

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH BOROUGH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118301

Headteacher: Miss J Trickett

Lead inspector: Mr J Donnelly

Dates of inspection: 5 - 7 July 2004

Inspection number: 257036

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	251
School address:	Peel Street Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	ME14 2BP
Telephone number:	01622 754708
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D P Abnett
Date of previous inspection:	29 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

North Borough Junior School caters for pupils aged seven to eleven. It is situated close to Maidstone town centre. The area is one of unfavourable social and economic conditions. This is a two-form entry school, with 251 pupils on roll and bigger than the average sized junior school. The school has similar numbers of boys and girls on roll. Attainment on entry to Year 3 is average. There are 25 pupils with English as an additional language, which is above the national average. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and there are small proportions from other ethnic heritages, including the Nepalese army barracks. Pupils from this background enter and leave the school at irregular times which can not be planned for. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The number of pupils, including the Nepalese children entering and leaving the school other than at the normal times is high. Of the pupils in Year 6 in 2003 only 46 per cent were in the school four years earlier. Thirty per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, which is above the national average. Three per cent of pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs, which is well above the national average. The area experiences very severe teacher recruitment and retention difficulties. The school faces severe challenges which are very different from when the school was last inspected six years ago.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23637	Jeremy Donnelly	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education English as an additional language
32667	Elizabeth Coleman	Lay inspector	
31029	Peter Thrussell	Team inspector	English Art and design Geography History Religious education Special educational needs
33124	Bridget Trim	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Music Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

North Borough Primary School gives its pupils a satisfactory education. Most pupils achieve in line with that which is expected of them as a result of sound teaching and learning. Standards are below average in the national tests; however work observed during the inspection indicates that standards are average. The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- This is an improving school. Standards are rising quickly in the classroom.
- All pupils achieve well in their personal development as a result of good support by all staff; they demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- Tolerance, harmony and social development are promoted well.
- Pupils' relationships with one another are good and they demonstrate highly improving levels of confidence, self-esteem and good behaviour.
- Too few opportunities are given for pupils to investigate and learn through practical activities.
- The assessment at the end of each lesson of what pupils have learnt lacks rigour and does not inform the next stage of learning. As a result, the match of work to pupils' learning needs lacks definition.

Since the previous inspection, in May 1998, the school has made sound progress in spite of severe difficulties of recruitment and retention of staff. The statutory requirements identified then have now been addressed. Teaching and learning are now improved. The headteacher and governors have addressed the minor weaknesses and issues identified in the previous report.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The achievement of pupils, including almost a third identified as having special educational needs, is satisfactory.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E	C	D	D
Mathematics	E	D	E	E*
Science	D	D	E	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Standards in the pupils' work and in lessons are average and improving rapidly. Standards at the end of Year 6 in the 2003 national tests were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, standards were below in English, well below average in science and were in the bottom five per cent nationally in mathematics. Standards are average at the start of Year 3, but many pupils leave or join the school before the national tests in Year 6. This means that comparing the results is unreliable, and does not reflect the school's effectiveness. A large number of pupils who join late have low attainment. Their progress is satisfactory. Given this very high mobility, the high number of pupils who have learning difficulties, or who have English as an additional language, achievement is satisfactory, overall. Standards in all

the other subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education, are broadly satisfactory.

The pupils' personal qualities are developed well. Their spiritual, moral and social and cultural developments are good, overall. The pupils behave well and have good attitudes to their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils and the promotion of tolerance and respect for other cultures are also good. Pupils' attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is sound, overall, and, as a result, all pupils learn satisfactorily. Teaching is consistently good in Year 6, where the best teaching is in mathematics and English. Assessment is unsatisfactory, overall.

The quality of care and guidance given to pupils is good. The curriculum provided is satisfactory, with a good range of after-school clubs. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is good. Governance is sound. The school faces severe challenges that are very different from those when the school was last inspected six years ago.

Key governors and senior managers have a good knowledge of what works well and what needs improving, yet have not always taken the necessary action to secure improvement. However, they are now clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning even further. The school is in an area with significant difficulties regarding teacher recruitment and retention, and these factors have slowed its rate of progress. The support staff are effective and provide good support for pupils' learning and pastoral care. The headteacher has been successful in building a motivated team who are now focused on raising standards. The governors ensure that the school meets statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils are generally supportive of the school. However, significant numbers have concerns about the length of some lessons, which they say are too long. Parents feel the pupils are well taught, but they have justifiable concerns about the effect on pupils of the very high turnover of staff. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about their teachers and the clubs after school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

1. Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by using assessment more effectively in order to:
 - Improve the challenge in lessons where work set is not always matched to pupils' needs
 - Improve the assessment of pupils gains at the end of each lesson to inform the next stage of learning
2. Raise standards in subjects, such as mathematics and science, by increasing the amount of time spent on practical and investigative work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Rising standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Good monitoring of pupils' progress and the standards they attain is now having a positive outcome in the average standards attained in the classroom. This has yet to have an impact in the national tests at the end of Year 6.
- Previous high staff turnover had led to discontinuity in education.
- The targets set for the high number of pupils with learning difficulties and pupils who have English as an additional language are met consistently.
- The high mobility of pupils many from the local armed forces barracks, adversely affects progress and learning.
- Planning does not always build on what pupils have learned previously.

