

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118288

Headteacher: Mr Jerry Jarvis

Lead inspector: Mrs Anna Sketchley

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 266462

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	212
School address:	Church Hill Boughton Monchelsea Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	ME17 4HP
Telephone number:	01622 743596
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Wendy Clarke
Date of previous inspection:	14 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> June 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Boughton Monchelsea primary school is about the same size as other primary schools and educates boys and girls between the ages of four and eleven. There are 211 pupils organised into seven classes. The school is situated in the village of Boughton Monchelsea some five miles from Maidstone. It is very popular and heavily oversubscribed. Most pupils come from the village itself although some travel in from surrounding villages and a very small minority come from Maidstone. The local area is more advantaged than the national picture although the pupils come from a wide variety of social circumstances. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is also below average and the majority of these are pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Almost all pupils come from white British backgrounds and there are currently no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. When pupils join the school their attainment overall is better than that expected for their age. The school has a number of awards. Most notable is their second International School Award for their links with other countries which makes a very significant contribution to the education offered by the school. In addition they have achieved a Green Eco Award for initiatives to improve the local environment and teaching pupils to be aware of global environmental issues, an Activemark for their commitment to promoting the benefits of physical activity and seek to achieve an Artsmark in the near future because of their commitment to providing a full range of arts experiences through music, dance, drama and art and design. In 2000 they attained an Achievement Award for their high test results in English, mathematics and science.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27225	Anna Sketchley	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, science, history, and geography.
9646	Geraldine Osment	Lay inspector	
11982	Ray Morris	Team inspector	English, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education and special educational needs.
18814	George Crowther	Team inspector	Mathematics, art and design, music, religious education and citizenship.

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Boughton Monchelsea is a good and effective school** with some very strong features. Very good relationships between adults and pupils, based on the family ethos of the school, result in pupils having very good attitudes and working hard. All pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and very positive environment for learning. The school is well led and managed with a great emphasis on giving pupils an all round education. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They behave very well and are very keen to learn which helps them to make good progress
- Pupils' results in national tests are well above average
- The new headteacher is providing good leadership and building well upon the existing good systems for managing the school. The governing body is very effective
- The quality of teaching is good and helps pupils to achieve well, but there are weaknesses in some lessons
- The curriculum is good and significantly enriched by a range of excellent additional activities.
- Parents support the school very well and this contributes to pupils' very positive attitudes to learning

**Since the school was inspected in 1999, improvement has been good.** The school has dealt with all the key issues from the previous inspection, with particular improvement in provision for information communication technology. Standards in English have been maintained and continue to be well above average. In mathematics and science they have risen from above average to well above average. Standards in a few other subjects have also risen. The very effective governing body and good leadership of the new headteacher provide a firm basis for further improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A	A	A	C
Mathematics	B	A	A	B
Science	A	A	A	A

*Key: A\* - top 5% of schools; 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.*

**Pupils' achievement is good.** When children start school, overall attainment is better than expected for their ages. In the Foundation Stage (reception class) children achieve well. Almost all children are likely to reach the goals expected nationally by the time they join Year 1, and many will exceed them. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science owing to good teaching. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 builds effectively on this, enabling pupils to continue to achieve well and usually reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. However, standards in the current Year 6 are not as high as previous years because there are fewer more able pupils than is usual for the school. Standards in art and design are above average. Time did not allow for

firm judgements to be made about standards in most other subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are fostered very well.** The school is particularly effective in developing pupils' self-confidence and promoting a mature approach to school. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to work and are very well behaved. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils are very caring towards each other throughout the school day. They feel valued and learn to value others through schemes such as the peer mediators and buddies which help to encourage friendships and resolve disputes. Attendance is well above the national average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good.**

**The quality of teaching is good** with some very good features. In the reception class, activities are stimulating and as a result children are eager to learn. Adults assess children's progress very well and use this very effectively to plan the next steps in their learning. Throughout the rest of the school most lessons are well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge and questioning skills. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils creating a very positive environment and as a result pupils learn confidently and quickly in most lessons. Where teaching is very good, the tasks are particularly well matched to pupils' needs, are challenging, and taught at a very good pace, which ensures that the pupils remain attentive and learn a lot. In a few lessons, although teaching was satisfactory, the pace of work was slow. On some occasions, teachers do not use what they know from assessing pupils' progress to plan work which provides a good level of challenge. Teaching assistants are effective so that pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

The curriculum is carefully planned and makes effective links between subjects and as a result pupils' learning in one subject is reinforced in another. Information communication technology has improved since the last inspection and is now making a better contribution to learning in other subjects. The school has made formal links with a number of schools in other countries and together with a very wide range of after-school activities this provides excellent enrichment of the curriculum, helping pupils to extend what they learn in lessons. The school provides very good care and support for its pupils and has created a very good partnership with its parents and other schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The new headteacher is providing good leadership and recognises the school's existing strengths but both he, the strong staff team and governors are all focused on seeking improvement to raise standards still further. The school evaluates its performance well but its improvement plan does not clearly reflect the priorities for action and how their success is to be measured. The leadership of subjects is generally good but subject leaders do not always fully evaluate what has been successful and what needs further work. Governors are very effective. They have considerable expertise, a very good knowledge of the schools' strengths and weaknesses, and provide the right balance of support and challenge.

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

Parents have very positive views of the school and the great majority feel that their children are doing well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel valued because the school seeks their views.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to build upon its current success are

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school.





