

INSPECTION REPORT

HEMPSTEAD INFANT SCHOOL

Hempstead, Gillingham

LEA area: The Medway Towns

Unique reference number: 118555

Headteacher: Mrs K Dadd

Lead inspector: Mr Paul Baxter

Dates of inspection: 10-12 May 2004

Inspection number: 256388

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	257
School address:	Hempstead Road Hempstead Gillingham Kent
Postcode:	ME7 3QG
Telephone number:	01634-365969
Fax number:	01634-260275
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Spencer Negus
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hempstead Infant School has 257 pupils, 118 boys and 139 girls, aged between 4 and 7 years. The school is located in Gillingham in Kent. It is above average in size and serves a broadly average socio-economic community – an increased proportion of pupils travelling from nearby towns compared to the time of the last inspection in 1998. About four per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and this is below average. About eight per cent of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds; six pupils speak English as a language different to their mother tongue and two pupils receive specialist language support. These numbers are above average. Approximately 21 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, a slightly above average proportion, and these include specific and moderate learning and social, emotional and behavioural needs. One per cent of the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, and this is a below average percentage. Overall, the attainment of children on entry to the school is broadly average. The school achieved several awards in 2003 including: 'Basic Skills Quality Mark', 'Healthy Schools' and 'Inclusive Schools Quality Mark'.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25217	Paul Baxter	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Science Physical education Religious education Foundation Stage
9487	Frances Hurd	Lay inspector	
31029	Peter Thrussell	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Music
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school provides a **satisfactory level of effectiveness**. After a time of limited improvement, mainly due to ongoing changes to staff, it is now building upon strengths such as good attitudes and relationships and addressing previous areas of weakness, for example, inconsistent achievement in English and science, with more success. Relatively recent improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and to the planning of the curriculum have re-established the pupils' satisfactory achievement overall, and broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. The headteacher sustains a strong commitment to the pupils' health and welfare and by cultivating a team ethic has rebuilt a satisfactory quality of provision. Value for money is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good strategies sustain the pupils' health and welfare, include pupils equally, and enrich their self-esteem throughout the school.
- Children in the Reception classes achieve well as a result of consistently good provision.
- Good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development promotes their good attitudes, relationships and behaviour.
- Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are below average and represent unsatisfactory achievement for pupils currently in these classes.
- Good teaching and learning in ICT and geography, and of observational skills in science, are promoting pupils' good achievement in these areas.
- Sessions in Years 1 and 2, where pupils choose or have responsibility for their own activities, too often lack sufficient adult support and this has a negative impact on skills and standards.

Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection in 1998. Following that inspection, instability in staffing reduced the effectiveness of provision and pupils' academic achievement for some time. However, improved stability and strengthening of leadership and management over the past eighteen months has addressed most key issues of the last inspection satisfactorily. Improvement has been good in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and geography. Recent staff development and support have also led to improved teaching and learning in English. Although improving, inconsistent practice constrains pupils' achievement in mathematics in Year 2.

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	D	C	D
writing	C	D	C	D
mathematics	E	C	C	C

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall. The pupils' performance in national tests at Year 2 has risen, matching the trend found nationally in recent years. Pupils come from much wider backgrounds than comparisons based on free school meals suggest, making such comparisons less reliable as indicators of pupils' performance. Inspection shows that the improvement to average standards in reading and writing has been accomplished by strengthening the quality of the teaching and learning across the school. Although the currently below average standards in mathematics in Year 2 represent a fall in standards, pupils currently in Year 1 are now achieving satisfactorily in response to improving provision in these classes. Standards are average in all the other subjects inspected,

namely, science, ICT and geography. Overall, most pupils, including higher attainers, pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good** overall. Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. In the Reception classes, teaching is consistently good. The good teaching observed in Year 1 classes reflects recent improvement, partially stemming from good support of senior staff. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 2 was satisfactory, constrained by ongoing changes to staff. Teaching is good in science, ICT and geography and shows continuing improvement. Teaching is now satisfactory in English and mathematics, but the underachievement of pupils currently in Year 2 in mathematics reflects previous weakness. The curriculum is satisfactory and widens the pupils' experiences through a variety of visits. The school complements pupils' learning well through productive partnerships with parents, the local community and nearby schools. The pupils' self-esteem is promoted well through good provision for their care.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Ongoing changes to staff and governors have had a negative impact, but the leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory. The headteacher encourages a strong emphasis on caring for pupils, and by working closely with the deputy headteacher and chair of governors is now promoting a more effective team approach to raising standards. Management and governance are satisfactory. Governors are more involved in plotting the future direction of the school and meet their statutory obligations in full. Financial management is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents' views of the school are very good. The overwhelming majority of parents give good support in all aspects of school life. The school considers parents' views diligently and values the parents' support and has very good strategies for sustaining their satisfaction, occasionally in very difficult circumstances. Pupils' views of the school are very good. They value the care, help and support they receive from all staff. Inspection supports these findings.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards and pupils' achievement in mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Develop more consistent challenge and expectation in the teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2, particularly by ensuring that all lessons develop the pupils' skills effectively.
- Improve the quality of pupils' recorded work, especially handwriting and in mathematics.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, pupils who have English as an additional language and those who come from different backgrounds, achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave the school. Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage (Reception Classes) and in Year 1 and it is satisfactory in Year 2. Standards are average in English, science, geography and ICT by the end of Year 2, but in mathematics, standards are below average for pupils of this age and achievement is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in their personal and social development and in their listening skills while in their Reception Year, where their achievement is good overall in response to good teaching.
- In response to more effective teaching and provision, pupils' achievement has been improved well in science, geography and ICT since the last inspection.
- In mathematics, standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory in Year 2.
- Strengthened provision is beginning to raise standards and pupils' achievement in Year 1 and the school's focus on writing is having a positive effect on pupils' skills throughout the school.
- Not all lessons in Years 1 and 2 have a sufficient focus on developing the pupils' academic skills.