COMMENTARY

1. Standards observed in lessons, in pupils' books and from the detailed tracking of the standards attained by individual pupils, indicate that overall standards are average and rapidly improving. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory; pupils of all abilities, gender and ethnicity, and those learning English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. At the end of Year 6, in the national tests in 2003, standards were below average in English, and well below average in mathematics and science. There is no consistent difference between the test results of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve soundly in relation to their targets.
2. Standards have recently been below average and, in some cases, such as mathematics and science, well below. However, standards have been rising due to consistent teaching and learning from a stable and well-motivated team under the good leadership of the newly appointed headteacher. Currently, inspectors found standards of work to be average in English, mathematics and science. The school has been plagued by teacher recruitment, leading to a high turnover of staff and instability in continuity of teaching and learning. There are also large numbers of pupils who enter and leave the school in the middle of their education, so the school does not have the chance to educate them continuously from Year 3 to Year 6. All these factors have a significantly adverse effect on sustaining higher standards.
3. Standards in English mathematics and science are currently rising because of the school's focus on teaching and learning, which is particularly effective in Year 6 and over Years 3 to 6 is always satisfactory and sometimes better, overall. Earlier cohorts as indicated in the national test results, experienced a less successful experience due to the severe difficulties of teacher recruitment during their time at school. This is not the case now.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.0 (27.4)	26.8 (27.0)

Mathematics	24.1 (26.4)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	27.1 (28.2)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 62 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In comparison with similar schools, standards in the national tests in 2003 are well below average, overall. There are very significant reasons for this as described earlier. Of the 2003 Year 6 cohort, only a small proportion of pupils was in the school four years earlier, in Year 3. This is very high mobility. Many of the pupils who join the school at different times have a lower attainment profile than those who left. These pupils achieve as well as they should from a low base-line.
5. The trend of improvement over the last four years is in line with the national trend and is due largely to the good leadership of the school by the headteacher. Pupils with learning difficulties make sound progress in these subjects because of the good support they receive.
6. The standards currently being attained by pupils in Year 6, including those with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language, are better than those achieved in the 2003 tests as a result of more stable staffing throughout the school.
7. Standards in Years 3 to 6 in the last couple of years were not as high because of the high turnover of teachers that these pupils have experienced in the past. This not the case now and, as a result, standards are rising.
8. Literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory; standards in Year 6 are average. Standards in ICT and religious education are satisfactory. Standards in art and design are high due to very good provision. In all other subjects sampled, standards are close to those expected.
9. A very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs have specific learning difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs all make satisfactory progress and many make good progress against their individual targets. Their needs are quickly assessed, targets are carefully set for them and their progress is regularly checked. They are well supported by teachers, skilled and dedicated teaching assistants, a part-time learning support teacher working with pupils from Years 3 to 6, and good support from local support services. Teachers make sure that these pupils are fully involved. Tasks are not always matched to ability and there is an over-reliance on commercial worksheets but, when they are required to do the same work as other pupils, they are well supported by the teacher or well-trained teaching assistant. This helps them to be fully involved in lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance, attitudes to school and behaviour are good. Their social, moral and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has been successful in maintaining high standards of good behaviour.
- The school's moral, social and cultural ethos is positive.
- The school successfully promotes good attendance.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning but a few easily lose concentration when the content of lessons is not well-matched to their abilities.

Commentary

10. The successful maintenance of good standards of behaviour, in the face of a significant change in the school population since the last inspection, has been a key element of the schools improvement. Progress has been made and the school has introduced a comprehensive behaviour policy, the main provisions of which are well known to both pupils and parents. Classroom and golden rules are displayed in school and they are consistently enforced using a number of strategies, including appropriate sanctions and a variety of

popular rewards. Pupils whose behaviour is challenging are well supported. They are given good strategies to improve which are often successful. The number of exclusions has fallen significantly to one this year.