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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Children in the reception class are taught well and as a result they make good progress so that by the time they begin in Year 1 most reach the expected standards for their age and many exceed them. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures that pupils continue to achieve well so that by the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average. Achievement is maintained in Years 3 to 6. At the time of the inspection standards in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, although above average, were not quite as high as in previous years. This is not because pupils are not well taught but because the current Year 6 does not have as many higher attaining pupils as is usual for the school. Standards in art and design are above average. Standards in information and communication technology are average. Other subjects were not inspected in detail but the work seen was judged to be at least average. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve as well as all others. More able pupils are helped to achieve well because of the enriched curriculum provided by the school.

#### **Main strengths**

- Children in the reception class experience a good start to school
- The achievement of all pupils is good in English, mathematics and science
- Standards in art and design are above average

#### **Commentary**

##### **National test results**

1. The school's performance in the 2004 national tests taken by Year 2 pupils in English was well above average. Mathematics results were very high and were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Teacher assessments in science were also well above average. Over the past three years results have improved at a faster rate than most schools. In comparison with similar schools in 2004 reading results were average but writing was above average and mathematics was well above average.

##### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004**

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.1 (17.9)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	16.5 (15.9)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	18.8 (17.4)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Results in Year 6 in 2004 show an improvement since the last inspection and have improved at a faster rate than most schools. Standards in English have been maintained and are well above average but mathematics and science standards have risen from above average to well above average. In comparison with similar schools results in English are average, but mathematics is above average and science is well above.

##### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 (28.7)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	28.9 (29.6)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	31.3 (31.3)	28.6 (28.6)

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*There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

### **Foundation Stage** (reception class)

3. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. A well organised and well resourced environment coupled with good teaching ensures that children have many good opportunities to develop a variety of skills across all areas of learning. The teaching of mathematics is particularly challenging and exciting and this encourages children to achieve particularly well in this area. The outdoor area is a particular strength and makes a significant contribution to children's very good progress in their knowledge of the world around them. The strong emphasis placed upon their personal and social development and very good support from adults gives all children confidence and helps them make good progress. As a result they make a good start to school and are well prepared for Year 1.

### **Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2**

4. Pupils' achievement is good. Good opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking skills help them to express themselves confidently in English and in other subjects. Reading is systematically taught and pupils have a positive attitude towards it. As a result they read well. In mathematics although pupils have a good grasp of number, shape and measurement and make good progress, they do not always practise recording their work and this is a weakness. Achievement is good in science because learning how to conduct scientific investigations is emphasised and pupils learn well through practical tasks. Pupils achieve particularly well in art and design because they build and practise their skills through a wide range of work.

### **Pupils in Years 3 to 6**

5. Pupils' achievement is good. In English initiatives to improve writing are having a noticeable effect on the quality of work. Solving problems and applying mathematics in practical tasks is a very effective method of teaching so pupils continue to make good progress in this subject. However, occasionally pupils are not given enough time to complete challenging tasks so do not achieve as much as they could. In science pupils are encouraged to record systematically and explain their findings through frequent investigations, ensuring that they achieve well. In art and design pupils capitalise on earlier skills using sketch books well to collect ideas. Good quality work is displayed around the school celebrating their good achievement and encouraging them to improve still further.

### **Pupils with special educational needs**

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the individual targets set for them and many attain average standards in all subjects by the time they leave the school. They achieve well because they are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Work is carefully matched to their needs and a range of resources is used effectively to enhance their learning.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' personal qualities are developed very well. Pupils arrive at school on time and their attendance rate is well above the national average.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' behave very well as a result of the school's very high expectations of conduct and manners
- Pupils' very good attitudes to school are reflected in their good standards of achievement
- Pupils' personal development is promoted very effectively
- Attendance and the school's action to encourage it are very good

## Commentary

7. Parents feel that behaviour in the school is very good and the inspection team judges it to be very good overall. Both in and out of lessons the pupils understand what is expected of them and they respond accordingly. In lessons teachers do not have to waste time sorting out discipline problems so they are able to plan interesting and varied activities that motivate and engage the pupils. This was clearly seen in a very good English lesson in Year 1 as the pupils identified the middle of a well-known story. In a good Year 3 English lesson the teacher had matched the tasks well to the needs of all of the pupils and they were kept busy learning about instructional writing. At lunch and break times the pupils take care of each other when playing games; older and younger pupils share the playground space very well. As reported in June 1999 there have not been any exclusions from the school.
8. The pupils are successful in their learning because they love coming to school and enjoy all of the activities provided for them. The previous report said that a minority of the older pupils are unable to sustain concentration; this is not the case now. For example, in a good Year 6 science lesson the class was challenged by the teacher when they were carrying out fair tests to measure how well materials muffle sounds. The excellent relationships between the adults and pupils and pupils with each other contribute to their very good attitudes. The pupils play and work together harmoniously and willingly co-operate with their teachers. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, high quality discussion took place between the teacher and the class as they investigated consecutive numbers.
9. All of the adults in the school show respect and kindness to the pupils. As a consequence the pupils are considerate towards each other and develop a good understanding of the needs of others. For example, they organise fund raising events for charities; Year 6 buddies take responsibility for the youngest children when they start school; peer mediators successfully sort out problems and the School Council is involved in school developments. By sharing experiences of the trips abroad, producing games to take to other schools, visits from European teachers and pupils and exchanging letters and emails the whole school is benefiting from the 'Comenius Project'. They are exploring and gaining understanding of different European cultures. The inspection team acknowledges the work that is taking place in religious education lessons to teach pupils about other faiths and religions, but together with the school, recognises that more needs to be done in preparing pupils for life in multicultural Britain.
10. Attendance rates are very high in comparison with other schools, which is a strong indicator of the very good support from parents for the school. The pupils are punctual for the start of school and lessons begin on time. The weather conditions were very bad during the inspection but as many pupils as possible endeavoured to attend.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1%	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.*

