

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **SUTTON-at-HONE C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dartford, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118850

Acting Headteacher: Ms J Porter

Lead inspector: Ms R Frith

Dates of inspection: 14 – 16 January 2004

Inspection number: 258070

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	304
School address:	Church Road Sutton-at-Hone Dartford Kent
Postcode:	DA4 9EX
Telephone number:	01322 862 147
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D K Hicks
Date of previous inspection:	8 June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sutton-at-Hone Church of England Primary School is a larger than average size semi-rural school with voluntary aided status. It provides for boys and girls aged four to eleven years. Pupils come from a range of social backgrounds but overall, the socio-economic status of families is average. A few pupils receive free school meals. When children join the school, overall they show levels of attainment which are similar to those seen nationally for children of that age. Pupil mobility is relatively low. Currently, 47 pupils are identified as having special educational needs, including three with a statement of special educational needs. Those receiving regular additional support display autistic, speech, communication, social, emotional, behavioural or moderate learning difficulties or are hearing impaired. Most pupils are from White – British heritage. Similar to other local schools, Sutton-at-Hone has found it difficult to appoint new teachers and fill vacancies. The school received the School Achievement Award in 2000 and Investors in People in 2002. The school is experiencing an unsettled period of leadership as it is awaiting the arrival of its new headteacher after Easter. An acting headteacher took up duties in January and is in post for this term. The deputy headteacher has returned to school on a part-time basis following a serious illness.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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29695	J Lance	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs
28320	R Willey	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Physical education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Sutton-at-Hone Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education overall.** The atmosphere in the school is one where pupils are keen to learn, enjoy the activities offered and feel part of the community. This has been maintained during a period when it has been difficult to appoint teachers and there have been considerable changes in relation to key management posts. The school has been less effective in ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they can and there remain a few pockets of underachievement. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning for children in the reception year are good and they achieve well. In the rest of the school teaching and learning remain satisfactory. Although there are signs of improvement, some teachers do not use the information gained from assessing pupils to plan appropriately challenging work.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and this enables them to achieve well.
- In Years 5 and 6, pupils of average and higher ability are underachieving in English and those of average and lower ability are similarly underachieving in mathematics.
- Pupils' attitudes and values are very well developed. Relationships are very good and pupils behave very well.
- The school provides a good range of experiences and opportunities which enhance the formal curriculum and maintain pupils' interests.
- Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good.
- The school's links with parents and other schools are good and links with the community are very good.
- Some subject leaders do not have a clear understanding of how to raise standards.

The school has made satisfactory progress in many areas since the last inspection and overall has enhanced the climate for learning. However, a few areas identified in the last inspection report have not been fully addressed and consequently some pupils are not achieving as well as they could. These include provision for higher attainers in English, the monitoring of teaching and learning, the use of assessment information and the role of subject leaders.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

**Children in the reception year achieve well and in Years 1 to 6, most pupils achieve satisfactorily.** For the youngest children, teaching is good and the curriculum appropriate for their age and abilities. By the time they enter Year 1 most are working at the levels expected nationally for pupils of that age in all areas of learning and a small group work above that. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily in reading, writing, mathematics and science and achieve well in information and communication technology. Currently, standards are broadly average by Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, most pupils make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics but there are some pockets of underachievement. This accounts for the unfavourable similar schools comparisons. Pupils are currently working at average levels of attainment in English and above average levels in mathematics. Standards are rising in science and pupils in Year 6 are currently reaching average

levels. Most pupils are achieving well in information and communication technology and in Year 6 reach average standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall due to the effective support provided.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** Because the pupils enjoy school, are eager to take part in activities and have very good attitudes to learning, they behave very well. Attendance rates are satisfactory.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**Overall, the quality of education provided by the school and the quality of teaching are satisfactory.** However, significant improvements have been made in the provision for the reception age children and teaching and learning here are good. Teachers in the rest of the school have made improvements in the curriculum and in the teaching of English, mathematics and science. These have been particularly successful in science where standards are rising because teachers are now providing suitably challenging work and teaching the subject for a longer time each week. Pupils' learning in science is improving significantly. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection also indicates that there are improvements in English and mathematics but such recent developments have not shown yet in the standards reached in national tests. In some lessons, teachers do not use the information gained from assessing pupils to set appropriate work which develops learning well. There have been significant improvements in the curriculum provision and teaching of information and communication technology since the last inspection and these are enhancing pupils' learning throughout the school.

Staff have developed good links with parents and successfully encourage them to help with their children's learning. The school has good links with other schools and colleges and very good links with the local community. These help to enrich the curriculum well and offer pupils opportunities to develop additional skills. Staff ensure that pupils are well cared for and trusting relationships develop. Pupils are valued and their ideas and comments taken into account.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.** Leadership is successful in creating a good ethos for learning and developing pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships. It is less effective in raising pupils' achievement. Management ensures a smooth day-to-day running of the school. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their work is satisfactory overall although they have not ensured that parents receive all the necessary information.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents have very positive views about the school. They believe the school is well led and managed, teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard. Arrangements to settle children into school are effective, pupils behave well and learn to care for others. Parents believe they are well informed. The vast majority of pupils feel that they can approach a member of staff if they had a problem, and that teachers listen to their ideas and encourage them to work hard.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that the information gained from assessing pupils is used effectively to identify their learning needs and provide appropriate tasks.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders.
- Monitor teaching and learning to identify and share good practice.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all the required information is included in the school prospectus and in the governing body's annual report to parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Children achieve well in the reception year and satisfactorily elsewhere in the school. By the time they leave school they have attained average standards in English and mathematics and below average standards in science.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well in the reception year because of the good teaching and their good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning and many of them achieve well.
- Although pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reach average standards there are some pockets of underachievement in English and mathematics.
- There have been recent improvements in the standards that pupils achieve in science because of improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology.

#### **Commentary**

- 1 Attainment in the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 2 was average in reading, writing and mathematics when compared with pupils in all schools. Attainment for pupils in Year 6 was average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Over the last five years, the school's rate of improvement for pupils in Years 3 to 6 in English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with the national trend. For those pupils in Year 2, it was below the national trend in reading, writing and mathematics.
- 2 On entry to school, children show broadly average skills in relation to language, literacy, mathematics and social skills. Most achieve well because the quality of teaching and support they receive is good and they quickly settle in school. Staff focus on developing their early reading, writing and number skills within an interesting curriculum and progress is generally good. By the time they enter Year 1, most children are confident and aware of the school's procedures and staff expectations. The vast majority reach the standards expected for their age in all areas of learning and are ready to be taught in line with the prescribed National Curriculum. A few pupils achieve above this in their personal, social, emotional, mathematical and creative development, in language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.
- 3 The national test results for pupils in Year 2 in 2003 were broadly similar to those in the previous year, with a slight decline in mathematics standards. When compared with schools with a similar number of pupils receiving free school meals, they attained well below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This similar schools comparison should be treated with caution as the school does not present as those usually found in this category. Although there is a high rate of employment in the area, some families rely on part-time additional work to maintain their income. Teacher assessment in science showed that pupils attained above average standards. In response to these overall results, staff have focussed on improving teaching and the curriculum with an aim to raising standards. This is proving to be successful although insufficient time has passed for these improvements to show in the national test results in Year 2.