Exclusions

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	222	8	1
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	25	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

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

11. As a result of the school's expectations pupils are well-behaved in the classroom and around the school. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere and they are polite, friendly and confident in their relationships with adults. They co-operate well with teachers and one another in lessons and this benefits their learning.
12. Playground activity is lively, but inspectors did not support some parents' perceptions of undue bullying and harassment. When incidents occur they are dealt with effectively by members of staff and good strategies have been put in place, including the training of midday supervisors, moderation of activities and the lunch-time nurture group, to ensure that playtimes can enhance pupils' well-being and be enjoyed by all. Most pupils in the playground were engaged in structured games or interaction, making a good contribution to their social and physical skills.
13. Provision for social and moral development is good. The school has introduced a prefect and house system and encourages older pupils to take responsibility for the care of younger ones through "buddies". The school has developed 'circle time' successfully to promote friendships, support self-esteem and address social problems as they arise. A programme of well-planned assemblies reinforces pupils' good awareness of right and wrong and the school regularly invites community groups in to address such issues as drugs awareness and bullying.
14. Cultural development is well provided for and pupils make good use of local opportunities to participate in music festivals and theatre and to engage with the history of Kent. There are a number of displays of cultural traditions around the world and pupils' work shows good awareness of different societies. The group of Nepalese pupils are popular and play a full and valued part in school life. The school organises regular multicultural events days and plans a day to celebrate its links with Nepal through a number of cross-curricular activities. Pupils and language support teachers are co-operating in writing a booklet in Nepalese for prospective pupils, explaining how school the works and what to expect. A global citizenship curriculum is planned to open the eyes of pupils to the opportunities outside the confines of their immediate surroundings.

15. The school's assemblies at the beginning of the day provide a time for pupils to reflect on their thoughts, through stories and prayers often written by pupils themselves. The school invites outsiders to speak to pupils and there is a sound personal, social and health education programme. Pupils have supported charities that have meaning to them, including one cancer charity which supported a former pupil.
16. The school has been successful in promoting good attendance and this has a positive effect on achievement. Registers are maintained accurately and the school has appointed an attendance officer to deal specifically with following up absences and late pupils. There are effective procedures to address poor attendance involving outside agencies to support individual pupils.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.9	School data :	0.0
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.

17. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school and relationships between pupils and their teachers are generally good. This creates an appropriate climate for learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education, including the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning provided by the school, is satisfactory, overall. The school has satisfactory links with parents and the care and welfare given to pupils is sound.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching for children is consistently good in Year 6 because teachers plan and prepare lessons well, overall.
- Most teachers plan effectively and have good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well.
- Learning support assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teaching and learning in the Year 6 mathematics lessons, where pupils are grouped by ability, is good.
- Teachers' evaluation of what pupils have learnt at the end of each lesson is not used effectively to plan for the next lesson, as the match of work to pupil's abilities lacks rigour.
- Assessment information is not always used effectively when planning the next stages of learning.

COMMENTARY

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	1	10	16	0	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.

18. Although there have been many problems with recruitment and retention of teachers in recent years, the quality of teaching has improved as there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Parents are happy with the quality of teaching their children receive.
19. Most teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of the subjects they teach, are very conscientious, and plan and prepare their lessons very thoroughly. Teachers know what they want pupils of different abilities to learn and clearly communicate this to pupils. Lessons have a good structure. Where teaching and learning are good, teachers demonstrate high expectations for pupils; keep them working hard and set challenging tasks that get pupils thinking and learning. Questioning is often good, which ensures that all pupils understand the purpose of the lesson, and are clear about what they have to do. In Years 3 to 4, teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory but the scrutiny of work indicates that this has not been the case over time. The school is aware of the wide and varied needs of pupils in these classes and is developing an appropriately practical curriculum to match teaching more fully to the pupils' learning needs. The work sampled showed that there is a depth to the higher ability work recorded that is lacking in the middle and lower ability range. This is due to weaknesses in the match of work to ability and the poor language and literacy skills of some pupils who have English as an additional language. When teaching is good, pupils take an active part in their learning. In otherwise satisfactory lessons some of the work planned did not fully match the ability of pupils; for example, where there is an over-reliance on commercial worksheets, with too little emphasis given to the practical application of problem-solving.
20. All staff treat pupils very positively. All pupils are well included in their learning. They praise and encourage them to do well. This promotes good attitudes, which affects how well pupils learn. In most instances, the staff manage pupils' behaviour well, which means that pupils concentrate well on learning tasks. There are good trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils like teachers and learning support assistants and this helps them to tackle work with more confidence. Good support means that all pupils, especially pupils with special needs in each class, have opportunities to work intensively in small groups with much adult help. Teachers use individual education plans effectively for these pupils to ensure that they are working towards the targets identified.
21. The statutory test results are thoroughly analysed so that staff have a clear picture of pupils' attainment. This data is used to plan subsequent work, but this is not always consistently applied. There are very few examples of pupils being asked to correct their work and so learn from their mistakes in this way. Assessment information is not used effectively to inform the next stage of learning in some subjects of the curriculum and often tends to be too informal.
22. In most lessons, the teacher is well supported by a teaching assistant. Sometimes the assistant helps a child who has particular special needs or sometimes provides support for a group of pupils. The assistants make an important contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Assistants who work with pupils who have English as an additional language keep them focused on the lesson and provide invaluable support when these pupils are tackling activities.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leaders are developing more robust planning that meets the specific needs of the pupils.
- Good opportunities for enrichment during and outside the school day contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development.
- Some lessons especially science are too long and as a result the pace of learning slows.
- Accommodation is very well maintained.
- There is insufficient planning for different ability groups.