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

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. The curriculum is good and opportunities for enrichment are excellent because of the school's involvement with other countries and a very good selection of activities after school. There are very good partnerships with parents and good links with the village

community. Pupils are very well cared for and work and play in a safe and stimulating environment. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. All teaching in reception is at least good and sometimes very good which provides children with a successful start to school. Throughout Years 1 and 2 teaching is good with some very good lessons and one of excellent quality. Throughout the rest of the school teaching is almost always good although more consistently so in Years 5 and 6. There were no unsatisfactory lessons and only a few had minor weaknesses. The proportion of good and very good teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Assessment is satisfactory.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan interesting activities so pupils are well motivated to learn
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and because of this they give clear explanations
- Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support pupils' learning
- Teachers forge very good relationships with pupils which helps them to manage learning and behaviour very effectively. Because of this pupils have very good attitudes, work hard and achieve well
- Information about how well pupils are doing isn't always used as effectively as it might be to help pupils to take the next steps in their learning

## **Commentary**

11. Teachers make lessons interesting and practical. In an excellent Year 1 mathematics lesson pupils were engaged in a very lively game to learn about shape and in a very good Year 2 English lesson the teacher used individual whiteboards with pupils to help them to record and practise examples quickly and easily. Where teaching is at its best these activities motivate pupils and encourage all of them to participate fully in the learning. Lessons have a good pace, moving swiftly and holding pupils' interest. Tasks are correctly matched to pupils' abilities so that they are all challenged in their learning and achieve well. However, in a minority of lessons, although teaching is satisfactory and activities are interesting, the match of work to pupils' abilities is not correct. They do not learn as much as they might because the work, especially for the more able pupils, is mainly useful practise of what they can already do and for them the pace of the lesson is slow.
12. A significant and successful feature of many lessons is teachers' good subject knowledge. This helps them to plan very good introductions to lessons which form good links to previous learning and sets the scene for pupils' new learning. Skilful questioning means that pupils are sure about what it is they are to learn and how they are to carry out their tasks. At the beginning of a Year 6 science lesson about pitch, the teacher made quite sure that all pupils knew what pitch was so that they would understand the tasks, what to do and why they were doing it. This resulted in all pupils completing a number of experiments quickly and efficiently. They discussed their findings using the appropriate vocabulary because they had been reminded of this at the outset of the lesson.
13. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Their difficulties are identified early in their school life and teachers produce detailed individual plans to deal with their various needs. Teaching assistants and other specialist staff support pupils well and ensure they are fully included in the life of the school. They explain ideas clearly and sensitively and ask carefully constructed questions so that pupils make good progress. Pupils' progress is carefully checked as they move through the school and the information gained is used to draw up effective plans for improvement.
14. Behaviour in lessons is almost always impeccable because teachers have very good relationships with pupils, respecting their contributions in lessons and listening to them carefully. They manage behaviour positively and pupils are praised regularly throughout lessons. This in turn, encourages them to want to behave well and work hard and consequently they have very good attitudes to their work. Their very positive attitude and good behaviour makes a significant contribution to the consistently good achievement throughout the school.
15. Constraints of time within the inspection process did not allow for all subjects to be looked at in the same depth. However, at the school's request the inspection team did observe the teaching of art and design and found it to be very good in the two lessons seen. As a result of this very good teaching, pupils learn and achieve well and pupils' standards are above those normally expected for their ages. The lessons were characterised by very good

subject knowledge, exciting tasks and good pace and challenge. A lively, humorous and confident introduction from the teacher together with a very good knowledge of art skills all contributed to Year 2 pupils riveted attention when learning how to use their view finders made in a previous lesson. Other subjects were linked successfully with art, for example, information and communication technology, enhancing both subjects and broadening pupils' experience and skills.

16. The school has considerable information about pupils' progress, especially in national tests, and has taken steps to have this analysed to help them use it to plan for improvement. However, although it is used in English and mathematics to set targets for pupils to help them to improve their work, the targets are not referred to frequently enough in lessons or used consistently by all teachers. When questioned pupils knew their targets but because they are not regularly reminded about them they are not as effective as they might be in bringing about improvement. Comments on pupils' work often do not indicate to them what they should do to improve.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 25 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	7	14	3	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.*

**The curriculum**

The school provides a good curriculum enriched by an excellent range of additional activities. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is planned so that effective links are made between subjects and, as a result, pupils find learning interesting and enjoyable
- Pupils' learning is enriched very effectively by after-school clubs and extensive links with schools in other countries
- Teaching assistants are well trained and provide good additional activities for pupils with special learning needs
- The hall is inadequate for teaching physical education

**Commentary**

17. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum for Information Communication Technology (ICT) is now fully covered and the range and quality of additional activities to enrich pupils' learning is now excellent.
18. The curriculum is organised so that pupils' learning in one subject is reinforced in another. In a history lesson, for example, Year 6 pupils practised writing concise statements about life in Ancient Egypt using evidence from a photograph of an original manuscript. These were combined with a slide of the picture in a computer presentation so that their historical research skills were developed along with those in writing and ICT. The school has established formal links with schools in five other countries and all pupils benefit from the opportunities these bring. For example, all classes were involved in creating a board game that could be adapted for use in other countries, or in producing storybooks to send to pupils in another school. Their skills in mathematics, design and technology, art, ICT and geography, for example, were all used and developed in these projects. Because these links are a regular feature of their learning, pupils respond enthusiastically and with greater understanding to the activities set for them in lessons.