Commentary

1. The children's attainment on entry to school is broadly average but variation can occur as different numbers of children come from the range of backgrounds and levels of prior attainment. Most children bring positive attitudes to school and, in response to consistently good teaching and support, achieve well, with personal, social and emotional development and listening skills being advanced most. Reading, speaking, writing and mathematical skills and the children's knowledge and understanding of the world match the standard expected of children by the end of their Reception Year. The children enjoy books, recognise a range of familiar words, form most letters correctly and can write recognisable words. The children's handwriting skills are the least developed and the school is currently focused on improving this aspect of provision. Most children are developing an appropriate confidence with number and can count up to ten and several beyond this number.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.6 (15)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	14.5 (13.8)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.6 (17)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 90 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the National Curriculum tests for 2003, standards were average in reading and writing and in mathematics and generally reflected a trend of rising standards since 1999 that has matched the trend found nationally. These showed that a mostly above average proportion of pupils were reaching the expected Level 2 standard in these aspects and also in teachers' assessments in science. The proportion of pupils reaching the above expected Level 3 standard, however, was mostly below average and led to equally low comparison with the performance of pupils in similar schools. Whilst there is underachievement in mathematics for pupils currently in Year 2, such comparisons should be treated with caution, since an increasing number of pupils are entering this school from a greater range of backgrounds and several with less skill than may

be found in schools who have a similar proportion of pupils with entitlement to free school meals.

3. Inspection evidence shows that standards are average by the end of Year 2, reflecting satisfactory achievement for most pupils. The school's assessment records also indicate that most pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall. Occasionally pupils with special educational needs achieve more in relation to their capabilities than their peers and this is due to the good quality of additional support that they receive. In a few lessons where challenge was less effective, potentially higher attainers could have achieved more, but overall they achieve satisfactorily and their needs are now considered more adequately than at the time of the last inspection. Average standards and satisfactory achievement in English represents a relatively recent improvement due to more consistent teaching but the pupils' handwriting skills remains a weakness. Standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics in Year 2 and this too is a weakness but average standards in Year 1 reflects a degree of improved provision. Good achievement in science, geography and ICT throughout the school represents a significant improvement.
4. For some time the school's ability to move forward has been constrained by continued changes to staff. The below average skill in mathematics of Year 2 pupils reflects this, for their learning has been disrupted the most. However, there are several reasons why pupils' achievement is satisfactory and is improving. The school has strengthened its ability to sustain a more effective and consistent quality of provision, for example, the monitoring of standards and support of teaching by the headteacher and the targeted and supportive work of the deputy headteacher in improving work in Year 1 classes. With support from senior managers, subject co-ordinators in English, science, ICT and geography in particular, have improved the quality of curriculum planning and are developing supportive assessment strategies and these are helping to strengthen teaching and learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for children in their Reception Year is well developed and has effective procedures for maintaining ongoing improvement.
5. In English, a whole-school emphasis on writing is having a beneficial impact and is enabling pupils to record their ideas and to learn more effectively across a range of subjects. In science, the well-planned and resourced curriculum is promoting good teaching and learning through practical investigation and has lifted pupils' observational skills to an above average standard. Pupils' achievement in geography and ICT has been improved by a whole-school focus to rectify these areas, which were identified as weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. In addition ICT is being used with increasing success to develop pupils' understanding in several other subjects, for example, in science where the use of a 'digital microscope' enriches the pupils' observations of the tiny parts of a flower. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 remain a weakness, but the school has recognised this and has had some success in addressing pupils' underachievement in mathematics in Year 1, where standards now match those expected of pupils of this age. Inspection also shows that satisfactory teaching in Year 2 is beginning to fill gaps in pupils' learning, stemming from ongoing staff changes and inconsistent expectations. However, expectations could be higher given the pupils' positive attitudes and self-confidence more effectively to raise expectations. In addition, a few lessons in Years 1 and 2, where pupils choose or follow a range of activities independently, lack the rigour and support needed to develop the pupils' skills to the full.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to learning, and behaviour is good overall, as at the last inspection: in the Reception classes (the Foundation Stage) children's attitudes and behaviour are now very good, an improvement. Attendance and punctuality are good, improved from last time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are good overall. They are sometimes very good, especially in Reception classes.
- Pupils are confident and have a good level of self-esteem.
- Pupils show a satisfactory ability to be enterprising and take responsibility.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.0
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

6. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Virtually all parents and carers ensure their children attend regularly, and inform the school promptly about absences. The school has good procedures in place to monitor attendance, and registration fulfils statutory requirements. Detailed analysis of attendance is done accurately through a computerised system. Newsletters and the prospectus promote the importance of regular attendance effectively.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	158	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	4	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	3	0	0

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

7. The fixed period exclusions represented appropriate action and concerned a much smaller number of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. No unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during the inspection, although in lessons where challenge was inappropriately pitched, pupils lost interest in their task and became chatty and fidgety. The best taught lessons produced the highest levels of enthusiasm and the best classroom behaviour.
8. Pupils are quiet and attentive during assemblies, and lunchtimes are happy, well-organised events where the 'stars of the week' who have displayed exemplary mealtime behaviour are displayed on the wall. Boys and girls enjoy using the playground apparatus and toys, and supervising staff encourage them to try new games and activities. Pupils of different ethnic

backgrounds play happily together, and footballing boys accepted a girl player without hesitation. Even the youngest pupils have a clear understanding of the school rules and routines, and of the rewards and sanctions they can earn. They willingly carry out the simple classroom responsibilities they are given, and their responses to the pupil questionnaires show that while many of them like their school just as it is, others have plenty of ideas about how it could be improved still further. The long-serving teaching assistants have provided much-needed support and stability during a period of staff changes, and many pupils (and their families) form affectionate and appreciative relationships with them.