Commentary

23. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, with particular emphasis on English and mathematics. The school has implemented the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education and meets the requirement to provide a daily act of worship. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
24. There is insufficient planning for the different ability groups. In the light of the falling roll and the change in the characteristics of the school, such as increased numbers of pupils with special educational needs, the long-term curriculum plan has been reviewed and republished in time for next term. A concerted effort has been made in the new plan by the deputy headteacher to address the need to adapt the schemes of work and to make connections between subjects systematically in order to reinforce and consolidate learning. Despite the efforts of the leadership team the impact of their work in developing the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils has not yet been fully realised in the results at the end of Year 6 national tests.
25. The organisation of the timetable is such that science is taught once a week for a two-hour session and this is too long, especially for younger pupils. However, the policy is that teachers should use this time with a certain amount of flexibility.
26. The good quality displays in the classrooms and around the school celebrate all subjects of the curriculum and also a number of out-of-school activities, such as the visit to the Swattenden Environmental Education Centre, and also multicultural education celebrating marriage in the Christian and Muslim culture. Displays are designed by the teachers, who then liaise with the teaching assistant whose responsibility it is to make the display. This system is popular with the teachers and is working well. Some of the displays are inviting and interactive. There is a good use of books that enhance the pupils' own work, or other information on display.
27. Provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. A good feature is the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy in the classroom. The school has a high number of pupils with learning difficulties, well above the national average. The school also has a number of pupils with significant and challenging behavioural needs. It is to the school's credit that these pupils are learning as they should in the absence of specialist external support and monitoring to which they are entitled. The inspection team judges that these vulnerable children require more support than normally expected.
28. The curriculum is enriched by a range of activities during and outside the school day. There is a good range of clubs and out-of-school activities, such as the lunch-time nurture club in the network room, and also after-schools clubs, like sports, including rugby and cricket. Sports coaches and local "stars" have added their weight to these endeavours. The Friday after school choir, which is taught by a qualified teacher, is very popular. These pupils enter the Maidstone Festival, where along with other local schools they took part in a performance of "The Blue Crystal" in which two pupils had solo parts. The curriculum is further enriched through the special events, such as Book Week, through visiting Theatre Groups and musicians, which pupils say they really enjoy. These activities all contribute well to pupils' well-being, motivation and personal development.
29. The school has a satisfactory number of qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of all pupils and to cover the full requirement of the National Curriculum. The senior leadership team has provided training for all teachers to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and tracking of assessment in literacy and numeracy as part of the drive to raise standards in the school. Teachers are well supported by an adequate number of teaching assistants. However, too many support staff are largely deployed to support pupils' behaviour rather than their learning. The school has been plagued by teacher recruitment, leading to a high turnover of staff and instability in continuity of teaching and learning. The situation is now

stable and standards are rising, and all staff are united behind the good leadership of the headteacher.

30. The range and quality of resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory. A number of new musical instruments have been purchased that have enhanced the music curriculum greatly. However, resources for pupils to engage in active learning need further development. The resources for science are particularly noteworthy.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides well for the care, welfare and health and safety of all its pupils. It is a safe and caring place, where all pupils are respected and are given support and guidance in their personal development. The school is beginning to take pupils' views into account by seeking their views through questionnaires. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know the pupils well and care about all of them equally.
- There are good relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults.
- Induction procedures are good.

Commentary

31. The whole ethos of the school ensures that every pupil is well supported and valued. The school health and safety policy underpins the safety and welfare of pupils and staff. The committee of governors holds regular reviews of policies, including risk assessment and fire safety. Good emergency procedures are in place, based on Kent County Council guidelines. All staff have been issued and are familiar with their responsibilities and the procedures regarding Child Protection. New staff are made aware of the procedures as part of their induction.
32. All staff, both teaching and support, work together to ensure that the pupils know that each one is special and that personal development is at the heart of the school's work. The Gold Award assembly on Fridays is centred on individual talents and personal achievement. This is an opportunity for pupils to celebrate success in such things as swimming, ballet, sports and the arts. The pre-inspection pupil questionnaire showed that 20 per cent of pupils felt that they did not have an adult in school that they could turn to if they were worried. When talking to the pupils, the inspection evidence found that pupils in Year 6 reported that their parents said that problems at home should not be talked about at school. However, overall, the pupils were quite clear that the teachers and the staff "are really friendly and kind" and that there was always someone on hand to help pupils who were upset or hurt.
33. Teaching assistants give valuable support to pupils who have been identified by teachers as needing additional help. This support is provided for both individuals and groups, such as the lunch-time nurture group. Pupils' severe challenging behaviour are effectively supported by all the resources available in the school. The complex needs of a significant minority of these pupils require the full co-operation of many external agencies available within the appropriate authority. There is a new tracking system in place for monitoring attainment in English and mathematics, which is very successful in identifying where support is needed. This has had a positive impact on the results in the national tests.
34. Pupils' views are sought through informal discussions and questionnaires. The recent environmental project on the subject of pollution around the school grounds has given rise to a number of ideas that pupils will be presenting to the headteacher. They believe that their views will be taken seriously.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are satisfactory, overall. It has good links with the community, which enhances provision. There are also satisfactory links with other schools and a good relationship with the local teacher training college. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good information to parents and is approachable.
- Links with parents to involve them in the work of the school are underdeveloped.
- The school makes good use of community resources to enhance and support provision.
- The school has made good use of its close relationship with Canterbury Christ Church University College to make a positive impact on learning.