19. The school's emphasis on providing additional activities and a very wide range of after-school clubs, including music, art, French and sporting activities, helps pupils to consolidate and extend what they learn in lessons. Pupils benefit from a French club, for example, and weekly timetabled lessons for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Through songs, games and simple conversation they not only enjoy the challenge of learning a foreign language, but also begin to appreciate the differences and similarities in another European culture. This wider understanding of their world is further developed through the excellent links with schools in Europe and America which have twice earned them the International School Award from the British Council. In addition to the basic physical education curriculum, opportunities for various ball games, dance and swimming have resulted in the school being awarded the nationally recognised Activemark which acknowledges its commitment to promoting pupils' physical education and health.
20. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They are well supported by teaching assistants, both in class and in small groups or individually. As a result, they are fully included in all the school has to offer.
21. The cramped nature of the old part of the school's building restricts opportunities for learning in a number of ways. The hall is inadequate for whole classes to be taught gymnastics in it, for example, and the non-fiction library is too small to be used effectively. However, good use is made of the available accommodation. A small indoor swimming pool, a new computer room and a small school museum greatly enhance resources for teaching. The school is otherwise well-resourced and plans for a new building are at an advanced stage.

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

The school has very effective procedures to ensure the care, guidance and welfare of the pupils. Achievement and personal development are monitored well. The pupils have very good opportunities to express their opinions and have them acted on.

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

- The pupils are very well cared for and they are happy in school
- Pupils feel valued because their teachers seek their views
- The pupils are not always sure what they need to do next to improve their work

#### **Commentary**

22. The very caring environment encourages pupils to learn and to help them mature right from when they start in Reception. Induction arrangements are very well planned with local pre-school groups and the Year 6 buddies play an important role in helping the youngest children settle quickly and happily into school. First aid, medical support, child protection and health and safety procedures are thorough and pupils are learning to keep themselves safe through their science lessons and visitors who support their personal, social and health education. These include road safety, rail and community police officers; the school nurse for sex education and Theatre ADAD for drugs awareness. The school was criticised in the last report for open access to the pond and this has been rectified.
23. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings in lessons. For example in a very good literacy lesson in Year 2 the class was asked 'how do you know it's a "wow" word?' when they were creating their own poems. They responded 'it makes me feel frightened' and 'it makes my tummy feel funny'. Ideas from the School Council including drinking fountains and patio areas with seating are having a positive effect on the life of the school. Opportunities to have a voice and make a difference have a significant impact on pupils' understanding of citizenship and their spiritual, moral and social development.



24. During the inspection most teachers were seen sharing the lesson aim with the class. This helps the pupils to understand what they will be learning and when revisited at the end gives them a good idea of how much they have learned. Pupils are not always aware of their targets for learning and in some classes marking is not consistent or helpful in informing them of what they need to do next to improve.

#### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has a very good partnership with the parents and other schools. Links with the community are effective.

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

- Parents have very positive views of the school and are supportive of all it has to offer their children
- The annual reports to parents do not clearly inform parents of the progress their children are making
- High quality links with other schools, particularly through the Comenius Project, provide many benefits for the pupils

#### **Commentary**

25. Responses to the pre-inspection meeting and the school's own questionnaire show that parents are very happy with the school. They think it is caring and friendly and that the new headteacher is very approachable; they called it the 'perfect village school'. Some of parents at the meeting said that the amount of homework is not always well balanced or relevant but on closer scrutiny the inspection team judges the setting of homework to be satisfactory. Parents show their support for the school in many ways. They ensure their children attend regularly; they help in classrooms, on trips and with swimming and they raise large sums of money through the parent teacher association (PTA). The PTA holds a wide variety of well attended social and fund raising events including wine tasting and murder mystery evenings, bingo and race nights, Mothers' Day teas and children's discos. Funds raised have purchased computers, sports equipment and paid for playground markings.
26. Parents do not feel that they receive good information about the progress their children are making. The inspection team agrees with them because the reports do not give a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving or of the skills they are acquiring. However, the school recognises that reports for and consultations with parents about their children's progress is an area for improvement. Other information for parents is good. The new headteacher sends out a weekly newsletter, parents are sent guides for each class about the curriculum they will be studying and they are invited to information evenings and an open day to see the school at work.
27. The school works very closely with local secondary schools to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a wide variety of sporting fixtures against others through the Maidstone Primary Schools Sports Federation and the school hosts a swimming gala. Student teachers from Christchurch College Canterbury and secondary school students on work experience placements are welcomed. The school has established very close partnerships with others in Finland, Greece, France, Italy and Spain. Opportunities to travel to and meet people from many European countries and to experience other cultures are invaluable and have a real impact on pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Governance of the school is very good. The headteacher and other key staff lead and manage the school well.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Governors provide considerable support for the school because they carry out their responsibilities very well and keep a watchful eye on the school's effectiveness
- The new headteacher is providing good leadership because he recognises and values the existing strengths of the school and is taking the staff team forward in seeking further improvements
- The school improvement plan is not focused sufficiently on the most important priorities for development and does not make clear how success will be measured
- Subject leaders do a good job, and other key staff are being given greater responsibility for leading initiatives to raise standards
- Good opportunities for staff training are not linked closely enough to aspects of the school's work it is seeking to improve