9. The pupils' good attitudes and behaviour are an outcome of the school's strong provision for personal development. This starts in the Reception classes where very good provision enables the majority of children to exceed the early learning goals for personal, social and emotional development. The school has worked hard and with success to maintain good standards of behaviour. 'Golden Rules' are displayed throughout the school and pupils are very aware of how the school expects them to behave. The pupils enjoy the stories in assembly and personal, social and health education lessons, including circle time, and these help to reinforce this positive code, as well as promoting their good social skills. The pupils enjoy and benefit from good relationships with each other and with the adults who work in the school.
10. Pupils work and play together amicably and there are many opportunities for them to do so. These help to establish good relationships within the whole school community, where all are valued and respected. Good curricular enrichment, through visitors, visits and out-of-school clubs, provides further opportunities to develop social skills away from the classroom. Each class has 'Golden Time' that reinforces this good behaviour and these positive attitudes. The 'Ocean of Achievement' display also celebrates them and pupils are proud of their own and others' achievements. In lessons pupils receive plenty of praise that recognises achievements, for example 'good listening' and 'good sitting', but sometimes it is overused and expectations could be higher.
11. The pupils develop satisfactory cultural awareness and understanding. Religious education lessons, visitors to the school, and the celebration of different festivals in assembly, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, help pupils to become aware of different beliefs and the cultures associated with them. However, discussion with pupils showed limited knowledge of different cultures, an aspect that could be further developed.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning and the planned curriculum are satisfactory. The pupils' learning opportunities are enriched by good provision for their care, health and welfare and by good partnerships with parents, local schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Reception and Year 1 and it is satisfactory in Year 2. Teaching and learning are good in science, geography and ICT and they are satisfactory in English and mathematics. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is a consistent feature in all Reception classes and good teaching in science, geography and ICT is promoting the pupils' skills and achievement.
- Teaching assistants support teachers and pupils very well and contribute to the positive attitudes and improving standards.
- There is an increasing proportion of good teaching in Year 1 and this is helping to raise standards.
- Teachers promote warm relationships and develop the pupils' self-esteem effectively.
- Not all lessons in Years 1 and 2 have a sufficient focus on developing the pupils' skills.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3 (8%)	21 (54%)	13 (33%)	2 (5%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons: figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

12. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The majority of the teaching seen in the school was good and represents an improving picture. However, discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work showed that too much of their recorded work, especially, in mathematics, reflected inconsistent expectations and a lower amount of effective learning.
13. Teaching in Reception classes is a strength. Teaching is underpinned by careful planning that consists of well-chosen practical learning opportunities that are backed up by relevant teacher and adult led teaching and support. The children in these classes are encouraged, taught and supported to make sensible choices when following their own learning activities. Rigorous questioning from adults develops the children's independence effectively. For example, in an outdoor session seen, when children chose to ride on tricycles they were expected and taught to do so with care and with skill and, therefore, learned well. In other lessons the children were taught how to join different materials and later, with their skills in place, they were enabled to make their own creations such as collage pictures. This too resulted in effective learning. In almost all the lessons seen, the Reception staff were particularly successful in developing the children's independence.
14. The increasing proportion of good lessons seen in Year 1 reflected the effective work of the headteacher and deputy headteacher in supporting colleagues and in promoting consistently successful strategies, for example, clear identification of learning objectives using whiteboards and displays. The whole-school emphasis on promoting writing is also having a beneficial impact although there is still some way to go in raising the quality of the pupils' handwriting.
15. Teaching and learning in Year 2 have been restricted by changes to staff and by staff illness. The satisfactory quality observed during the inspection represents an improvement. Good teaching was observed in science, geography and ICT, for example, illustrating the benefits of improved planning and good use of new resources to aid the pupils' learning.
16. The successful and more frequent use of 'Plan, do and review' and 'Small group' sessions in Reception contrasts with the ineffective use of similar 'choosing activities' seen at times in Years 1 and 2, where the pupils' choices and activity were not supported by the same rigour, expectation and support of adults. Too often the pupils themselves showed a lack of maturity in these periods and, when not supervised sufficiently, wasted their time on meaningless activity that developed neither academic nor social skill. Occasionally learning in a few other lessons was constrained by teachers attempting to cover too much or by low expectations with regard to recorded work, especially writing. Increasingly the school is targeting these aspects with success, especially in Year 1, and an improved and more consistent quality of teaching is emerging with good effect on pupils' achievement, in science, for example.
17. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and higher attaining pupils, are usually offered tasks that are matched appropriately to their needs, enabling them to achieve satisfactorily. Often pupils with special educational needs receive such good personal support that they achieve well in relation to their capability. These improving qualities were also seen to good effect in several English lessons and in all science

lessons, especially the latter in both Year 1 and Year 2, where observational skills were taught particularly effectively during practical investigations.

18. Teachers are consistent in their very good deployment of the experienced and capable teaching assistants, whose work has a very beneficial impact on the pupils' academic and personal development. Observation of lessons showed that teaching assistants were very supportive in questioning pupils to extend their understanding, particularly in Reception classes. In Years 1 and 2, teaching assistants gave strong support to pupils working in groups, during scientific investigations, for example, where they encouraged pupils to observe flowers with care and precision. In English, teaching assistants played an important role in developing the pupils' reading skills and gave very effective support to pupils using the library. Teaching assistants were perhaps most effective in their support of pupils with special educational needs, helping and including several pupils with quite severe emotional and behavioural needs. Such sympathetic and valuable assistance was offered, for example, to pupils in a games lesson in Year 2 and this not only supported the pupils with specific needs but also enabled the teacher to give appropriate attention to other pupils.
19. During this year pupils' work has been assessed thoroughly in English and mathematics and targets have been set, but it is particularly in writing, which has been the school's focus, that pupils know what they are trying to do to improve. The headteacher monitors pupils' progress effectively in these areas and their personal and social development through half-termly meetings with class teachers, and where pupils are making insufficient progress or have problems, extra support is given. In other subjects, satisfactory assessment systems are now in place, and co-ordinators are building up collections of pupils' work that reflect typical levels of attainment for different groups of pupils. Overall these assessments are being used satisfactorily to inform future teaching and learning and to enrich pupils' achievement.

The curriculum

The overall curriculum is satisfactory and opportunities for enrichment are good. The accommodation and resources are good and support the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Visits and visitors to the school enhance the curriculum and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- On a few occasions the weekly 'Plan, do and review' and 'Small group' sessions in Years 1 and 2 lack a clear focus on developing pupils' skills and on raising standards and consequently do not represent effective use of curriculum time.
- Good resources support all areas of the curriculum and a high number of support staff are used very well to promote pupils' achievement.