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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.5 (16.0)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.4 (14.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.1 (17.2)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- 4 The results of the national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2003 showed a fall in standards in mathematics which the school was anxious to address. Several strategies have been adopted to improve results and early indications are that these are bringing about improvements but there still remain pockets of underachievement in Years 5 and 6. This is reflected in the similar schools comparison, where pupils attained well below average standards in all three subjects. The school did not meet its targets for English and mathematics for the year 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.1 (27.1)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.1 (28.3)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.2 (28.2)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- 5 Evidence from this inspection shows some signs of improvement although there are still some pockets of underachievement. In Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning is improving, for example, in some mathematics lessons, and in reading and writing. Overall, pupils are achieving satisfactorily in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards are broadly average in these areas for pupils in Year 2. In Year 6, pupils are currently working at average levels in English and above average levels in mathematics. In Years 5 and 6, some pupils' achievement is not as good as it could be because the work set is not appropriate to meet the needs of all in the large classes. In English, some of the average and above average attaining pupils are not appropriately challenged, whilst in mathematics it is the average and below average attaining pupils who could do better. Standards have risen in science and are now average for pupils in Year 6. This is because the quality of teaching and the quality and breadth of the curriculum have improved. Insufficient time has passed, however, for these improvements to show up in the Year 6 national test results. Throughout the school, pupils are achieving well in information and communication technology, which indicates good improvement since the last inspection. This is because the quality of teaching and facilities have improved.
- 6 No significant difference was noted in the achievement between boys and girls during the inspection although there have been differences in the Year 6 national tests results. In 2003, girls did better than boys in English, mathematics and science and the school focused on developing boys' writing skills. Some improvement is evident, as there was no underachievement relating to gender seen during the inspection. From the information given by the school and through observation and discussion, it is clear that there is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils from different minority groups.
- 7 Pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude to learning. They are interested and encouraged to work hard. Many pupils make good progress and achieve well. In 2003,

several of the pupils in Year 6, on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, reached standards in line with national expectations. Others achieved in line with their ability. Inspection evidence suggests that broadly similar results will be achieved this year because the correct focus is placed upon their needs. Provision has improved since the last inspection.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to school and their learning are very good, as is their behaviour. Pupils' personal development is good and they develop very good relationships with adults and each other. Pupils have some very good opportunities to develop as good citizens. Attendance is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High expectations of behaviour and good management of pupils by all staff lead to an orderly atmosphere where pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the school.
- The very good relationships between the staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves establish a supportive environment for learning which helps pupils to gain self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy the range of activities the school provides.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is good.
- Some very good provision is made for citizenship, especially for the pupils in Years 5 and 6, which helps pupils to take on responsibilities and to contribute very effectively to the life of the school.
- There are gaps in provision for pupils' personal development, especially in opportunities for pupils to gain a knowledge and understanding of the diversity of cultures in the wider community.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are not monitored rigorously enough to improve overall attendance or to identify pupils with patterns of absence and lateness.

### **Commentary**

- 8 Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection, when it was found to be below the national average. The school promotes good attendance but does not follow up unexplained absences on the first day and does not have effective systems in place to identify pupils who have frequent patterns of absence or lateness and to try to improve this. There has been no contact with the Educational Welfare Officer for some time and consequently no support has been sought for families who have problems ensuring that their children come to school regularly and on time. Pupils' punctuality is satisfactory overall. However, the arrangements for Year 6 pupils to record information about pupils who arrive late is unsatisfactory and fails to reinforce for parents the importance of pupils arriving promptly for the start of the school day. There are still some parents who do not co-operate with the school to improve attendance and a small number of families who remove their children from school for more than the authorised number of holiday days during the year.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.4	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.*

- 9 The good environment for learning is a strength of the school. Pupils work in an environment which is free from oppressive behaviour, such as bullying, racism and sexism, because these issues are taken seriously by the school and pupils are encouraged to treat others with respect. Very good relationships between the pupils and between the pupils and the adults in

the school contribute to pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem and encourage them to work hard and not be afraid to make mistakes. Parents and pupils say that there are exciting things to do at school and pupils are enthusiastic about the range of activities the school provides. Pupils in Year 1 loved using a programmable floor robot (a 'Roamer') in a mathematics lesson and responded to the challenge to move it to different locations in the classroom. They learned from each other, co-operated very effectively and significantly improved their skills.

- 10 Pupils' behaviour is very good because there are high expectations throughout the school and the staff manage the pupils very well. No pupils were excluded in the year before the inspection. A strong emphasis is placed on being a good friend and thinking of the needs of others, and pupils develop good moral values and social awareness. Pupils have a very good understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Very good provision is made for pupils to develop as good citizens, especially in Years 5 and 6. The members of the school council represent the views of pupils very well and contribute effectively to the life of the school. They have identified aspects which could be improved, for example games equipment for use at playtimes, and have formulated plans to purchase these. Very thorough plans were proposed by the pupils for raising additional funds for this equipment. Older pupils have very responsible attitudes to their role in the school and take a pride in serving as 'buddies' and leaders of the school 'houses'.
- 11 There have been some improvements in pupils' personal development since the previous inspection. Pupils' moral and social development is now good and their spiritual development remains good. However, because the school still has no planned programme for pupils' personal development, there are still some gaps in the provision. For example, there is no plan for pupils to gain a growing knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity as they progress through the school. There are some very good 'one off' activities which significantly enrich pupils' experience. These have included a series of workshops for Years 3 and 4 pupils on traditional music and dance of Ghana. However, pupils do not leave the school with a developed awareness of the range of cultures within British society.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is good for children in the reception year and satisfactory elsewhere. The curriculum is satisfactory overall with good opportunities for enrichment. Pupils are well cared for and staff seek, value and act on their views well. Links with parents and other schools and colleges are good and links with the community very good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good for children in the reception year and satisfactory elsewhere. Overall, the way teachers assess pupils' work is satisfactory but they do not always use this information well to set work of an appropriate challenge.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good for children in the reception class and this encourages them to achieve well.
- There are indications that teaching is improving and this was seen in the lessons observed during the inspection.
- The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Teachers assess what pupils have done and how much they have learnt well in English and mathematics, in particular but some do not always use this information to plan work which matches the pupils' abilities.
- Teachers generally have good subject knowledge.
- Staff have high expectations of good behaviour and this helps to provide a good ethos for learning.

- Teachers gain the attention of their pupils in most lessons and encourage them to work hard.
- The expertise and support of teaching assistants are used well and have a significant impact on pupils' learning.
- The use of a specialist music teacher is helping pupils to achieve well during their lessons.