## **Commentary**

28. The governors have a very perceptive appreciation of the school's strengths, and they are well aware of aspects of its work that need to be improved further. They have a very sensible view of the values to which the school should aspire. They support wholeheartedly the school's aim to provide a rounded education for all its pupils, in which developing each child's personal qualities is just as important as seeking high academic standards. They are keen to continue and strengthen links with the local community. They want the school to be a happy place where learning is exciting and fun. The governors are very well placed to fulfil their responsibilities for guiding the school's development. For example, in the very important task of appointing a new headteacher, they have selected someone who shares their values and will move the school forward in the manner and direction they would wish. The governors have very good strategies for keeping in touch with the day-to-day working of the school through visits and discussions with the staff. They also look critically at the school's performance through indicators such as the results of national tests, and are well placed to consider this information in its proper context. All these qualities, along with considerable individual expertise, ensure that governors have high aspirations for the school and provide the right balance of support and challenge for the management and staff.
29. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for only a few weeks. Nonetheless, it is clear from discussions with governors and staff that he has already gained considerable respect and support. From the outset, the headteacher recognised the many strengths of the school, and particularly the very productive team spirit amongst the staff – "It's unlike any other school I've been in because everyone works so hard for each other." The headteacher's considered evaluation of the school has influenced the very clear aspirations he has for its future. He is already making better use of the leadership qualities of senior staff because he recognises that they will play a key role in moving the school forward. He has clear and well-argued plans to use information about pupils' existing attainment to identify and support groups of children who could be making better progress. The headteacher is determined to lead this improvement in all aspects of the school's work.
30. The current school improvement plan does not provide a strong basis for helping the school to improve aspects of its work. Although it contains many appropriate targets, logically organised within aspects of the school's work, these are far too numerous and often too vague, to give clear direction to the action the school needs to take. For example, "To improve the quality of pupils' writing" is a laudable target, but the plan fails to identify the aspects of pupils' writing that are not good enough or to outline the precise actions teachers will take to ensure improvement. In addition, the plan does not make clear how the staff will know when they have achieved the targets because no indication is given of what success might look like. Both the headteacher and the governors recognise that the existing school

improvement plan needs to be sharpened so that it will provide a more effective way of marshalling the staff's willingness to seek improvements and raise standards.

31. All subjects have a member of staff, sometimes two, whose job it is to lead and manage developments. These teachers have good expertise and, in most subjects, colleagues benefit from good support and advice about planning and teaching. Most subject leaders have a good grasp of strengths and areas for development, often based on opportunities to look at pupils' work across the school and, in some cases, to observe lessons. Whilst subject leaders identify aspects of teaching and learning that need to improve, and set initiatives in motion, they are less skilled in checking on what has been learned and evaluating which initiatives have been successful and what needs further work. At present, there are no whole-school expectations for how this part of the subject leaders' task should be carried out. The deputy headteacher and other senior staff are influential, both as subject leaders and in leading important aspects of the school's work. For example, a very successful project concerned with developing a European dimension to the school's work has been led admirably by the deputy headteacher. Senior staff have the trust and respect of colleagues and are playing an increasingly valuable part in leading and managing the work of the school.
32. Provision for pupils with special education needs is managed effectively. Pupils' progress is carefully checked by a part-time specialist teacher who oversees the production of their individual learning plans. Advice is provided to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants support these pupils well. Teaching assistants have regular meetings with teachers to plan and evaluate specific activities for pupils and a member of the teaching staff is responsible for ensuring that their training needs are identified and that courses and help are made available to meet them.
33. The school has good systems for evaluating and managing its performance. Well-established procedures for self-evaluation detect aspects of pupils' achievement that need to be strengthened. The headteacher's evaluation of the school, carried out before the inspection in partnership with staff and governors, is very close to the inspection team's view. Data about pupils' performance in national tests is analysed carefully by the school and weaknesses are acted upon. For example, there is now a far greater emphasis on pupils' using and applying their skills in mathematics, particularly in Years 5 and 6, because it was identified as a weaker aspect of pupils' work. Performance management for teachers is well established, but targets referring to the progress pupils' should make are not specific enough. Teachers and support staff say they have plenty of opportunities for further training and, in areas such as ICT, this has been successful. The school recognises, however, that opportunities for training need to be linked more closely to priorities in the school improvement plan, so staff are focused on the most important areas for development. The most recently appointed teacher has been very well supported during in her induction year and has found the support of a senior colleague invaluable. The school's finances are managed prudently and effectively with the current surplus earmarked for planned building work.
34. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in strengthening the leadership and management of the school. Governors, in particular, have improved the effectiveness of their work significantly. There remain, however, weaknesses in planning for school improvement and checking on the success of measures to raise standards. The school has a very positive attitude towards seeking ways to improve pupils' achievement further, which gives it a good capacity for future improvement.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	580,667	Balance from previous year	54,470

Total expenditure	531,433
Expenditure per pupil	2,567

Balance carried forward to the next	49,234
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## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE (reception class)**

35. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall, with some very good features. This enables all children to make a successful start at the school. All children are currently fulltime but some did not join the class until January. Most children start school with average or above average knowledge and skills for their ages. The year group as a whole is therefore judged to have above average attainment on entry to school.
36. The leadership and management of this area of the school are good. Very good relationships amongst all adults help promote a family ethos and ensure that children are very well cared for. Teaching is good and as a result children achieve well. All are likely to meet the expected goals for learning and many will exceed them by the time they reach Year 1.
37. Assessment is very good. Individual profiles are very comprehensive and show clearly what children can do on a daily basis. This enables the teacher to respond regularly to each child's needs when planning the next stage in their learning. Very good organisation and resources enhance opportunities for learning to play, co-operate and share together and encourage children to take advantage of all that is on offer. The classroom provides activities that are stimulating and fun within a very happy and secure environment. As a result children are eager to learn. Occasionally, when children have a choice, opportunities are missed in the teaching to structure some activities so that they relate more definitely to the main learning intention of the lesson.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good
- Adults are very good role models for the children
- There are very high expectations of good behaviour
- There is a strong family ethos

#### **Commentary**

38. Teaching and learning are good in this area because emphasis is placed upon being ready to learn. Children's personal, social and emotional development is significantly enhanced by the strong family ethos and very good induction procedures, therefore children settle quickly into school. There are good routines and a calm beginning to the day so that children are ready to learn right from the start. Adults are very good role models because they are welcoming and polite but they make clear what is acceptable and have high expectations of good behaviour at all times. Class rules for behaviour are displayed in the classroom and used by adults to reinforce what is required. This ensures that children quickly develop confidence in their surroundings and with one another. Special emphasis is placed upon being kind and helpful and this makes a significant contribution to the learning environment resulting in a very happy classroom. Healthy eating is encouraged and children enjoy their fruit snacks. All children achieve well in this area of learning and are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the end of reception.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good
- Opportunities for speaking and listening are good
- Children's vocabulary is well developed
- Early reading and writing skills are promoted very well

### **Commentary**

39. Opportunities for all children to develop their speaking and listening skills pervade all areas of learning. They are engaged in meaningful talk through the very good activities on offer and the skilful intervention of adults. Less able children made good progress when retelling “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” with the help of the teaching assistant who used the story to emphasize the difference between “over” “through” and “under”. Children’s early writing skills are significantly enhanced because of the variety of exciting related activities such as visiting the class “Post Office” and the very popular “writing corner”. This enables them to be independent and to practise making their letters properly and learn to spell using “Humpty’s Word Wall”. More able children are already able to write short phrases without help. Children are learning to read with the help of a popular reading scheme and these books are taken home for regular practice to which parents make a very real contribution. However, the rich and interesting range of other books in the classroom is not shared at home and this limits children’s early reading experiences. Many children already recognise and read a few of the most frequently used words. All children achieve well in this area of learning and are likely to meet the early learning goals, and some will far exceed them, by the end of the reception year.

### **Mathematical development**

Provision in mathematical development is very good.

### **Main strengths**

- Teaching and learning are very good
- There are very good opportunities for children to develop their counting skills and to develop a mathematical vocabulary
- Structured play through a variety of very good resources makes a significant contribution to this area of learning

### **Commentary**

40. Teaching and learning are very good in this area because there are many opportunities for the children to learn to count and as a result they make very good progress. They especially enjoy singing counting songs like “Five Speckled Frogs” and their number skills have been cleverly reinforced by using the computer to draw and number the frogs. They practised their speaking skills when the teacher “wrote” a number on their backs with her finger and they had to guess the number and explain its shape. When learning about capacity children learned about full and empty, nearly full and nearly empty and half full. This activity not only extended their vocabulary well but also their thinking. At the end of the lesson they were presented with a real challenge when asked how many small cups would be needed to fill one large one and then how many would be needed to fill half a large one. Children were offered a wide range of resources to practice this mathematical idea and enjoyed working with pasta, rice, water and sand to fill a variety of containers. The very good teaching through these practical activities and appropriate resources ensures that all children achieve very well. Most count to ten confidently and some use this knowledge to begin to solve simple addition and subtraction problems. Some are already meeting the early learning goals and all are likely to meet them and most exceed them by the start of Year 1.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

Provision for Knowledge and understanding of the world is very good.

### **Main strengths**

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Children are provided with a varied and stimulating range of activities in order to find out about the world around them

- Activities are very well planned and assessed by adults



### **Commentary**

41. Teaching and learning are very good in this area because of the stimulating and wide variety of activities and the good balance between teacher led activities and those chosen by the children. Activities are carefully planned and adult intervention supports and maximises the learning. Planting beans and exploring how things grow really fired the children's enthusiasm. The teacher skilfully combined sharing a "big book" on growth with a demonstration of planting a bean. Through her very good questioning the children showed what they remembered from a previous lesson about the parts of a flower and used this knowledge to learn how the bean was different. Their vocabulary was extended as they named all the parts correctly. Children's knowledge and skills were developed well when they planted beans, used a microscope to look at seeds and used a computer program to place the parts of a bean on a stem. Their mathematical language is extended through a project about "Ourselves" as they print with hands and feet and measure the "biggest" and the "smallest". They acquire new knowledge about other cultures through studying the Chinese New Year. They begin to develop good scientific skills because of opportunities to select and describe what will float or sink. Computers are always available in the classroom displaying appropriate programs to support the various areas of learning and most children demonstrate good mouse and keyboard skills for their age. All children achieve very well in this area of learning and are likely to reach or exceed the expected early learning goals by the end of reception.

### **Physical development**

Provision for physical development is good.