Commentary

20. The overall curriculum is sound and includes statutory responsibilities for race equality, accessibility and personal, social and health education. Recent innovative planning has focused well on developing cross-curricular links within half-termly topics and is ensuring planned opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. These are having a beneficial impact on pupils' achievements. Visits and visitors to the school enhance the quality of the curriculum. Recent visits to support pupils' learning, and linked specifically to their topics have included a coastal study at Herne Bay and the art sculptures at Groombridge. Visitors have included a presentation from the Toy Museum, puppeteers and a musician's workshop. Art and design technology weeks also contribute well to enriching the curriculum. On occasion, the most unproductive times of the week are the sessions in Years 1 and 2 where pupils choose activities or work independently for a significant part of the day. Too often these do not have sufficient adult intervention to ensure that pupils develop their skills systematically. They also lack a clear strategy for raising standards in any area of the curriculum.

21. Well-trained and experienced support staff know the pupils very well and provide very good quality support of teaching in every class. Their work is well planned and they provide good individual and group support in lessons and often note pupils' responses during the whole class introductory sessions. All areas of the curriculum are well resourced, and the ICT suite, in particular, is being used well to support pupils' achievements. The outdoor areas are used well to extend pupils' learning. They continue to be imaginatively developed and a sensory garden is currently being built.
22. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. These needs are quickly identified and carefully monitored, particularly those related to learning and behaviour. Well-written, clearly focused individual education plans help them to acquire the skills necessary to access the full curriculum. The school has gone some way in identifying gifted and talented pupils, but has yet to plan fully for their needs.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good overall and very good in the Reception classes (Foundation Stage). The provision of support, advice and guidance is good. The involvement of pupils through seeking and valuing their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to ensure all in the school community work in a safe and healthy environment are very good.
- Virtually all pupils have a very good relationship with an adult within the school who they would trust to help them with their problems.
- Induction arrangements are good.

Commentary

23. The school provides a healthy, safe and welcoming environment for its pupils, as at the last inspection. This provision is very good for children in the reception classes enabling them to achieve very well in the personal, social and emotional development. Provision is good in Years 1 and 2 and helps pupils to develop good attitudes that aid their learning. All health and safety management is computerised and regularly updated with any additional unexpected problems. The governors assess the site for risks each term and the caretaker does a visual check each morning. The school suffers from occasional vandalism (playground apparatus was damaged during the inspection) and close circuit television has been installed.
24. First aid arrangements are good, although there is no dedicated medical room, and child protection arrangements are very good. The school won the 'Healthy Schools Award' last year, and strongly emphasises the importance of healthy living and safety awareness: it ran a first aid course for parents and pupils. The local authority provides very good support for health and safety management.
25. Staff make every effort to get to know pupils and their families well, and in addition the school, with its partner junior school, provides access to and accommodation for the 'Place to Be' counselling service for pupils, parents and staff. The level of emotional and social support offered by the school is therefore of a very good standard, and there have been no exclusions since 'Place to Be' was installed. Reception staff visit all pupils at home before they join the school, and work closely with parents and pre-school providers to find out all they can about the new arrivals. Pupils arriving in Years 1 or 2 are carefully matched with a ready-made 'circle of friends' to provide classroom and playtime support.
26. At present, the level of academic support and guidance is not at the same level as that given for personal development: some higher attainers are given work appropriate to their needs,

although pupils with special educational needs are well supported and appropriately challenged. Early identification of their needs enables this support to be well planned and clearly focused through well-written individual education plans. Regular reviews help to ensure that steady progress is made. Individual targets are shared well with pupils so that they understand why they are being supported and know the progress they are making. The help and support of outside agencies is sought as required.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community and other educational establishments are all good, as at the time of the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The procedures in place to deal with complaints and ensure satisfaction are very good.
- The involvement of parents through seeking their views is good.
- Arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the junior school are good.
- Parents' support for learning is satisfactory overall: some provide very strong support whilst others find this difficult.

Commentary

2727. The school is very approachable: parents are strongly encouraged to contact teachers or senior staff with any queries or problems, and are welcome to attend a wide variety of school events. However, there has been a steady increase in the number of families where both parents work, sometimes some considerable distance away, and where their children attend the privately run childcare facility housed next door to the school from 8am until school time, and after school sometimes until 6pm. This circumstance naturally affects both the amount of personal contact parents have with the school, and the support they can offer children's learning at home.

28. Parents give good support to the school in the education of their children. About a dozen parents help regularly in class, and 30 helped to clear and tidy the grounds (another working party will take place this term). A small committee organises the parents' association's fundraising, and organises a range of events for pupils and their families. These activities have a beneficial impact on children's learning. The school sends out annual questionnaires to parents: the school reports on the results, and uses them in its development plans.
29. Information for parents is satisfactory overall. They are kept well informed about school events, and about the curriculum their children will be studying. Reports, however, do not always give parents a clear idea of whether their children are working at, above or below the expected standard for their age, even in core subjects. The school runs regular information sessions on various topics, but attendance is generally disappointing. Parents who have children with special educational needs are fully consulted about their children's support and needs.
30. The school has good links with the parish church and local shops and businesses. Its sports day, country dancing display and barbecue are popular with local residents. Grandparents and elderly residents visit the school to talk about their life experiences and join in school events, and representatives of the emergency services visit regularly. There is a well-established link with a children's hospice, through fundraising, talks by hospice representatives, and visits by pupils and staff to the hospice. Links with the junior school, which shares the site, are very strong and constantly being developed in new ways. During Year 2 pupils have regular contact with a Year 5 'buddy', and pupils from both schools attend each others' productions and special events. The school plays a full role in its 'consortia' of 18 neighbouring primary schools, and participates annually in the Medway Infant Music Festival. It provides teaching experience for students from three training colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher and staff with responsibilities is satisfactory overall. Management and the governance of the school are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a strong commitment to inclusion.
- Good leadership and management in the Foundation Stage and in some subjects, for example, English and science, have helped to improve standards and achievement.
- The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well.