Commentary

35. In light of the challenges created by the significant changes in the pupil and staff profile in recent years, the school has made sound progress in its links with parents. There is good relevant information sent to parents on joining the school in the comprehensive prospectus. There are regular newsletters that contain school and community news. Parents' evenings and events are increasingly well supported and the school has introduced curriculum evenings to enable parents to improve their understanding of how to help their children at home. Annual written reports are in a clear format, informative and contain general targets for improvement. Parents report that they find the school and teachers approachable and many, especially parents of pupils with special needs, are positive about their involvement, although some feel that the school does not sufficiently take account of their concerns. The school recognises that this is an area for further development and is keen to involve more parents in the work of the school, either by supporting the Parent-Teacher Association or acting as volunteer helpers. It has introduced homework diaries to encourage more dialogue between parents and teachers. Inspectors were satisfied that procedures to deal with complaints are clear and appropriate.
36. The school makes good use of community resources to enrich and support provision in many areas of school life. The well-established links with local and county sports clubs have ensured the school's success in a number of different sports, and this is a source of pride among pupils. It enters many local competitions and community organised events. It has made good use of the extensive facilities available in the town to broaden pupils' horizons. It has a comprehensive programme of outside visitors to enrich provision and to give pupils skills in areas such as cycling proficiency and safety awareness. Business links with a local supermarket and the town centre manager are being developed as part of school improvement. The school is keen to play a central part in the local community and the new appointment of an LEA community development officer will support these links.
37. The school is part of a large cluster of schools which is presently being restructured by the local authority. This has led to difficulties in accessing some support agencies, which the school is working hard to overcome. However, established links with local secondary schools have meant that arrangements for transfer have not been disrupted. Pupils report that they have received appropriate advice on choice of schools and they are positive and confident about moving to secondary education.
38. The good links with the local teacher training college has meant that the school has been successful in recruiting sound teachers to permanent posts and this has had a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Pupils have also had the useful opportunity of learning from European exchange teachers. The school also makes a good contribution to teacher training, offering regular opportunities for work experience to secondary and other students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher is good and the many new structures are beginning to have an impact on standards in the classroom. The leadership of other members of staff with responsibilities is, overall, satisfactory. The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily. Management of the school is sound. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations as to what the school needs to do to improve.
- The severe challenges the school now faces are completely different from these when the school was last inspected six years ago.
- The provision for special educational needs is well led.
- A more stable and effective teaching force is being established, despite severe problems in this area historically.
- The governing body is aware of the challenging tasks that lie ahead, and is now more informed and able to contribute to the development of the school.
- The school improvement plan identifies the areas for development in teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment. The school is tackling these areas with rigour.
- New management procedures are in place and beginning to have an impact on standards in the classroom.

Commentary

39. The headteacher, in partnership with the deputy headteacher, has a clear vision about what the school needs to do to improve. Planning to achieve this vision and to raise standards through detailed monitoring of the standards attained by individual pupils is good. The school improvement plan is very comprehensive, and is successful in identifying the most important things the school needs to do. The level of information shared with staff about the schools' performance nationally is now appropriate. As a result, the plan shows clearly what needs to be done and explains the action necessary to be successful. Subject co-ordinators have produced good action plans that show improvements linked to raising standards. These show the school's drive to develop the role of co-ordinators and to create an effective working team that shares the headteacher's vision. The headteacher is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and she has rightly identified mentoring and continuing professional development to address these issues. Currently the school is leading a research project on improving teacher's knowledge of pupil's different learning styles and achievement. The headteacher's knowledge of her school is gained from firsthand observation of teaching and learning.
40. The school has established effectively a positive climate for learning. Parents indicate that behaviour has greatly improved over the last two years. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are keen to learn. Planned developments, particularly in English and mathematics, are linked to the careful tracking of pupils' progress and standards attained. After one year, there are indications that these developments are now bearing fruit, although further monitoring is required to evaluate their ongoing effectiveness.
41. In the recent past the recruitment and retention of staff has been challenging and has slowed the rate of improvement. A more positive picture is now emerging. Good links with initial teacher training institutions have helped with the recruitment of new staff who understand the school's particular situation and its needs. Good procedures for the induction of new staff, along with performance management targets based on monitoring and linked to both school and professional development, are helping to establish a more effective teaching force.