## Commentary

12 Teaching in the Reception year is good, and consequently children do well. They quickly become familiar with what teachers expect them to do and develop good attitudes to learning. Most achieve well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' learning over time has been satisfactory but there is some evidence to suggest that recent developments have improved the quality of teaching and learning in individual lessons. Some improvements have also been noted in Years 3 to 6. The chart below gives an outline of the quality of teaching seen in lessons during the inspection and shows that in nearly three-quarters, teaching was good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This shows significant improvement since the last inspection.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	5 (13%)	22 (56%)	11 (28%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.*

- 13 Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and demonstrate this well. Pupils, in turn, respond well because they are clear about what they should do and want to learn. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is often very good and this is a significant feature in how teachers manage and encourage the pupils in their care. When teachers know that individual pupils can do better they are encouraged to do so and if others show signs that they are finding their learning difficult, additional support is frequently given.
- 14 Staff generally know their pupils well but in some English and mathematics lessons teachers do not always provide appropriately challenging work. For example, in the large Year 5/6 lessons, pupils are set in mathematics and English so they work in groups of pupils with similar abilities. Whilst the teachers of these sets discuss the varying needs of the pupils and plan work for the three different sets, some do not take sufficient account of the still existing broad level of ability within each set. In some cases, the same work is given to all with additional support provided by the classteacher and teaching assistants. This does not cater sufficiently for the wide range in each set and whilst the support provided by teaching assistants is effective in many cases, different tasks would be more effective in enhancing pupils' progress and raising their achievement. Although teachers regularly assess pupils and have the information regarding their achievements, they do not always use this to set appropriate work. This sometimes leads to the situation where pupils are not clear about how well they are doing or how they can improve their work.
- 15 Teachers and support staff generally have good subject knowledge and expertise and use this to ask appropriate questions and respond to pupils' queries. Several show confidence in their abilities but a few do not. The school uses the expertise of a music specialist well to ensure that pupils receive good quality teaching as some staff do not feel confident in teaching this subject. Staff confidence and expertise in the use of computers has risen significantly since the last inspection and this has helped to raise pupils' achievement.
- 16 The school has improved some of its work with higher attainers, for example, in science. Here, they are receiving a more appropriate curriculum with tasks that encourage them to use their scientific knowledge and understanding to develop scientific investigations, record

their findings and analyse their results. In these cases, tasks are challenging and pupils achieve well. However, in English in Years 5 and 6, the work set is not always well matched to the pupils' abilities and consequently their rate of progress slows and achievement is not as good as it could be.

- 17 The school has invested heavily in teaching assistants to effectively support pupils with special educational needs. This means pupils can be taught in smaller groups with tasks to meet individual needs. The system is working well. Teaching assistants, allocated to particular pupils or year groups, work closely with the class teacher to provide suitable work for each pupil and carefully monitor progress that is made. There is a good match of support staff to the curriculum. A good example of this was seen in Years 5 and 6 where pupils dispersed for group work to six groups working with an adult, and then came together for a brief but effective end of lesson session. This helped to give pupils equal access to the programme of study.
- 18 The special educational needs record keeping is extremely thorough. Each pupil is screened and has a good quality individual education plan (IEP), which helps teachers to plan work at the right level. Almost all planned provision is good because it makes full use of accurate prior assessment and so tasks meet individual needs. This enables pupils to meet the learning objective, to make good progress and to remain positive about learning, which fosters personal development. For example, in a Year 4 additional literacy group, pupils sustained concentration because the task and resources were right for their stage of development.

## **The curriculum**

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum with a satisfactory range of resources. Pupils' learning is effectively enriched by a good range of activities and provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, as is the provision of resources.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support individuals or small groups of pupils with special educational needs.
- The very good match of support staff to the curriculum helps to provide equality of access and opportunity for all pupils.
- Foundation Stage children are well prepared for the next stage of learning.
- There is no whole school, planned programme for the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and so provision is patchy.
- The school provides good opportunities for enrichment through participation in the arts and other activities.
- There is no designated area in the school as a base for special educational needs. This makes it difficult to manage resources and develop some areas of support effectively. The annual budget is small.

## **Commentary**

- 19 Overall, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and the satisfactory breadth and balance of the curriculum is strengthened by the good provision for pupils with special educational needs. However, there is no central area for special educational needs so it is not possible to keep pupil files, information and resources in one place and at the time of inspection they were spread around the school. This makes it difficult to manage resources and develop some areas of support effectively. Resources are barely satisfactory. The limited budget does not make it possible to make planned provision as new resources in this

specialist area become available. There is, for example, limited use of information and communication technology programs.

- 20 The school has invested heavily in teaching assistants to effectively support pupils with special educational needs so they receive an appropriate curriculum. In addition to suitable training, professional development is encouraged. As a result, teaching assistants not only help to deliver the National Curriculum but lead literacy, music and ICT groups and clubs.
- 21 Older pupils are set for English and mathematics. During these lessons there is a very good match of support staff to the curriculum. A good example of this was seen in a Year 5 and 6 literacy lesson. Above average and average achieving pupils work with the teacher, while lower achieving pupils and those with special educational needs have additional support. In the lowest set, pupils work in small groups, effectively supported by six adults. Carefully considered deployment helps to give all pupils equal access to the programme of study. In addition, the school has a register of gifted and talented pupils and monitors their needs and progress.
- 22 The curriculum for children in the reception year covers the recommended six areas of learning. Staff use information from parents and other providers to plan for individuals' needs. This gives a good continuity in learning and prepares children well for the Year 1 curriculum.
- 23 Pupils' personal development is good because the school environment values pupils and encourages them to value others. Some classes have sessions of circle time (where pupils sit in a circle and discuss general issues and are encouraged to put forward their views) or citizenship and the school operates a 'buddy' system for new pupils. A school council has more recently been formed, which encourages pupils to have a voice and think about their school community. These good initiatives do not include every pupil and provision remains patchy as there is no planned whole school programme for the delivery of personal, social and health education. The school does, however, satisfactorily cover areas relating to sex and relationships education and drug abuse.
- 24 The school provides a good range of activities to promote participation in the arts and other activities. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision for pupils from the reception year to Years 5 and 6. Opportunities to dance, sing, play an instrument or learn a second language are well attended at lunchtime and after school. Good links with local secondary schools enrich provision with specialist facilities or status. The planned use of visits and visitors to extend pupils' experiences are incorporated well into the curriculum.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Provision to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Satisfactory support, advice and guidance are given to pupils based on the school's monitoring. Staff involve pupils well in the life of the school through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff know the pupils very well and have very caring attitudes towards them. These very good relationships support pupils very well and help them to feel happy and safe at school.
- There are good strategies to help pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem so they have the confidence to speak to an adult in the school if they have a problem.
- Induction arrangements for children entering the reception class are very good and help them to settle in well.
- The school council is used effectively to gain pupils' views of the school.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough to help pupils achieve as well as they can in lessons and in their personal development.
- The school's provision for child protection, although satisfactory, is not as good as it could be because there is no structured programme for pupils' personal development and no systematic analysis of patterns of attendance.

- Although satisfactory overall, improvement is needed in the governors' provision for health and safety by ensuring that all necessary risk assessments are in place.

