and classroom displays indicates a good link with literacy as the younger pupils worked on an island environment based on Struay a fictional island from books they were reading. A link with art and design was also apparent by pupils designing and painting posters to advertise the use of buses and taxis on the island. Their awareness of local matters was enhanced by working on a topic of roads in the locality, 'Making Gillingham Safe'. This topic linked well with mathematics when pupils collected data about the amount of traffic around the village and also developed their moral and social understanding about good and bad things in the environment. This topic was further developed by Years 3 and 4 pupils when they asked the question, "What is an Environment?" Good links with mathematics and their social and moral development were apparent when they considered improving the environment. This entailed weighing the school's dry waste for a week, first separating the paper, to estimate the amount of waste thrown away by the school in a year and its effect on the environment. In their topic on weather and how it affects our lives, this age group used holiday brochures to research the reason that most people now holiday abroad. The geography curriculum is enhanced by the use of the local environment and a residential trip, with a geographical emphasis, by the older pupils in the summer term. The resources for geography in the school are old and are in need of replacement and the use of ICT is under-developed.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

There was insufficient evidence for overall judgements to be made about standards and provision in art and design, design and technology and music.

69. In **art and design**, pupils are introduced to appropriate media and techniques as they move through the school. In Years 1 and 2, some pupils complete interesting self-portraits using coloured pastels while others make colourful collages with paper and fabric showing patterns they noticed as fruit and vegetables were cut up. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make handprint patterns using bright coloured patterns and others make observational drawings of flowers with pastels using effective blending techniques. Art techniques are used well to illustrate aspects of the history topic on World War 2 which pupils in Years 3/4 are currently studying. Some pieces of work have been assessed using National Curriculum criteria but there is no system for recording the progress that pupils make through the subject.
70. In **design and technology**, pupils make an appropriate range of interesting artefacts. Photographic evidence indicated that pupils in Years 1 and 2 had made models with windmill mechanisms, designed attractive salads using different ingredients and made models with wind-up mechanisms. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 had made colourful and well finished hand puppets from different fabrics, photo frames and money containers. Evidence indicated that most of these were well finished and presented. There was insufficient evidence to show the effectiveness of the evaluations of pupils' work. There is a collection of work which has been assessed to National Curriculum criteria but there is no system for recording the progress that pupils make through the subject.
71. During the inspection it was not possible to see any **music** activities or lessons. However, the school employs specialist teachers to tutor pupils for violin, guitar, octarina and keyboard. A member of staff organises a recorder club as an extra-curricular activity. The school has a suitable range of musical instruments although links with ICT are under-developed. During the observed whole school assembly, taken by the Headteacher, pupils sang enthusiastically and tunefully when prompted. A two-year rolling curriculum plan is in place based on a nationally recommended scheme of work.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The co-ordinator does not have effective whole school responsibility.
- Support assistants are used well to assist pupils with SEN.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of health and safety aspects.
- Resources for the subject are good.
- The small size of the school hall limits pupils' gymnastic activities.

Commentary

72. Two lesson observations indicate that pupils achieve average standards in gymnastics in Year 2 and average standards in games in Year 4. This represents satisfactory achievement in both areas. These judgements are broadly the same as those made by the school's last inspection. Swimming was not observed during the inspection but indications are that standards in Year 4 are average. No judgement can be made about the standards of the dance element of PE as no lessons were observed.
73. In the gymnastics lesson observed in Year 1/2, Year 2 pupils were encouraged to perform balancing and climbing activities on large and small apparatus. Most were able to perform balancing and climbing skills with safety and were able to control the linking of their actions. They are beginning to practise and improve their performance and to recognise the effect of exercise on their bodies linking well with science. In the games lesson observed in Year 3/4, pupils took part in an appropriate warm-up activity and demonstrated sound running and jumping skills in their preparation for athletic activities.
74. Across the school, teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good elements. In the Year 1/2 lesson, the teacher showed a good knowledge and understanding of health and safety principles. Pupils in the confined space of a small hall were managed well and they acted sensibly and safely. Pupils with SEN participated well in all activities and the support assistant was used effectively to record pupils' performance for later assessment purposes. In the Year 3/4 lesson, the teacher and support assistant were actively involved in the lesson and encouraged pupils, especially those with SEN. However, although the teacher gave personal and whole class advice to pupils on how to develop their skills, pupils spent too long listening to him and not enough time performing.
75. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory, as the co-ordinator does not manage the subject satisfactorily throughout the school. Resources for the subject are good. This represents good improvement in addressing this key issue since the last inspection. However, the hall is small and cramped. The curriculum is enhanced by extracurricular activities like a football club. However, there is no formal action plan for the development of the subject and assessment and monitoring procedures are underdeveloped.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

76. There was insufficient evidence for overall judgements to be made about provision in PSHCE. The school has a policy and planning for the subject. It is taught in its own right, usually during circle time, and linked to other subjects like PE and science. The co-ordinator is in the process of developing a whole school scheme of work and she has produced possible teaching activities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 throughout the year. In the observed lesson in Year 1/2, pupils were invited to discuss how change affected them within the main topic of 'feelings'. Good subject knowledge was indicated from the teacher who encouraged pupils to listen carefully to each other and put forward positive attitudes about relationships and how they could help someone who was affected

by change. The teaching assistant was used well to record individual pupils' personal development during the discussion. The whole school assembly, taken by the Headteacher, also used the theme of helping others when pupils were introduced to the work of Christian Aid prior to their non-uniform day to raise funds for the charity on the following Friday. Resources for the subject are wide and varied including co-operative games and jigsaws and teaching packs covering themes such as 'Help the Aged', 'Childline' and 'Healthy Eating'. Older pupils participate in a residential visit during the summer term to enhance their social development. The success of the school's personal, social and health education programme is reflected in the very good relationships evident in the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	5
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	6
Value for money provided by the school	5
Overall standards achieved	6
Pupils' achievement	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	5
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	5
The quality of teaching	5
How well pupils learn	5
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5
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	5
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	5
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	5
The leadership of other key staff	5
The effectiveness of management	5

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