42. The provision for special educational needs is well led by the co-ordinator. The deputy headteacher has only recently taken over this role. She already has a clear picture of the range of needs within the school and how provision could be further improved. The school successfully supports the needs of pupils with behavioural and social concerns, but recognises that more now should be done to meet their particular learning needs more effectively.

Financial information

The school uses its finances wisely and seeks good value for money at every opportunity.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	675,311	Balance from previous year	1,200
Total expenditure	657,936	Balance carried forward to the next	17,375
Expenditure per pupil	2,277		

43. Governance is satisfactory, overall. However, new governors, including a new chairperson, are aware of what needs to be done to raise standards and has set about this task with vigour. They are now encouraged to review the work of the school and so to contribute to its development. With this information governors are now aware of the challenges the school is facing, and can now offer them individual and corporate expertise. This has not always been the case. The governing body ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the subject is good and is starting to bring about improvements.
- Assessment is not being used well enough to plan for all pupils.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- Standards are rising as a result of regular monitoring of pupils progress.
- Very high pupil mobility particularly in Years 5 and 6 which has an adverse impact on the standards that can be attained in the national test in Year 6.
- Too few opportunities for speaking and listening.

Commentary

44. By Year 6, overall, standards in the lessons observed are average in all aspects of English. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily. There are many significant factors to explain this:
 - A significant number of pupils in Year 6 did not start in Year 3 and have joined the school at different times, with varying experiences of schooling and wide-ranging levels of attainment.
 - This, along with a high proportion of special educational needs, limits the overall standards attained. However achievement is satisfactory.
 - In the past the school has found it very difficult to recruit and very difficult to retain new teachers.
 - The progress that pupils make is now regularly monitored and challenging targets are set, so that teachers are expected to know and to plan for the range of ability within classes. However, in some classes, not enough is yet being done to plan lessons more successfully for the full range of ability within classes.
45. Conversation with pupils shows them to be keen to talk about their school. Within lessons, however, the drive for effective classroom management and the resulting good behaviour, has to an extent curtailed opportunities for pupils to interact with teachers and one another, in order to further develop their speaking and listening skills. Too few opportunities were seen where the conclusion to lessons gave pupils sufficient time to discuss and evaluate what they had been learning.
46. The school now timetables daily guided reading sessions, where teachers focus their support on groups in order to develop pupils' better understanding of text and vocabulary. These sessions are successful for the group reading to the teacher and should provide a quiet reading time for the rest of the class.
47. Pupils' past work shows that they write for a sufficient range of styles, including narrative, poetry, instructions, report and letter writing. Individual portfolios of extended writing are now dated and provide a good record of individual progress for both teachers and pupils. Handwriting and spelling are taught consistently and these skills are sufficiently reflected in pupils' written work.

48. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers are particularly successful in managing classes, often with a nucleus of pupils with behavioural needs. The use of different strategies, including strong use of praise and encouragement, helps to keep pupils on task and to develop positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are generally well-prepared, with the required resources to hand, so that pupils can quickly settle to activities. Time targets are often given to help focus concentration and to let pupils know how much work they are expected to complete. Where teaching is better, greater account is taken of the full range of ability within classes so that all pupils make good progress in their learning; assessment is used well to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. This was evident in a good Year 5 and Year 6 lesson, where higher-attaining pupils summarised a story in words, using appropriate grammar and punctuation. Lower-attaining pupils had to summarise by sequencing a series of pictures. All pupils are treated with respect in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.
49. The head and deputy head teacher, working closely with the co-ordinator, have identified key areas for development in all aspects of the subject. These planned improvements, at the end of the first year of a three-year plan, set out a clear and comprehensive agenda for raising standards and achievement in the subject. Careful monitoring of progress, using end-of-year testing and other levelled assessments, is now providing a secure basis for measuring the effectiveness of these improvements. An analysis of records already shows some success in raising standards and achievement, although it has also identified some earlier underachievement in Year 3. There has been regular and successful monitoring of teaching and learning and this is now having an impact on standards in the classroom, but has yet to make a full impact on the results in the national tests

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Language and literacy are used satisfactorily across the curriculum. The school has begun to link language and literacy with other subjects in its planning. In some subjects, opportunities to develop pupils' speaking abilities are missed. Subject vocabulary is promoted well in some of the lessons observed in physical education, personal and social development and in whole-school assemblies.

MATHEMATICS

Provision is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- In the few lessons where work is not matched to pupils' different capabilities, the level of challenge is sometimes inappropriate, slowing the pace of learning.
- The very high number of pupils with learning difficulties, many with complex behaviour, achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans.
- The school is now successfully recruiting and retaining motivated subject specialist teaching staff.
- Standards are rising as a result of effective monitoring of pupils attainment from Year 3 to Year 6 and are average in the lessons observed.
- Teaching is consistently good in Year 6
- The very high mobility of pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is a challenge.
- Insufficient use of investigation and applying practical skills limits pupils' attainment in these areas.