## Commentary

- 25 The school has sustained its good care for pupils since the previous inspection. Parents value the very caring ethos of the school and say that their children thrive in its happy and friendly atmosphere. Pupils feel confident and secure because they are very well known by the staff and they have the confidence to approach adults in the school when they need some help and comfort. The school places an emphasis on the value of each individual and helps pupils to develop self-confidence and self-esteem very successfully through opportunities to take responsibilities in the school, to contribute to assemblies, to perform in front of an audience and to value their own achievements both in and out of school.
- 26 Children are supported very well when they start school and settle in quickly. They have some good opportunities to become familiar with the school environment and their parents have very good information which helps them prepare their children well for the transfer to school. Good links with local pre-school groups ensure that information about the children is shared effectively and that children's abilities and needs are identified quickly.
- 27 Some improvements are needed to ensure that the school provides as well as it can for child protection. There are some good procedures in place to identify and monitor concerns but patterns of attendance and punctuality are not analysed consistently enough to note concerns at an early stage and parents are not contacted on the first day of absence when no explanation for the absence has been received. The lack of a planned programme for the personal development of pupils also limits the school's effectiveness in preparing pupils for making decisions about their lives, including keeping healthy and safe.
- 28 The governors have an active role in providing a safe environment for the pupils, staff and visitors but there are still some improvements to be made in completing the range of risk assessments required to ensure that everyone working in the school is as safe as they can be.
- 29 Pupils do not receive as much guidance and support as they need because assessment of their achievement is not used effectively enough to help them to improve. Class teachers provide some good information about pupils' progress but targets for future learning are not linked closely enough to pupils' needs and pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they need to do next. There is no systematic monitoring or assessment of pupils' personal development and still no programme for personal, social and health education, which was identified in the previous inspection. As a result, the school does not have an expectation of how pupils' personal development should progress through the school and of the goals pupils could achieve by the time they reach the end of Year 6.
- 30 The school council is still at an early stage of development but is already being very effective in giving pupils the opportunity to express their views of the school. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that the elected pupil representatives discuss issues with their class groups and communicate well between the class and the council. Pupils are developing their responsibilities very well and the school is ensuring that action is taken in response to school council suggestions and decisions. This contributes very well to pupils' experience of citizenship.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The links with parents are good as are the links with other schools and colleges. These support pupils' learning well. Links with the community are very good and significantly enrich pupils' experiences.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The partnership with parents of children in the reception year is very good. It helps children to settle well into school and helps parents to support their children's learning at home.



- Parents are very supportive of the school and feel welcomed and valued.
- Parent volunteer helpers make a significant contribution to pupils' learning at school.
- The school makes very good use of resources in the community to enrich pupils' learning.
- Visitors from the community contribute very well to pupils' experience.
- Parents of pupils in Year 1 to Year 6 do not have enough detailed information about what their children will learn to help them at home as well as they could.
- The governors do not provide all the required information in the school prospectus and the annual report to parents.

## Commentary

- 31 The school has good links with parents. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and good formal and informal links between home and school which support parents well and help them to be actively involved in school life. The school is fortunate to have a large number of parent volunteer helpers who make a very good contribution to pupils' learning, especially in developing reading skills. Parents also contribute well to the enrichment of pupils' experience through their support for out of school visits and for after-school clubs. The school has some good strategies for seeking parents' views and responds positively to suggestions and concerns.
- 32 Support for parents of children in the reception year is very good. They have very good information about school routines, about what their children will learn and how they can help them at home. This good practice ensures that children settle well when they start school and that parents and staff work effectively together to help children learn. The information about what pupils will learn is much less detailed for parents of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 and limits the support parents can give at home. End of year reports on pupils' progress are good and give some useful information about pupils' achievement but targets for future learning are not specific enough and not all year groups have information about pupils' attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels. This means that parents do not have as much information as they could about how their child is doing and what they need to do to improve.
- 33 The previous inspection found that the governors did not meet their statutory requirements for the information provided in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. This is still the case.
- The school's results in national tests and the comparative national figures are not published correctly.
  - The school's targets for pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in national tests are not given.
  - Parents are not informed of their right to withdraw their child from collective worship or of the alternative arrangements which would be provided.
  - The name of the chair of governors is not given in the annual report.
  - The contact address for the clerk to the governors is not given in the annual report.
  - The date for the next election of parent governors is not given.
  - There is no information about the progress made on the action plan following the previous inspection.
- 34 Links with the community are very good and have improved since the previous inspection when they were found to be satisfactory. Parents feel that the school is at the heart of the community and has the characteristics associated with 'a real village school'. Resources in the village, for example the local church, are used very well to extend pupils' experience and contribute very well to their learning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were taken to the church as part of their work in art. They were encouraged to look closely at different features in the interior, to study the different materials used, to make rubbings and pictures of them and to reflect on their significance and meaning. This activity contributed very well to pupils' observation skills

and practical skills in art but also gave them some insights into the spiritual importance of the church itself.

- 35 Visitors make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Sixth form students from the local grammar schools work with the pupils as part of their community programme within their studies for the International Baccalaureate. They support pupils in sport and in modern foreign languages. Visiting groups contribute very effectively to pupils' experience of diverse cultures and visitors to school assemblies help pupils to understand the role people play in the community, for example the local Mayor.
- 36 Links with local pre-school groups are very good and contribute well to the way children settle quickly into the reception year. The links with other local primary schools rely mainly on sporting fixtures. There are some good links with the local Community Technical College and secondary schools and the school would like to extend links between subject leaders in the primary and secondary phases.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is satisfactory, as is the management of the school. Overall, the governance of the school is satisfactory, although governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties in relation to the information they provide for parents and consequently this aspect of their work is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are actively involved in school life, but some aspects of reporting to parents and of risk assessment are not fulfilled.
- Although leadership is only satisfactory overall, aspects of leadership are good because the headteacher has developed a shared commitment to succeed by all in the school community and a good climate for learning which is recognised by the parents.
- The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils are fully involved and valued.
- Management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and leadership is good.
- Monitoring of the work of the school at all levels is not as rigorous as it should be and has not identified pockets of pupil underachievement, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- A very efficient finance officer ensures that the school's budgetary arrangements are well maintained.

### **Commentary**

- 37 Most of the criticisms relating to the leadership and management of the school from the last inspection have been addressed. Successful strategies have been developed to raise the attainment of higher achieving pupils in science and mathematics but not in English, and this still needs to be fully addressed. Information and communication technology now covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils' attainment in the subject has significantly improved as a result of very good subject co-ordination and the training given to improve teachers' expertise. However, improvements in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and the use of assessment to meet the needs of all pupils have not been as effectively addressed. The school has identified difficulties in recruiting high quality staff, reducing financial resources, changing expectations, lack of resources and frequent initiatives which are not supportive of the recent introduction of the teachers' workload agreement as barriers to improvement. Inspectors agree that difficulties in recruiting teachers has resulted in large classes in Years 5 and 6.
- 38 The previous headteacher had a collegiate approach to leadership. This was demonstrated in the decision taken collectively by governors, teachers and headteacher for the composition

of classes in Years 5 and 6 this year. However, no-one was charged with responsibility for monitoring the effects of this decision and neither headteacher nor subject leaders did so. As a result, pockets of underachievement have gone unnoticed. He has been effective in motivating most staff, but not all, and in sharing his vision with an audience beyond the school, which included a strong commitment to the valuing of all pupils and ensuring their full participation. As a result, parents expressed the opinion that the school is well led and managed. The good organisational skills of the deputy headteacher would normally ensure that the vision was translated into practice but, as a result of her illness, systems she has designed, such as the performance management of teaching assistants, have not yet been implemented. However, the performance management of teachers and support given to teachers new to the school are good. Most subjects have a single leader to oversee provision for the whole school. In English and mathematics, however, there are separate leaders for younger and older pupils. As a result, these subjects have no-one in a position to oversee the entire subject curriculum and this is a weakness.