Commentary

31. The headteacher, in partnership with the deputy headteacher, have a firm belief in nurturing the whole child, and are strongly committed to inclusion and supporting the health and well-being of all pupils. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (in Reception classes) is well co-ordinated, and provides a good start to children's schooling; children settle in and achieve well. There is now an improving focus on developing pupils' academic skills and raising standards and achievement. This has been held back by ongoing changes in staff, including key personnel. The quality of subject co-ordination is satisfactory overall. Good co-ordination in English, science and ICT is helping to bring about improvements in these key subjects. However, the school recognises that more needs to be done to develop the role of subject leaders as part of its drive to raise overall standards. Some ongoing underachievement in mathematics has only recently started to be addressed. The deputy headteacher has worked well alongside class teachers, particularly in Year 1, to help secure these improvements and to development a team approach to leadership and management.
32. The school is committed to including all pupils equally in day-to-day activities. All additional educational needs, including both learning and emotional and behavioural needs, are identified and pupils' progress closely monitored. The provision for these needs is well led by the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs. Educational plans are linked very closely to individual needs and are well supported, especially by confident and well-trained teaching assistants.
33. The school's approach to self-evaluation is satisfactory and is strengthening. However, the focus on standards and the development of consistent expectations have yet to reach fruition. School improvement planning has clearly identified some vital areas for development, for example standards in writing. The monitoring of lessons, and subsequent further training on learning styles and the levelling of pupils' writing, has helped to bring about improvements. It has also identified points for professional development, which form a good basis for the performance management targets set for both teachers and teaching assistants. There are regular placements for teacher training that bring some fresh insights to the school and also provide links for further staff training.
34. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Several governors are relatively new to their responsibilities and have yet to contribute fully to the management of the school. The governing body is well served, however, by capable people in key positions, especially the chair of governors, and meets its statutory obligations well. The headteacher receives the full support of governors in ensuring that racial harmony and equal opportunity are sustained effectively.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	627,629
Total expenditure	619,905
Expenditure per pupil	2,313

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	21,824
Balance carried forward to the next	29,548

35. The headteacher and the bursar receive good support from the chair of the governors' finance committee. Together they ensure that good financial control underpins equally good management and use of the funds, including the special grants to support pupils with special educational needs, made available to the school. These aspects, as well as the regular supportive visits to the school made by an increasing number of governors, for example, to develop the ICT suite, represent improvements in the governance of the school that are helping to bring about more effective provision. This is also illustrated in the table above, where the carry-forward from 2002/2003 included prudently 'ear-marked' funds to resource the new ICT suite. The governors' monitoring of the use of ICT on pupils' learning also reflects a more consistent commitment to the consideration of 'best value'. Currently 'best value' is considered satisfactorily, for the impact of provision could be more precisely measured in terms of its impact on pupils' achievement. The school continues to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (in Reception Classes) was identified as a strength at the time of the last inspection and it continues to be so. The provision in all the Reception Classes is good. Children's attainment is broadly average when they enter these classes and covers all levels of prior attainment. Most children make the transition into full-time school smoothly, progress well and extend their skills effectively, especially their independence in learning. The children achieve well in response to well-planned teaching and learning in the required areas of learning. The warm relationships and the teachers' very good deployment of teaching assistants have a consistent and beneficial impact on the children's achievement, especially in the development of their personal and social skills. Since the last inspection there has been an effective ongoing development of the curriculum and an equally successful focus on promoting the children's independence and self-esteem. Careful and effective leadership of this stage of learning has sustained the good quality of provision and the children's achievement, despite an increasing number of children with emotional and behavioural needs being admitted since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well and exceed the standards expected at the end of their Reception Year because of very good teaching that promotes the pupils' self-confidence and social skills.
- Staff provide very good role models for the children to follow and give very warm and consistent support and guidance.

Commentary

36. From an early age children are encouraged to make choices about activities to undertake and to accept a personal level of responsibility for their learning. The children's behaviour is managed and supported very effectively. Often teachers use 'shakers' to focus the children's attention and in return the children behave very well. Classroom routines are carefully nurtured and movement from one activity to another is well organised. These ensure that the frequent changes of activity, from teacher-led work, such as teaching patterns in music, to learning through practical activity and play, for example, when making models using logs, uses the minimum amount of time and brings refreshment to the children's learning opportunities.
37. All sessions observed began with children entering the room in a well-ordered manner. They sat politely, listening carefully when the adults were speaking to them. They co-operated well with each other in group activities and in response to warm yet clear support and guidance developed and exercised a good degree of independence when making choices about what activity to follow and who to co-operate with, for example, when sharing books.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall and discussion plays a very strong role in developing the children's oral skills.
- Adults are particularly skilled in enriching the children's understanding through warm but challenging support when children are 'learning through play'.
- Although satisfactory and improving, children could be provided with more opportunities to develop their writing skills, as they grow older.

Commentary

38. Teaching is good in this area of learning and overall, most children are on course to meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of their Reception Year and achieve well. The consistent and effective emphasis placed upon the children's speaking and listening skills through questioning is particularly successful and children's listening skills are above average. Oral introductions to lessons and the review of activity that follows the variety of opportunities given to the children are productive sessions where the teachers and their assistants extend the children's communication skills effectively. For example, the children were expected to talk about why they chose to play on the large wheeled toys and to make links with other work they had been doing with their teachers.
39. The children's reading and writing skills are developed effectively. Children are supported in their visits to the library and they can choose other times to read and share books if they wish. Large storybooks are shared frequently with whole classes and these sessions are successful in developing the pupils' recognition of words and meaning of text. Other successful lessons included children dressing up as story characters, for example as a giant, and involved the teacher drawing the giant as if speaking using 'speech bubbles'. These activities focused the children's attention on letters and their initial sounds and promoted their understanding of writing. However, teachers have recognised that this is an area where the children's skills could be more advanced and are planning to teach a joined style of handwriting at an earlier stage.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities to develop the children's skills in this area of learning are planned well and are enriched by good links with practical work in other areas of learning.
- Teaching assistants strengthen the individual support given to the children and help to ensure that teachers are fully informed about the children's needs.

Commentary

40. Teaching and learning are good in this area of learning and the children achieve well and reach the expected goals by the time they leave their Reception classes. The children are provided with a variety of meaningful tasks that extend their understanding of mathematics and develop their basic number skills. The teachers often adopt a successful cross-curricular approach whereby number is taught in an everyday context that the children can understand. For example, music and number skills were taught effectively in lessons based on exploring sound patterns created using percussion instruments. As the children noticed the different patterns made with drums and shakers so they counted the drum beats. In another lesson the teacher used tiny teddy bears imaginatively to promote the children's singing of 'Ten in a bed' and when 'one fell out' the children learned how to take-away, 'one-at-a-time'. Such activities were successful in developing the children's knowledge and facility in number and they were fun too!