Commentary

51. All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 6, pupils' results were well below average. Standards observed during the inspection were average, this is an improving trend as described earlier. More able pupils do not always benefit from challenging extension work. There is a high degree of mobility in the school population, which has an adverse effect on the standards. Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are sound and the school has continued to make steady progress since the previous inspection.
52. By Year 6, pupils calculate with numbers up to 1000 or so, but only a small number do so without error. Some pupils in Year 5 make errors in calculation because they do not know basic facts well enough. Pupils undertake work in addition and subtraction, as well as in a range of multiplication and division forms. Most have a clear understanding of fractions and they readily identify equivalent fractions and reduce a fraction to its lowest term. However, they are not all secure in the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils showed that they have a clear enough understanding of what decimal numbers are and how to use them in calculations. They name a range of irregular shapes and angles and most are able to identify and calculate many formulae and understand probability using practical applications. All pupils achieve as expected, regardless of cultural background or gender.
53. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Successful lessons are well planned, well delivered and briskly paced. Where pupils are grouped by ability in Year 6, and taught by subject specialists, teaching and learning are consistently good. Teaching assistants, when employed, are used effectively to aid individuals or groups of lower ability pupils and this has a positive impact on their achievement. In otherwise satisfactory lessons some of the work planned did not fully match the ability of pupils for example; where there is over-reliance on commercial worksheets with too little emphasis given to the practical application of mathematics. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are enthusiastic and the school has continued to make progress since the previous inspection. All pupils are taught in a good atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.
54. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the subject is good. Appropriate priorities for development have been addressed in the school development plan and in the monitoring of standards, and teaching is now helping to raise teacher's expectations, although this has yet to make an impact in the national tests at the end of Year 6. The leadership is aware of the emphasis which needs to be given to the practical application of mathematics in the classroom.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

55. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils use their mathematical skills well in history, science and physical education. They are given opportunities to practise their skills of understanding coordinates, making symmetrical patterns and producing graphs. Pupils can calculate the temperature and forces used in science and, in history they have a good sense of ordering chronological events by date.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is now successful in recruiting and retaining motivated teaching staff.
- Monitoring of the standards that pupils achieve and setting targets for individual teachers is effective.

- Pupil mobility is very high, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and often pupils entering the school have lower attainment than those who left. As a result, standards in the national tests are below average, overall.
- The high number of pupils with learning difficulties consistently achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans.
- On a few occasions, the tasks set do not always match the ability of individual pupils and insufficient opportunities are given for practical and investigative inquiry.

Commentary

56. Achievement is satisfactory for all pupils of different abilities. Standards in the lessons observed and in pupils books are average. This has yet to have an impact on the national tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils enter the school with average knowledge and understanding of science. Currently, work in Year 3 is below average because expectations have not been high enough and also because of the limitations of some pupils in language and literacy skills. However, it is clear that pupils make progress as they move up through the school; for example, in Year 5 following an investigation using forces of varying strength on elastic bands, pupils were able to record their findings firstly on a chart, then to discuss and interpret the implications of their findings and finally to translate the information on to line graphs. The high pupil mobility and high number of pupils with learning difficulties and pupils with English as an additional language are challenges the school is addressing with vigour. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
57. Good attention to improving management and assessment of teaching have led to significantly better results than last year in the unconfirmed 2004 Year 6 national tests. The inspection evidence showed that pupils achieve well in lessons when the learning styles and tasks set meet the needs of individuals and groups. The work sampled showed that there is a depth to the higher ability work recorded that is lacking in the middle and lower ability range. This is due to weaknesses in the match of work to ability in a few lessons, and the poor language and literacy skills of some pupils who have English as an additional language.
58. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some elements of good practice. The teaching staff are now committed to school improvement. Teachers' confidence, increasingly high expectations and subject knowledge, are improving. Pupils have too few opportunities for speaking and listening activities. When teaching is good pupils take an active part in their learning; for example, in Year 6 they were clearly excited by the project on pollution around the environment of the school. They were able to use data to explain the results of their investigations in the light of their knowledge and understanding of their findings. They discussed with one another in a mature way their responses to sets of questions, distributed by the teacher, comparing the results of their findings with their earlier predictions. However, overall, there is too little emphasis on pupils' involvement in investigative and enquiry skills.
59. Marking is satisfactory overall but it lacks consistency. Marking is largely by means of ticks and positive encouragement. However, in some books pupils are told when they have achieved the objective and sometimes questions are posed by teachers but not answered by pupils. Only rarely are there indications of the next steps in learning. Assessment of pupils' learning is not being used to inform the design of tasks in subsequent lessons.
60. Leadership and management are satisfactory and are clearly focused on raising standards in science. He monitors and evaluates the curriculum through the teachers' medium-term plans. The present school policy, which allows for flexibility within the weekly two-hour session for science, needs to be very carefully monitored in order to ensure that there is sufficient time allocated to the subject in practice. In the overall drive to raise standards, work samples have been scrutinised and assessment tests for Years 5 and 6 have been analysed. The subject leader reports directly to governors. There is a good action plan in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Subject leadership is good.
- There is a good range of hardware and software.
- The match of work to ability in otherwise satisfactory lessons is an area for development.
- The school is successfully overcoming the many challenges, as mentioned earlier on in the report.