- 39 Leadership of the special educational needs provision is good, with very good management, although much of this is completed off-site in the co-ordinator's own time. The co-ordinator is only employed for one half day a week. The very good record keeping and appropriate training for teaching assistants helps to keep the support in place in her absence. In addition, the co-ordinator relies heavily on class teachers to plan well and monitor pupil progress. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how further to improve provision and presents as a good role model for other staff, with some helpful support for pupils that could usefully be used throughout the school. The school does not make full use of the knowledge and expertise of the co-ordinator.
- 40 Governors are very supportive of the school and carry out most of their statutory duties satisfactorily. There are numerous committees and working parties to ensure that the full governing body is well-informed about all aspects of school life. Governors enjoy an open relationship with staff, enabling them to question and discuss what they see going on in school. Also, the pairing of specific governors with a subject leader enables detailed information about the curriculum to be disseminated to the whole governing body. Consequently, they are well informed and very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which helped them identify the talents they should look for when appointing the new headteacher. They do not, however, meet all the requirements relating to reporting to parents or carry out risk assessments as thoroughly as they should.
- 41 Governors endeavour to manage the school's finances so that educational priorities can be achieved. They look to getting best value from their spending. They are supported by an experienced and highly competent Finance Officer who administers the school's budget efficiently. Financial arrangements are good and this is reflected in the last two audit reports seen during inspection. Appropriate budget allocations have been identified, and finance reserved, in order to complete developments in the school plan, such as the re-development of the outdoor area for children in the Reception year.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	735,310
Total expenditure	712,772
Expenditure per pupil	2,213

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	15,385
Balance carried forward to the next	22,538

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Provision has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Good leadership and management have resulted in significant changes in the curricular provision, quality of teaching and resulting standards. The curriculum is now well planned over the six areas of learning and relates to the national expectations for children of this age. Teaching has improved because staff are now clear about what they want the children to learn and use good assessments to ensure that the tasks set are at an appropriate level. Pupils with special educational needs have their needs addressed in this way and make similar progress to their peers. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall and the school has recognised the need to improve the outdoor curriculum. Plans for substantial redevelopment of the outdoor area are in place and work is due to start in a couple of months. Staff work well as a team and are reflective practitioners. They have drive and a clear plan for further action in relation to improvements in provision and the raising of standards.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and support is good and helps children to develop good behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning.
- By the time they enter Year 1, children reach standards at least in line with those expected nationally for children of that age and a significant number attain above this.
- Staff have developed good relationships with parents and this helps children to make a good start in school.

#### **Commentary**

42 Most children settle quickly in school and achieve well. This is because the induction programme is good and parents and children are clear about the procedures. Staff create a good learning environment where children understand the expectations of staff and the school routines. Children are encouraged to play and work together both formally through the tasks set and through the provision of resources which aid learning and develop relationships. Teachers make appropriate comments to encourage co-operation and the children quickly become aware that they should share and take turns. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and children respond well to these. Because of the positive comments which raise the children's self-esteem, and through the provision of activities which sustain their interests, children's good behaviour is maintained. A good range of tasks is offered with appropriate opportunities for children to develop independence through working without direct adult supervision. Their independence and learning skills are also encouraged during the 'Plan, do and review' sessions when children decide which activities they will work on and then say how well they have done.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children receive a good range of activities which develops their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- The quality of teaching is good and helps children to achieve well.
- Most children are expected to reach the standards expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1 and a few will attain above this.

## Commentary

- 43 The teachers have a good understanding of how children learn and the need to develop their communication skills on entry to school. They focus well on developing the latter through the provision of specific sessions or activities such as the creative play areas and small world play. Several examples were seen of children talking to each other well and also acting out a variety of roles. This was encouraged, for example, when the teacher entered the baby clinic and joined in the activities. In response to a child talking about a hospital man, she responded 'Do you mean a doctor?' and encouraged a child who was talking about baby 'stuff' to use the correct words. Children are encouraged to share books with their parents at home and this enhances their learning. Most enjoy stories and the older children can retell them in their own words. Children benefit from specific sessions when they learn the sounds that letters make. This was observed in one good lesson when the teacher used good examples to aid the children's memory of the letter name and encouraged them to make the sound of the letter. On entry to school, children develop their writing by learning how to write their names and respond well to opportunities through play, for example, when writing appointments for visitors to the baby clinic. Teaching is good because it recognises the children's needs and builds systematically on prior learning within a supportive environment.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and results in pupils achieving well.
- Most pupils reach the level expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1 and a small number attain above this.
- A good range of activities maintains the children's interests and reinforces their learning well.

## Commentary

- 44 The children's mathematical skills and understanding are taught during specific session, and consolidated through daily play activities. Most enjoy their work and respond well because they are interested in what they are doing. Their counting and number recognition skills were developed well in one good lesson seen when the teacher used a variety of activities such as number songs, drawing numbers in the air and encouraging the children to draw around their hands and number the digits. The teacher had a good understanding how young children learn and offered a range of tasks, each for an appropriate period of time, so their attention was sustained. In the same lesson, the teaching assistant worked well with a group developing their skills of sorting so that most quickly understood that they could sort by shape, colour or size. Support was given to two children who initially found it difficult to understand what was expected of them so that they too could eventually achieve well. Mathematical skills were also developed on a visit to a local shop as the children counted out the money and decided on the size of the nappies required, using the terms 'small', 'medium' and 'large'. Back in the classroom they further developed their understanding of size as they compared the nappies and placed them on the doll.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and the children achieve well.
- Children reach standards that are similar to those expected nationally for children of the same age and a few attain above this.
- Good links are made between areas of learning through study of a topic.

## Commentary

- 45 Through looking at the teacher's plans, speaking with the children and looking at their work, it is clear that children receive a good range of learning experiences and achieve well. Staff are particularly effective at linking the work so that areas are covered in a way that makes sense to the children. For example, the reception classroom was resourced well through the provision of a 'baby clinic' and a 'When we were very young' display. The former helped the children to develop an understanding of places in the community and people who are there to help as well as developing an understanding of the roles of parents and professionals. The latter was used effectively during lessons and helped to enhance the children's understanding of how babies are looked after and how they grow. In one good lesson observed, teaching was good because adults took the opportunity of the good adult/child ratio to take a small group to a local shop. The children were prepared well as they were encouraged to discover what was needed in the baby clinic and decided to take enough money to buy baby wipes and nappies. The staff took every opportunity to develop the children's speaking and listening skills, together with emphasising the health and safety issues associated with the trip. On arrival back at school, the children's attention was drawn to a rainbow and resulted in one child stating that 'you need the sun and rain to make a rainbow'. The children thoroughly enjoyed this brief visit to the shop and as one child said, "Going to the shop is a really fun thing".