The teacher also promoted the use of mathematical language. For example, by pointing out that taking away one teddy bear meant that there was one less teddy 'in the bed!'

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision is **good** in this area of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers ensure a good balance between adult led teaching opportunities and child initiated activities and this helps the children to develop skill and understanding.
- Children enjoy learning for they understand the relevance and have self-confidence in their learning opportunities.
- Adults make good links with the children's previous learning and this extends their understanding.

Commentary

41. Teaching and learning are good in this aspect. The accommodation and outdoor areas available for children are well organised and equipped and are used effectively to promote this area of learning. Children learn about animals and plants when they explore and investigate in the outdoor garden areas. They use the computers in the centrally shared area effectively to develop their language and mathematical skills and use simple encyclopaedia programs to extend their knowledge of other people and places. Teacher led lessons about how to join different materials were followed up successfully during choosing activities when children used these skills to make clothes for teddies and to make card and paper models. Stories, hymns and prayers, for example, when studying celebrations such as weddings in assemblies developed the children's awareness of religious belief and practice and made a strong contribution to their spiritual and cultural development. The children enjoy and benefit from the wide range of activity and achieve well in this area of learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards in this area of learning. Activities seen showed that children selected from a range of well-resourced opportunities. These included sand and water play, riding on large wheeled toys that helped to develop their social and gross motor skills. Activities such as using scissors to create clothes for their teddy bears helped to develop their fine motor skills. Children were encouraged and questioned well during these sessions and the learning support assistants supported teachers and children very effectively. Children enjoyed their work and mixed with each other and with adults very warmly.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

It was not possible to judge the quality of provision overall. Observations of children making clothes for their dolls, painting and making collage pictures and creating models, for example a dog kennel, using logs and crates showed that they have a wide range of well planned opportunities to develop their skills in this area of learning. Colourful displays of children's work celebrated their achievement, demonstrated the value placed on their ideas and efforts and helped to promote an atmosphere of enjoyable and effective learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strength and weaknesses

- Handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work do not match their ability to write.
- Good management of the subject is contributing to raising standards, although the quality of teaching and learning is constrained to satisfactory by the high teacher turnover.
- Literacy skills are well used across the curriculum.

Commentary

42. While standards in reading and writing in the 2003 national tests were average, they were below average when compared with those of pupils from similar schools. The number of pupils achieving the higher level was average in reading, but well below average in writing. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising particularly in writing where the school has placed due emphasis. The quality of provision has been sustained since the last inspection.
43. Reading is systematically taught throughout the school, and a good stock of books is readily available in classrooms and the library. By the end of Year 2 higher attaining pupils can read accurately with some intonation, talk about characters and make suitable predictions. Average attaining pupils read more slowly, generally following the words accurately, and use their phonic knowledge well when they come across unfamiliar words. Pupils of all abilities enjoy reading. Home-school contact logs (books where staff and parents record the pupils' reading) are well used to encourage parents to support their children's reading. Pupils understand how the library is arranged and select books readily.
44. Pupils speaking and listening skills are broadly average although in all classes there are some articulate children. Teachers give pupils opportunities to use their speaking and listening skills in lessons through whole class and smaller group activities, but there is no planned programme to develop these skills and this leads to inconsistent provision, on occasions. Pupils tend to answer questions in class with a few words, and sometimes with mixed tenses and teachers are not always proactive in encouraging pupils to use the grammatical structures of Standard English. The development of speaking skills must be seen in the context of being contributory to raising standards in pupils' written work.
45. Pupils in all classes are improving the quantity of written work that they produce, due to the new well-planned programme of work. The expectations are well matched to pupils' abilities, and the targets set for pupils, contribute to a beneficial progression in the development of their writing skills. Pupils' work is well marked and includes developmental comments. In a Year 1 lesson pupils were writing an account of a visit to Groombridge, 'The Enchanted Forest'. Approximately half the class wrote at length, with some punctuation, plausibly accurate spelling and used a word bank well. Standards were above average and the pupils' achievement was good.
46. The weakness in all writing is the quality of pupils' handwriting, which also contributes to the poor presentation. Pupils, even the older ones, do not join up their letters in a word, and often the space between letters is no different to that between words making it difficult to read. Writing on plain paper, with no line guides underneath, also makes it difficult for pupils to write in a straight line, and this contributes to the poor presentation. The strength of pupils writing is the content and quantity of what they write, which is also refreshingly uninhibited by the total absence of worksheets. The school has already planned in-service training to remedy the weaknesses.
47. The teaching of English overall is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well and plan effectively for the use of their teaching assistants, particularly in group-work. Pupils respond well when listening to the teachers, but in some satisfactory lessons, they spent too much time sitting as a class on the carpet and their concentration lapsed. In good lessons teachers used strategies such as; pupils writing quick answers on whiteboards, holding up cards to indicate how many sounds there are in a given word, or quick discussions with a response partner to liven up the introduction. Pupils enjoy English and discuss their work well in pairs and small

groups, but there are few times when they concentrate fully on their own writing without being distracted by other pupils and this is restricting their achievement. All classes have a daily half hour small group work session based on developing literacy skills. These vary in their impact. In one very good session teaching assistants were used effectively and all pupils were on task, while in another unsatisfactory session the achievement of three fifths of the class was below expectations.

48. The co-ordinator leadership is good and has contributed significantly to the recent improvement in writing. She has been thorough in maintaining and analysing pupil data, teachers have been well supported in matching pupils' work against national curriculum levels and this information has been well used to set targets for improvement within classes. Teaching has been well monitored, but its effectiveness has been constrained by the high staff turnover and lacks consistency.

English across the curriculum

49. The school has placed good emphasis on the use of pupils' literacy in other subjects. Year 1 pupils following a visit to the park in their local studies wrote to the park keeper with the features they especially liked and those that they felt could be improved. Following a visit to Herne Bay, pupils labelled their shells, and wrote about contrasting seaside locations. In science there is a productive focus on teaching key vocabulary and the labelling of diagrams. Pupils also word process their work using ICT. In all teaching there is an opportunity for pupils to talk about their work and listen to others, and reading non-fiction books contributes well to their learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall the below average standards in Year 2 are too low and the achievement of pupils currently in Year 2 has been unsatisfactory.
- Although recent improvements are starting to raise standards and achievement, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are managed well in lessons and are keen to learn.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support in lessons.