Commentary

61. Pupils of different abilities and backgrounds achieve satisfactorily. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when standards at the end of Year 6 were well below average. The reason for this is the improved coverage of National Curriculum requirements, which has been made possible by the improved range of ICT equipment. For example, older pupils now use sensors to investigate control of toy vehicles they have built. Boys and girls alike are included in all aspects of school life.
62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. In the few lessons observed in the ICT suite, teaching was characterised by good pace, enthusiasm, and high expectations by all staff. As a result, pupils were highly motivated in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. The good subject knowledge facilitated learning and challenged the more able. Where lessons are over-reliant on commercial worksheets in group work, the pace of learning slows to satisfactory, overall
63. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership is good. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how to continue and build on previous improvements. The co-ordinator is taking effective action in helping less confident colleagues further develop their skills by various support teaching. Good training has been provided for teaching assistants, who play an effective role in working with groups and with pupils with special needs. The new ICT suite is well equipped, and this has a positive impact on the standards they achieve. The co-ordinator is aware of the limited resources for control and modelling, which are clearly identified in the subject action plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

64. There is satisfactory provision, overall. The use of ICT in subject areas is developing well and teachers use ICT to support their learning in mathematics, for example, in databases and producing graphs; in art and design in the exploration of art packages; in design and technology in simple modelling and designing sandwiches; and in English in the presentation of work. The school recognises that more needs to be done in mapping ICT across the curriculum, developing cross-curricular links and in developing teachers' web site knowledge.

HUMANITIES

In humanities, work was sampled in **history** and **geography** but one lesson was observed. It was, therefore, not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in either of these subjects. However, examination of planning and pupils' previous work indicates that the full range of National Curriculum is taught.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop a good awareness of different faiths.
- The action plan for the subject shows clear areas for development.
- On a few occasions opportunities to develop pupils speaking and listening were missed.

Commentary

65. Standards by Year 6 are in line with those expected of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, as they were at the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily.
66. From the lessons seen and pupils' past recorded work, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where teaching is better pupils are challenged well. For example, pupils in Year 3 were asked to identify, from Bible stories heard previously, the reasons why some people did not like Jesus. Higher attainers were expected to record their ideas fully in sentences whereas lower-attaining pupils had, with support, simply to list them. Pupils study a range of different world religions and have a sound knowledge and understanding of their key features. In a lesson in Year 5, pupils were expected to compare the wedding ceremonies and customs of different faiths. Resources were well set out for this lesson, which required pupils to research from books, information sheets and the computer. Groups worked well together and showed a strong interest and positive attitudes in what they were doing, although some lack of secure research and note-taking skills restricted the progress made. One lesson seen relied too much on the teacher's own ideas and understanding, rather than developing the pupils' through careful questioning and discussion.
67. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear action plan for improvement, which includes monitoring standards, developing more links with faith communities through visits and visitors, and looking for cross-curricular links, for example, through art and design. The use of ICT is developing, with the use of web sites for research and virtual visits to different places of worship. The co-ordinator has yet to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

68. Work was sampled in **art and design** but no lessons were seen. It was, therefore, not possible to form an overall judgement about provision. However, examination of planning, pupils' previous work and displays indicates that the full range of the National Curriculum is taught.
69. It was not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in **design and technology**, as work was sampled but lessons were not observed during the inspection. However, it was obvious from the high quality displays of pupils' work in the classrooms that standards are at least satisfactory. In one Year 3 class, pupils were linking poems about monsters to the designs they were drawing in preparation for making working models of their chosen literary characters. The subject leader monitors teachers' planning and curriculum coverage. Assessment of pupils' progress and achievement needs further development. However, the subject leader submits a report to the governing body on a regular basis.

70. It was not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in **music** as only one lesson was observed during the inspection. However, it is clear that standards are at least satisfactory. Pupils demonstrated that they enjoy singing and can sing in tune. They were able to create atmospheric music through their composition of an eerie sound sculpture using percussion instruments.
71. **Physical education** was sampled. In the few lessons seen teaching and learning was good. There is a good range of equipment to support the curriculum and the curriculum is additionally supported through links with neighbouring schools and clubs within the town. The subject co-ordinator has a very clear understanding about what needs to be done to further develop this subject. There is no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

72. Only one lessons of direct teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship was seen during the inspection. There is an appropriate amount of time allocated by each class to the teaching of PSHE. The benefits of this can be seen in the good behaviour, attitudes and values shown by the pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	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	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4

The effectiveness of management

4

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