### **Main strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good
- There are many opportunities for children to practise their physical skills

### **Commentary**

42. Teaching and learning are good in this area because during both creative and physical activities children are encouraged to use a variety of tools, such as paintbrushes, scissors, pens and pencils as well as other larger equipment. Examples of their work show that they develop their small muscle skills well when they stick and cut and manipulate play dough for modelling. The very well organised space and equipment in the outdoor area offers very good opportunities for children to climb, be involved in adventurous play and use wheeled toys. This is an improvement since the last inspection and ensures that they achieve well whilst developing their large muscle skills. During a physical education lesson linked to work in class about going on a Bear Hunt children were able to demonstrate good control, an awareness of others and the space around them because of the very good teaching. They understood about the importance of warming up and cooling down and responded very well to clear explanations and instructions. Children's excellent attitudes and behaviour enabled all of them to participate fully in the physical challenges offered by the teacher and they moved freely with confidence and enjoyment. Almost all can dress and undress without assistance. All children achieve well in this area and are likely to meet or exceed the early learning goals by the end of reception.

### **Creative development**

Provision for creative development is good.

### **Main strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good
- Very good links are made with other areas

### **Commentary**

43. Teaching and learning are good in this area because very good links are made with all other areas of learning. There are good opportunities for children to learn to sing tunefully and to take part in action songs which helps them to memorize words as well as practise their counting skills. Musical instruments are used to enhance the dragon dance for the Chinese New Year and making dragon puppets combines their physical and creative skills very well. Role play costumes complement the Post Office and the home corner allowing children to learn well whilst engrossed in their imaginative play. Whilst making cards for Mothering Sunday children exhibited better than average cutting and sticking skills. This creative approach incorporating other areas of learning enhances children's experience and ensures that they achieve well. All are likely to meet the early learning goals and some will exceed them by the end of the reception year.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is good.

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge, ensure lessons are interesting and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in other lessons
- Recently introduced improvements in the teaching of writing are particularly effective and are a developing strength
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils, achieve well
- Information about pupils' progress is not used as effectively as it might be to help pupils improve

#### **Commentary**

44. Pupils' achievement is good. Standards in English are well-above average in Years 1 to 5. Standards in Year 6 are above average. This is lower than in last year's national tests because there are fewer more able pupils in the current Year 6 than is usual for the school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
45. The great majority of pupils listen carefully in lessons and in discussions with each other or an adult. Speaking skills are fostered well because teachers emphasise the use of correct vocabulary and regularly ask pupils to discuss a question in pairs and agree an answer. When discussing the addition of '-ing' or '-ed' to the end of words, for example, a Year 2 boy confidently pointed out to his partner that "if the word ends in a consonant, you double the consonant before adding -ing." Opportunities for speaking in public through drama activities and presentations to the whole school in assembly help pupils express themselves clearly and with self assurance.
46. Reading is systematically taught and pupils are encouraged to enjoy literature in a variety of ways. In reading lessons, the teacher and teaching assistants guide specific groups of pupils in their reading with a particular focus such as reading with an expressive voice. Other pupils, meanwhile, work independently and concentrate well on a range of related activities, including reading books of their own choice. The range of teaching and learning activities is well balanced and most pupils have positive attitudes to reading and read very well as a result.
47. The school is concentrating its efforts on improving standards in writing and this is beginning to have a noticeable effect on the quality of pupils' work. Many pupils write competently for a variety of purposes and lessons focus on helping them write more complex sentences with a wide range of descriptive vocabulary. Pupils in Year 4, for

example, confidently selected interesting words from lists on display, or referred to the original text when recounting the story of The Iron Man. However, written comments on pupils' writing do not provide sufficient information on where they have succeeded and what they need to do next to improve. Pupils have individual targets to help them develop their writing, but these are not as effective as they might be in bringing about improvement because they are not used consistently by all teachers.

48. Teaching is good and lessons are often very well taught. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject so that pupils learn to use correct vocabulary when discussing grammar. Pupils in a Year 6 lesson, for example, talked knowledgeably about identifying subordinate clauses in complex sentences and how conjunctions are used. Teachers explain the purpose of the lesson clearly and, in the best teaching, refer pupils back to this in the final part of the lesson so that the teacher, and also the pupils, can assess how effective the learning has been.

49. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are fully included in lessons. Work for these pupils is carefully planned so that it relates to their particular need while meeting the overall aim of the lesson. As a result, they make good progress. In a Year 1 lesson on writing a story, for example, lower-attaining pupils were given clear instructions by a teaching assistant who followed these up with carefully chosen questions to confirm their understanding, so that they successfully wrote the story of The Three Pigs. Higher-attaining pupils also benefit from being given more demanding tasks in a group taken by a teacher.
50. Leadership and management are good. Weaker aspects of pupils' work have been identified and steps taken through staff training to improve these. The two subject leaders observe lessons in order to discuss how teaching might be improved, and check lesson plans and pupils' work. The results of regular tests are analysed but the information gained is not yet used as effectively as it might be to set targets for improvement and track progress in achieving them.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

51. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects. Discussing and listening to each other's ideas is a prominent feature in many lessons. Writing is developed in history, for example, when Year 6 pupils write reasons for and against returning the Parthenon marbles, and in geography when they describe the pros and cons of building a supermarket in the village.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

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

- Pupils enjoy their work and achieve well because the quality of teaching is good in most lessons
- The curriculum includes a good range of work, with a particularly strong emphasis in Years 5 and 6 on pupils using and applying their skills
- Most lessons provide appropriately challenging tasks, but teachers do not always allow pupils enough independence to work at the speed of which they are capable
- Good management supports teachers well and has correctly identified aspects of pupils' work that need to improve, but plans to raise standards are not specific enough
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work, particularly in Years 3 to 6, does not focus sufficiently on pointing out what pupils need to learn next