Commentary

50. In the current Year 2 overall standards are below average. From average attainment on entry to the school achievement is unsatisfactory. The effective support for pupils with special educational needs, however, enables them to achieve satisfactorily. Although a significant number of pupils are reaching the average Level 2 standard, too few are achieving the higher than average Level 3 standard by the end of Year 2. To some extent this reflects teachers' low expectations of the quality and quantity of work produced by the pupils, and a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils. This was evident, particularly in the Year 2 work sample, where overall presentation and productivity were below average. Discussion with pupils showed their lack of confidence in mental recall and using taught skills to tackle mathematical problems. Many recent staff changes have impacted adversely on pupils' achievement.
51. There is an improving picture in Year 1 where overall standards are average and all pupils are achieving satisfactorily. The work of the deputy head teacher has been particularly effective in this year group. She has worked closely alongside teachers to help improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.

52. At the time of the last inspection standards were average but improving. Challenge for higher attaining pupils and the presentation of work were key issues that have, until very recently, not been sufficiently addressed. The quality of teaching and learning, although now improving, has also declined. Improvement, therefore, since that time is unsatisfactory.
53. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen were satisfactory. Lessons are generally well prepared and resources used appropriately to support pupils' learning. One particular strength in teaching is the work of the teaching assistants who are used effectively, often to support lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs. In a Year 1 lesson the assistant developed the introduction well for a group of pupils, questioning their understanding and introducing the task. At the end of the lesson she discussed work with a group of higher attaining pupils and assessed their progress. This allowed the class teacher to focus questioning more effectively on a narrower range of ability. Along with class teachers, assistants also play a key role in classroom management. Good relationships are developed with pupils that result in positive behaviour and an eagerness to learn. In more effective lessons pupils are challenged well through careful, targeted questioning, which both furthers their understanding and enables teachers to assess it. However, in too many lessons this challenge, particularly for higher attaining pupils, was not sufficiently evident, either from questioning or the expectations of the quality of work and the amount to be produced. Although pupils generally settled well to tasks, few indications were given of what should be completed, and often resulted in work that was unfinished.
54. The school records the on-going progress of individual pupils well. Regular recorded assessments show the standards that pupils have reached and the achievement made. This enables teachers to put classes into groups based on prior attainment and to plan support and work appropriately. However, the work planned does not always reflect sufficiently the next small steps in pupils' learning, nor challenge them enough to work towards the next level.
55. The role of the subject leader needs to be developed further, to enable her to have a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject. However, with the support of the head and deputy head teacher, the subject is satisfactorily co-ordinated. The need to raise standards and achievement has now been more clearly identified, and to this end the help and advice of a numeracy consultant has been planned. There has been some useful monitoring of teaching and learning, with a view to raising standards and achievement, but recent changes of staff have curtailed its effectiveness. Resources for the subject are good and well organised so that year groups and individual classes have easy access to them.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching throughout the school ensures good achievement by all pupils, especially in the development of their observational skills.
- The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and there is a very strong and effective focus on pupils learning through practical scientific enquiry.
- The pupils enjoy and show interest in their scientific investigations, aiding their learning.

Commentary

56. Teachers' assessments for 2003 showed that pupils in Year 2 reached average standards. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels was well below average. Inspection shows that improvements to the curriculum and to subsequent teaching and learning are now challenging all pupils' effectively reflecting in particularly an improved challenge for potentially higher attainers. The evidence from the inspection, however, indicates that standards are average overall by the end of Year 2 with pupils reaching above average

skills in scientific observation. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils who have English as an additional language.

57. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection. The judgements of the last inspection were that pupils' progress was unsatisfactory reflecting unsatisfactory provision. Therefore, in relation to this subject, this inspection shows that the school has turned a weakness into a strength. This has been achieved by good leadership, an effective review and improvement of the planned curriculum and by a strong whole school commitment to pupils learning through practical investigation.
58. The consistent good quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is the key factor promoting the pupils' good achievement. All the pupils, including higher attainers, those with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, are fully included in lessons and enjoy equal access to the 'open-ended' investigations which enable them to learn effectively at the level that appropriately matches their ability. The teachers introduce, set up, support and review meaningful investigations for the pupils. With very good support from teaching assistants they question pupils individually and in groups, encouraging them to look closely, to think and increasingly to predict outcomes. This has a beneficial impact on their learning. The pupils in Year 1, for example, develop their observational skills well, by observing plants and seeds and know that changes take place, as seeds germinate. The pupils show average skills when setting up experiments to test what plants need to grow and increasingly make choices as to how to do this. Several accurately predict what will happen, and an increasing number show above average understanding. The pupils enjoy their work and show respect when dissecting flowers to study the constituent parts. When questioned the pupils readily identified key feature such as petals, stamen and filament reflecting their improving knowledge and good achievement.
59. Pupils in Year 2 move onto making their tests fair, by ensuring that variables are controlled appropriately, for example, when testing how far toy cars can travel on different surfaces and on different inclines. Most show average skills and an increasing number are beginning to exceed this standard and can explain in detail how they made their tests fair, what outcomes they expected and why their predictions were either accurate or incorrect. The teachers' increasing emphasis on using appropriate scientific language was also evident in the pupils' recorded work and is also contributing to the rise in standards.
60. Teaching and learning in lessons seen were consistently good. Lessons in Year 1 were typified by clear instruction, precise scientific language and good use of resources to aid learning. When observing flowers, for example, learning was enriched by the plentiful supply and good range of different flowers provided. Teachers and teaching assistants questioned the pupils closely to support their understanding and to build on their previous learning. Teaching in Year 2 was supported by appropriate challenge and expectation. Work on forces was extended by good links with other subjects, with mathematics for example, when measuring how far toy cars travelled. The challenge offered matched the pupils' previous attainment well and enabled the pupils to progress well in relation to their skills. For example, higher attainers focused more on measurement, middle attainers recorded their findings on supportive planning sheets and lower attainers were encouraged to discuss their investigations.
61. Teachers and their assistants are knowledgeable and are well-prepared and have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
62. Work is supported well by a good range of resources that enables all pupils to learn through 'hands-on' practical activity. Increasingly ICT is put to good effect in supporting pupils' learning. This was seen in Year 1 classes, when a 'digital microscope' was used to magnify the parts of a flower. The pupils reacted with 'awe and wonder' and were enthused to continue their work. Such experiences also contribute well to the pupils' spiritual development, and their willingness to share ideas and to work collaboratively during investigations also enriches their social development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The ICT suite is well resourced, contributing to pupils' good achievement.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps towards their good teaching and pupils' learning.
- ICT is well managed through the good leadership of the co-ordinator.