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in specific physical education lessons, which enable the children to reach similar standards to children of that age nationally.
- Overall, the children's confidence is developed well through using a range of resources but the outdoor area is not yet fully developed to extend fully this area of learning.

## Commentary

- 46 The children receive regular opportunities to develop their physical skills through formal lessons which take place in the hall. They are introduced gradually to these lessons and the teacher's expectations. In the lesson observed it was the first time that the majority of children had taken part. Teaching was good and helped the children to achieve well because the teacher had a good understanding of their needs and anxieties. Plenty of encouragement was given as the children changed into their kit and there was a good balance between developing the children's independent skills and providing support when appropriate. High standards were set as the teacher explained how the children should walk to the hall and what they should do when they got there. Because the teacher demonstrated what she wanted the children to do and gave clear instructions, all understood and responded well. After a period of time which was appropriate for their age and ability, the children could follow instructions, use the space well and move by sitting, walking, standing and running. Some children were asked to demonstrate what they were doing and this raised their self-esteem as well as confirming the teacher's expectations to the rest of the class. Most pupils handle items such as scissors, pencils and brushes well. They are encouraged to use construction materials and enjoy using objects when developing their small world play.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children enjoy their creative work and achieve well.

- Teaching and learning are good and children reach the standards set nationally for their age.
- Specialist music sessions help children to respond well and make good progress.

### Commentary

- 47 The children's creative skills are developed well through a range of specific activities, often related to other areas of learning, and through the provision of resources which enhance their overall development. Once a week, the children are taught by a specialist provider with experience in developing children's musical skills and abilities and their responses to music. In one of these lessons observed, teaching and learning were good as the children responded well to a wide range of activities. These encouraged the children to work with others, thereby developing their relationships and personal skills, and to sing back their responses and develop their confidence and musical skills. All staff worked well together as the teaching assistant encouraged all children to become involved and the classteacher assessed the children's responses and their attainment.
- 48 Evidence of children's work and from the teacher's planning showed that children have good opportunities to develop their creative skills through making things such as a rattle for a baby, and painting and drawing, for example, when mixing paint to create their portraits. The children's creative skills were also developed well when they acted out roles in the imaginative play area which was developed as a baby clinic. All participated well, including the boys, who enjoyed using the resources, for example, when weighing the dolls.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a recent, strong focus placed on developing reading skills for all pupils and writing for boys and this is bringing about improvement.
- The good teaching and learning seen in some classes has not been in place long enough to be reflected in test results.
- Pupils have a consistently good attitude to learning.
- Assessment is good but it is not used consistently to plan appropriate work.
- There are pockets of underachievement for some older pupils.
- Lower achieving pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped as there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of work in classrooms.

### Commentary

- 49 In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, standards in English in both Year 2 and Year 6 were average when compared with all schools but well below those of similar schools. Children enter school with average attainment and achieve satisfactorily. In light of this comparison the school has recently placed a stronger focus on developing reading skills for all pupils and writing skills for boys. For example, in Years 1 and 2 there is individual and supported reading before group reading is introduced towards the end of Year 2. Pupils experiencing difficulty in Years 3 and 4 receive additional literacy support. Extended writing is promoted through other subjects. Inspection evidence suggests that these measures are beginning to make a difference. During the inspection there was no evidence of girls performing better than boys, even though they did so in the 2002 national tests. Pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are reaching average standards.

- 50 Teaching and learning were never less than sound. Good teaching and learning were seen in Years 1, 2 and 3 and in the set for lower attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6. This is an improving picture but is not yet reflected in test results.  
Good teaching and learning have the following features:-
- Good subject knowledge, with a clear understanding of the steps to learning. Learning objectives are shared with pupils, giving them a greater involvement in their own learning.
  - Good planning takes account of accurate prior assessment to provide tasks which are sufficiently challenging and appropriate for the range of ability of pupils.
  - Time is managed well. The pace is brisk. Pupils do not sit still for too long listening to the teacher, so concentration is sustained. This leaves enough time for pupils to work in groups, complete the learning objective and make progress.
  - Good use is made of additional support from teaching assistants, often teaching groups of pupils effectively.
  - In mixed age classes good account is taken of the different programmes of study.
- 51 Throughout the school, teaching shows a good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy, with high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards their work. Pupils respond well, sharing resources sensibly and working with partners or in small groups, without losing concentration. The subject is well resourced, especially in the quality and quantity of books.
- 52 Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve the quality of assessment, which is now good. However, there is inconsistent use of information gained from assessment in response to meeting the needs of individual pupils. It is inconsistent in Years 5 and 6 but good for pupils with special educational needs. Although improvement in provision and standards is satisfactory overall, this remains a weakness.
- 53 Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught literacy in three sets, according to ability. This gives a wide age range and high pupil numbers to each set, whilst limiting the range of ability to be taught. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that progress for some pupils in the upper two sets is inconsistent and pockets of underachievement remain. In both sets, literacy plans do not take sufficient account of available information to meet pupils' individual needs. Only one task is planned for the whole class. Sometimes, the planned tasks are too challenging and follow a Year 6 programme of study. Consequently, less able pupils within each set have the potential to underachieve because they do not always fully understand or follow the learning objective.
- 54 Year 5 and 6 pupils in the lower ability set achieve well and many are in line to reach the national standards expected for their age. Others will achieve in line with their ability. Pupils with special educational needs similarly achieve well throughout the school because of appropriately planned provision and carefully deployed teaching assistants. Overall, provision is usually good.
- 55 The two subject leaders have good subject knowledge and a clear educational direction. Appropriate priorities have been put in place to raise the standard of reading and writing but their roles remains underdeveloped. There are weaknesses in the monitoring of teachers' planning prior to delivery and the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure a consistency of provision.
- Language and literacy across the curriculum**
- 56 Pupils are beginning to use their language and literacy skills well in other subjects, for example in extended writing in history and geography. Planned provision to link subjects together is still developing.



## MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The current focus on investigational mathematics is challenging higher attaining pupils and raising their attainment to above average by the end of Year 6.
- Setting common tasks for pupils in the large sets in Years 5 and 6 does not adequately address the needs of all pupils.
- Although the assessment and tracking of pupils' performance is thorough, insufficient use is made of the information to guide curriculum planning or set targets for pupils.
- Good use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.
- Shared subject leadership results in no-one holding an effective overview of provision.

### Commentary

- 57 The last inspection criticised the lack of challenge provided for higher ability pupils. The school has addressed this effectively by placing greater emphasis on an investigational approach to the subject. This has stimulated pupils' mathematical thinking skills and attainment has risen as a result. In 2003, more pupils reached the higher levels in the national tests in Year 6 than in previous years. However, overall test results were average when compared with pupils from all schools. When compared with pupils from similar schools, standards were well below average. Current Year 6 pupils are likely to attain standards above the national average. Pupils in Year 2 are working at levels appropriate for their age and this reflects the results of the Year 2 national tests in 2003.
- 58 Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught jointly in groups of more than 30. The range of ability present, particularly in the middle and lower groups, is too great for all to be appropriately challenged by a common task, yet an analysis of pupils' books showed that the setting of such a task is often the case. As a result, there are pockets of underachievement here because not all pupils are working at appropriate levels. Nevertheless, a number of good and very good lessons were observed during the inspection. These were conducted at a brisk pace and consistently focussed on developing pupils' mathematical vocabulary and creating good opportunities for pupils to explain the strategies they have used to find answers. Overall, teaching and learning are, therefore, satisfactory.
- 59 There are good systems in place for assessing pupils' achievements and the school has extensive data on pupils' performance. This is not, however, always used well to guide curriculum planning and determine what pupils need to learn next. Group targets are set for pupils and often displayed in classrooms. Pupils, however, are generally unaware of what these are. Marking does not always inform pupils how they might improve their work.
- 60 Pupils with special educational needs are often well supported by teaching assistants and, where this is the case, achieve well. In some classes, teaching assistants work very hard to help pupils achieve a learning objective set by the teachers.
- 61 The subject has shared leadership. However, as the subject leader for older pupils was on maternity leave, it was only possible to observe the role of one subject leader. Her hard work and good co-ordination is restricted to the younger section of the school. Currently, insufficient opportunities are provided for subject leaders to fulfil their roles adequately, for example, in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and standards, and this is a weakness.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

- 62 Links with other subjects are limited but pupils do have a few planned opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other areas of learning. In science they produce graphs and

tables, and in geography, pupils in Year 6 tabulate data for their "Bluewater" project. Pupils use co-ordinates in map work and locate dates on a time line in history.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and pupils in Year 6 are now working at average levels.
- There is a greater focus on the investigative nature of science and this is helping to maintain pupils' interests and improve their attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are offered a broad curriculum and more time is spent on the subject than in the past.
- Teaching is improving and is currently satisfactory overall. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology.
- The role of the subject leader is limited and restricts her ability to gain a broad view of provision and standards across the whole school.

### Commentary

- 63 In the 2003 National Curriculum tests and assessments, pupils in Year 6 attained below average standards overall because the percentage of pupils with higher attainment were not achieving as well as they could. When compared with similar schools, attainment was well below average. Evidence gained from talking with pupils in the current Year 6 and through looking at their work indicate that pupils are now achieving satisfactorily and working at levels expected for their age. There is now no underachievement for the pupils of higher and lower attainment because the quality of teaching is improving and all pupils are appropriately challenged. This indicates an improvement since the last inspection although these improvements have not yet shown up in the Year 6 national test results. Teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2003 indicate that pupils attained above average standards for those reaching the level expected for their age. The work of pupils in the current Year 2 indicates similar standards and they achieve satisfactorily.
- 64 A significant feature which has helped to bring about improvements is the amounts of time teachers allocate to the teaching of science each week. This has meant that the topics are covered in greater depth and teachers now place greater focus on developing pupils' investigative skills. Pupils in Year 6 said they enjoyed 'doing' science more now than they used to when they were younger because the lessons are more practical and they learn how to develop tests and investigations. This, in particular, helps higher attainers, as this kind of work develops their independent skills and scientific thinking. Guidance is given in the front of the pupils' books on how to develop investigations and follow the process of scientific enquiry so pupils can refer to this as they undertake their work. Examples include work on how the movement of air affects the rate of evaporation and the effect of water vapour on a cold surface. Examples of how pupils use their mathematical and data handling skills are evident when they record temperatures and use graphs to predict future readings.
- 65 Overall, the quality of teaching is improving as teachers now plan more appropriately and provide tasks which match the pupils' needs and maintain their interests. This was evident in a Year 5/6 lesson when good teaching enabled pupils to achieve well and develop an understanding of terms such as weight, mass and force and learn to use force meters. Pupils achieved better than expected because the teacher knew her class well, set appropriate work and provided support so that pupils of all abilities could make good progress. The very good relationships evident in the lesson, together with the teacher's good use of humour and the pupils' good concentration, resulted in pupils responding well to the challenges set and working well together to achieve their results. The skills of teaching assistants were also used well and their contributions were significant features in developing pupils' learning. A relative weakness in the quality of teaching overall is the lack of planned provision for the use of information and communication technology. Although some teachers

encourage pupils to use computers when appropriate, their use is not systematically planned either to enhance scientific learning or the pupils' computer skills. Overall, teaching is satisfactory although there is some good teaching as indicated in the lesson above.

- 66 The subject leader has a clear understanding of how to improve provision in the subject and a review at the end of last year resulted in the changes in the curriculum and teaching which are beginning to bring about improvements. Her role does not encourage her involvement in analysing pupils' progress and attainment across the school. However, she is fully aware of the need to increase the number of pupils gaining a level above that expected for their age in the Year 6 national tests, in order for standards to improve overall.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The development of the ICT suite in particular and the overall quality and volume of resources acquired since the last inspection have helped to improve pupils' attainment.
- Teacher expertise has improved and, as a result, well planned and delivered lessons have helped to improve learning.
- The subject leader has a comprehensive overview of ICT within the school. Her clear vision is driving the subject forward.
- Class based computers are insufficiently used to support learning in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

- 67 Pupils' attainment has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was below average and progress was at best poor. Standards are now average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. This is, in part, the result of the investment in this area of the curriculum that has included the development of a dedicated computer suite. The recent acquisition of 15 laptop computers will, once the teaching assistants have been trained, allow skills learned in the suite to be used to support learning in other subjects within the classroom. Hardware, such as 'Roamers' and sensing equipment, has already improved pupils' use of control technology and they confidently use the school's video and digital cameras to record aspects of their work, especially when they are visiting places of interest away from the school site.
- 68 The teaching observed in the suite was consistently good. Teachers now have a very secure understanding of the subject and its requirements and are confident when using the information and communication technology resources. Their assurance gives pupils the confidence to experiment that, in turn, develops their skills. Pupils in Year 2, who were learning to use the 'fill' and 'spray' icons to colour their drawings, had no worries about making a mistake as they know how they could start again. Lessons are conducted at a good pace that maintains pupils' interest well and new techniques and procedures are demonstrated well. The good arrangement by which half classes use the suite in turn ensures individual access to computers, enables all pupils to be fully involved and enhances their learning. Well directed questions ensure that all pupils have understood each stage before the teacher moves on to the next, and pupils are supported very well. As a result, learning is good.
- 69 Much of the very good progress made in this subject can be attributed to the subject leader. She has addressed the concerns expressed at the time of the last inspection that the requirements of the National Curriculum were not being fully covered. Her vision for the subject, expressed in a detailed action plan, continues to drive it forward. She has established a support team within school to ensure that problems with hardware can be readily solved. The Vice-Chair of Governors plays an active part in this, as do two of the teaching assistants who are very computer literate. A scheme for assessing pupils' attainment has also been established and a portfolio of pupils' work is beginning to be

developed. Although these are good developments, teachers have not been using information gained from assessing pupils' work to improve their planning.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

- 70 Word processing software is used effectively to present work in an eye-catching way but classroom based computers are generally underused to research information for other subjects. The subject leader is aware of this and hopes that the introduction of the laptops will improve current practice by increasing opportunities for learning and the development of pupils' skills. The classroom situation is in marked contrast to much of the work done in the computer suite, which uses information from other subjects to practice new skills and techniques. For example, a lesson with pupils in Year 2 linked with their work on the Isle of Struay in geography and Year 6 pupils related their work to a geography topic about the shopping mall at Bluewater.