Commentary

63. By the end of Year 2 pupils reach average standards and their achievement is good. In one lesson pupils were confident in opening a 'paint' program and using 'drop down' menus to recreate a picture in the style of Piet Mondrian, and in a Year 1 lesson pupils showed above average standards in combining graphics and text.
64. The significant factors in the pupils' good achievement are the confidence of teachers in using the interactive white board, the teaching of only half a class at a time, which ensures that each pupil has full access to a computer, and the good quality of teaching assistant support. Teaching is consistently good. Lessons are well planned using the school's recently revised scheme of work that ensures a progression of skills. Pupils are well organised and managed in the ICT suite and knowledgeable teaching assistants give effective support and encouragement. The work in the ICT suite is supplemented by good access to computers in the shared areas in the class bases, each of which has a projector to enhance the teaching provision. This strengthening provision represents good improvement since the last inspection.
65. The school has had a succession of co-ordinators until the deputy headteacher took over the management of the subject at the beginning of the academic year. Good, consistent leadership is now improving standards. The revised scheme of work is well supported by new software and appropriate staff training. New assessment procedures have been introduced which have a clear focus on raising standards. The school has an informative web site that is regularly updated by one of the governors, who also, with assistance from the chair of governors, sorts out the 'gremlins' in the networked suite very effectively.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. ICT is well used to support other areas of the curriculum. In science pupils operate a digital microscope to project the image onto a screen. Data handling programs are used to record the popularity of their pets, and pupils word process their work, and use a 'paint' program linked to their art work. They use floor turtles to help them understand co-ordinates when looking at maps of the local area.

HUMANITIES

Geography was inspected in full and is reported below. Religious education was sampled. History was not inspected.

Religious education was sampled. Two lessons were seen and whole school and class assemblies were observed. Discussions with staff and pupils and a scrutiny of pupils' work added to the evidence collected. These showed that the subject is co-ordinated satisfactorily. Planning is good, meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and enables pupils to consider contrasting religious beliefs and practices. Teaching and learning is increasingly strengthened by the recent introduction of assessment criteria that clarifies the knowledge and understanding of pupils as they move through the school. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory.

Teaching and pupils' subsequent learning were underpinned effectively by the teachers' good knowledge of the subject, by their good use of resources such as religious artefacts and by the warmth of the relationships promoted. Occasionally learning was limited by the teachers' attempts to introduce and cover too many issues thereby confusing some pupils. Discussions with pupils illustrated their positive attitudes. Work in the subject is improving, however, and makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

Geography

Provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and benefit from the good improvement in provision since the last inspection.
- A good scheme of work and a good range of visits enhance pupils learning.
- Good management of the subject, clear guidance on the planning of cross-curricular work, and a focus on pupils using their literacy skills well to write about their experiences, have contributed well to raising standards.

Commentary

67. Pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 2 and this represents good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils who have English as an additional language. The visit to Herne Bay gave pupils a good opportunity to look at natural and man-made features. They collected shells and pebbles, which they later tried to identify, and understood that, while they were natural features, they could move. Teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan their work well, have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In a Year 2 lesson pupils contrasted Herne Bay in terms of temperature and landscape with seaside locations outside the United Kingdom. They responded to good teacher questioning with sensible answers.
68. The headteacher has taken over the management of the subject very recently due to staff changes. She ensures that the subject benefits from good direction. The planned work enables pupils to write about their visits and use writing as an effective means of communication. Year 1 pupils, following a visit to the park in their local studies, wrote to the park keeper with the features they especially liked and those that they felt could be improved. Teacher assessment has been introduced and a portfolio of work levelled against national curriculum criteria enables the teachers to use assessments effectively. Learning is enriched by a good range of resources and includes the developing and supportive use of ICT.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, music and physical education were sampled. No report is made on design and technology.

A good lesson was seen in **art and design**. The lesson was well prepared and managed, resulting in pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils, working independently, made good progress in creating face sculptures. Examination of some previous work, planning documentation and discussions with staff indicate that the subject is co-ordinated satisfactorily and the requirements of the National Curriculum are being met.

In **music**, a good singing lesson for all Year 1 pupils, along with a singing assembly for the whole school, showed the quality of singing to be above average. Songs were chosen well and pupils were quick to learn new words. Singing was tuneful and showed the dynamics of the different songs well. For example, 'be brave, be strong' was sung with just the right volume, force and expression.

Learning is enriched by the work of a visiting specialist teacher and discussions with staff and an examination of subject plans showed that co-ordination is satisfactory and planning fully in place.

In **physical education**, one indoor lesson in games was observed. A discussion was also held with the co-ordinator, curriculum plans were examined and photographs of a range of physical activity were seen. The quality of teaching in the lesson observed was satisfactory. The teacher demonstrated good knowledge, promoted warm relationships and used the teaching assistant well to support pupils with special educational needs. Learning was enriched by a plentiful supply of balls and by the movement possible in the spacious hall. At times pupils' learning was constrained by the teacher's efforts to introduce too many activities, limiting the pupils' ability to extend their skills. The pupils enjoyed the lesson, however, and their positive attitudes enabled them to sustain concentration and make progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area of the curriculum was sampled.

No specific lessons were observed, but the school has a good policy that explores issues through planned 'circle time'. These sessions take the form of whole class discussions where the pupils are encouraged to air their views about a variety of issues. Pupils often like to discuss relationships, for example. Assemblies seen during the inspection that included themes such as 'Special Occasions' enabled the pupils to talk about and explore their own experiences. Such discussions also made a good contribution to this curriculum area. The school's success in achieving awards such as 'Healthy Schools' and, in particular, the 'Inclusive Schools Quality Mark' also illustrates the quality of the work in this area of learning.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
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	4
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).