## **HUMANITIES**

Inspectors observed only one history lesson and three geography lessons. They also looked at pupils' work and teachers' planning. Insufficient evidence was gained to make a judgement on provision in these subjects.

### **History**

- 71 In the Year 4 history lesson, teaching and learning were good, as was pupils' achievement. Pupils were very interested in comparing modern day and Victorian schooling and were looking forward to a visit where they would act in role as Victorian children. The teaching was effective in maintaining the pupils' interests and developing their knowledge and understanding because activities were appropriate for the age and abilities of pupils. Standards of work seen in pupils' books were broadly average.

### **Geography**

- 72 From the geography lessons seen, it was clear that pupils in Year 2 are reaching standards appropriate for their age but insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement for pupils in Year 6. In a Year 2 geography lesson, the quality of teaching was good because it maintained the pupils' interests well and enhanced their learning of geographical features and the use of a map. Good links were made with literacy as the teacher developed geographical understanding through story. Features on a wall map were identified in relation to the characters in the story, and by the end of the session, pupils were clear about the differences between human and physical features. Most pupils achieved well. Work in their humanities folders showed that pupils in Years 1 and 2 had a satisfactory understanding of a range of countries, their climates, transport and currency.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

Only one lesson was seen in each of art and design, design and technology and music, and none were seen in physical education. It is not therefore possible to make a judgement on provision in these subjects.

### **Art and design**

- 73 It is clear from teachers' planning, displays around the school and discussions with pupils that work planned in art and design is varied and interesting. This is an improved picture to that at the time of the last inspection. The school is successfully developing an approach so that art and design is linked to other subjects. This was evident in a visit Year 2 made to the nearby church, where pupils looked carefully at the stained glass windows and then drew and coloured the designs. The good scheme of work is planned to give pupils a systematic

acquisition of skills. Lesson templates are carefully designed to help the non-subject specialist to teach the subject.

## Design and technology

- 74 A design and technology scrutiny of work showed that pupils are gaining experience of a range of materials and techniques and developing the expected subject skills through designing and making a variety of projects. Once again, a cross-curricular approach is developing. Younger pupils were observed designing paper boats that would float. This led to a valuable scientific discussion about the absorbency of newspaper. Older pupils had designed Victorian slippers and could evaluate their own and others' work. Written evaluation is routine at the end of a topic. This is an improved picture to that at the time of the last inspection. Resources are sufficient and the use of ICT to support learning is growing as cross-curricular skills are strengthened.

## Music

- 75 The teaching, learning and achievement in the lesson observed were excellent and justified the school's claim that standards had risen over the last twelve months. Also, in both the hymn practices, singing was tuneful, well-phrased and rhythmic with clear diction and intonation.
- 76 As at the time of the last inspection, staff generally lack expertise in teaching music. The school initially addressed this by introducing a music programme specifically designed to be taught by non-specialists and which included an assessment scheme to enable them to record pupils' learning and progress. A better solution, however, was found a year ago and the school now employs a part-time experienced musician who teaches Years 1 and 2 and 5 and 6. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught by one of the school's teaching assistants who is an accomplished flautist. This has ensured a consistent, knowledgeable approach to the subject that has captured pupils' interest and is raising standards across the school. The two music specialists also help the subject leader with a choir and three groups of recorder players, allowing pupils to enjoy a greater access to music than was available previously. As at the time of the last inspection, the school is well supported by the Kent Music School, which provides instrumental teachers for individual pupils.
- 77 Resources were described as poor at the time of the last inspection as there were not enough tuned percussion or multi-cultural instruments. This situation has been significantly improved. There is now a good stock of multi-cultural instruments, although the number of tuned percussion instruments is still limited. The subject leader has now identified the need for a repair/replacement fund to be established so that the current stock does not again become depleted.

## EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

### **A Year 2 class working with a specialist music teacher to develop an understanding of long and short sounds.**

What a dreadful start! Pupils' first attempt at singing "Good morning and how are you?" unaccompanied was awful. The singing by the pupils was discordant and flat. Having identified the long and short sounds within the phrase and been humorously persuaded to open their mouths fully and hold the long sounds, their third attempt was tuneful, perfectly pitched and achieved expertly within minutes. At this point the teacher introduced 'Sing a song of short sounds' accompanying the singing on keyboards. This nonsense song amused pupils, captured their attention and engaged their interest so they worked hard to perform it to a high standard. By now the pupils were singing so well that the teacher added a variety of instruments to provide accompaniment. He first asked pupils to demonstrate the difference between the long and short notes produced by their instruments, checked that they understood how sound is produced and ensured that every child had a turn. He then checked that they knew terms such as 'introduction' and 'conductor' before a final performance ended the lesson. In less than thirty minutes he had visited all aspects of the music curriculum. This excellent lesson achieved its learning objectives for all pupils, involved everyone and pupils enjoyed it immensely. It also demonstrated why music is so popular in the school and

standards are rising.

## **Physical education**

- 78 Physical education is valued throughout the school, and, from Year 1, pupils are made aware that physical activity is necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Training for physical fitness begins with circuit training for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and develops into participation in team games by older pupils. Outdoor facilities are good and other resources adequate and used well. The school has its own swimming pool and all staff are trained to teach swimming, which consequently enjoys a good level of success. By the end of Year 4, all pupils can swim at least 25 metres and all pupils have an understanding of basic water safety. A local high school supports the teaching of sport by allowing pupils to help to coach rugby and football. Many pupils belong to teams that compete in local leagues and three boys this year play for the District football team. In summer, the school competes in the District Sports Day. Adventure sport is a feature of the residential visit to the Isle of Wight by pupils in Year 6. Boys and girls of all ages enjoy a range of clubs associated with the subject, from dance for younger pupils to team games for older ones, and these help to improve the overall standard of physical education in the school. Although there has been no subject leader since July, the new acting headteacher has undertaken subject responsibility.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

- 79 There was not enough evidence to report on this area in full but one lesson in a Year 5/6 class was sampled. The teaching and learning here were satisfactory, as was achievement. By the end of the lesson, pupils had developed a sound understanding of the issues surrounding the effects of television viewing on children's academic performance and personal development. Overall, provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Although there are some very good aspects, for example, the way staff develop pupils' moral and social education, the school does not yet have a clear overall programme for personal, social and health education. Consequently, it is difficult to ensure that learning develops consistently over time at an appropriate level. Provision for citizenship is very good, particularly for the pupils in Years 5 and 6. By the time they leave school, pupils have developed a good understanding of their role within the school community through the school council. This helps them to understand the democratic process and their roles and responsibilities in improving the school. Pupils' work was included in the 'People in Action' display in the local Civic Centre, and through the Mayor's attendance at an assembly, pupils begin to understand key features of the wider community. Overall, assemblies make a good contribution to developing pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
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
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
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	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
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).*