#### **Commentary**

52. Standards are higher than at the last inspection, particularly in Year 2. Over the past few years, results in national tests have improved at a better rate than for most schools. In 2004, the Year 2 results were in the top five per cent of schools nationally and the Year 6 results were well above average. The Year 2 results were much better than those gained by similar schools. Data comparing the Year 6 results with those of schools whose pupils reached a similar standard in the 2000 Year 2 tests suggest the performance was average, but a closer analysis of the statistics shows that the results were only just outside the above average grading.
53. Standards in the current Year 2 and Year 6 are lower than in last year's national tests. This is because these year groups contain fewer more able pupils than is usual for the school, illustrated by the current Year 6 pupils' relatively low results in their Year 2 national tests. It is not an indication of weaker teaching. Despite falling slightly, standards in the current Year 2 are well above those expected for pupils' ages. Almost all pupils have a good grasp of calculations with numbers to 100, adding and subtracting accurately and beginning simple

multiplication and division. They also have a good understanding of a range of work about shapes and measuring. A weakness is that Year 2 pupils do not record enough of their work. Standards in Year 6 are better than expected for pupils' ages. For example, almost all have a good understanding of fractions and decimals, they can draw and interpret different types of graphs, and they have carried out successfully various methods of long multiplication. In a lesson seen, Year 6 pupils investigated various ways of making totals with two or three dice, which showed good development of strategies for solving problems and in applying mathematics in practical tasks. This type of activity is a strong and effective feature of pupils' past work in Years 5 and 6, but it is less evident in other classes.

54. When pupils join Year 1, standards are above average. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' achievement is good. Teachers ensure that pupils achieve well in most lessons by giving appropriate tasks to pupils of different abilities and providing good support for the less able, including those who have special educational needs. For example, in a good Year 3 lesson about organising information in a Carroll diagram, the teacher used different levels of task matched well to provide plenty of challenge for pupils of all abilities, and the three staff provided good support, particularly for the less able pupils. As a result, all of the pupils made good progress. In a few lessons seen, the teacher planned activities at varying levels of difficulty, but did not allow the pupils enough time to work on them independently, reducing the challenge of the tasks by leading the pupils through them. In these lessons, some pupils, particularly the more able, did not achieve as well as they could have. In pupils' past work, there are also examples where pupils of all abilities have completed the same work sheet, with varying degrees of success, rather than being given tasks that would have extended their existing skills more effectively.
55. The quality of teaching is good, with some strong features. It was excellent in one of the six lessons seen, good in four and satisfactory in one. Lessons are generally planned well to build upon pupils' existing skills, and pupils' very good attitudes to their work support learning very effectively. A very good feature of most lessons is the quick-fire session at the beginning that tests and extends pupils' mental mathematics skills. For example, a Year 6 lesson began with the teacher posing a wide range of multiplication questions –  $65 \times 11 = ?$   $90 \times 80 = ?$  What is 50 squared? – which gradually built in difficulty and really made the pupils think. The children thoroughly enjoy these sessions and are eager to provide their answers. Teachers are good at making it clear to the pupils what they will be learning, and this is often written on the board as well. They are not so good at re-visiting and checking on the learning during the final part of the lesson, which often consists of pupils explaining what they have done, not what they have learnt. Most lessons include a good range of teaching methods and have a good variety of activities, which keep the lesson moving at a good pace and ensure that pupils have plenty of fresh challenges. For example, in an excellent Year 1 lesson, the teacher quickly reviewed what the pupils had already learnt about three-dimensional shapes and checked their understanding. She then set them a range of practical activities, counting and recording faces, making shapes with construction equipment and cutting up cardboard boxes to find the shapes of the faces. This enabled the teacher and the teaching assistant to work closely with individual pupils extending their understanding. A quiet buzz of productivity showed that the pupils were fully involved in their work and, when they fed back their findings to the class, the teacher used the opportunity very effectively to reinforce the learning. Teacher's marking of pupils' work is thorough but, particularly in Years 3 to 6, does not take opportunities to point out what pupils need to learn next. Good teamwork ensures that teaching assistants make a very effective contribution to supporting pupils' learning.
56. Management of the subject is good, with a clear understanding of what is done well and what needs to improve, based on analysis of pupils' work and the quality of teaching. For

example, the school identified the need for more activities that require pupils to explore patterns in numbers and shapes and provided staff training. Plans to implement improvements, however, are not specific enough, and do not identify outcomes in terms of a rise in standards that would show success. Events such as the very successful 'Maths Week' enrich the curriculum effectively. The school has good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and checking on their progress, but this information is not always used well enough to ensure pupils take the next step in their learning. For example, most pupils do not know their current learning targets and teachers rarely refer to these in lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although standards are now higher, some of the areas for development identified then have yet to be tackled fully.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

57. Pupils' use and development of mathematics in other subjects are satisfactory. There are examples in pupils' science work of measuring and of recording in graphs and tables. Work in geography and history touches on mathematical skills when working with maps and time lines. In other subjects, teachers take opportunities for pupils to count and measure. Although the current provision is satisfactory, there is no evidence that it is planned systematically.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and by the end of Year 6 standards are usually well above average
- There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills of investigation which is helping them to achieve well
- Good teaching is characterised by well planned lessons and good teacher subject knowledge leading to clear explanations
- Marking does not tell pupils what they could do to improve their work
- The subject is led and managed well but assessment and tracking of pupil progress is not fully developed

### Commentary

58. Standards have improved since the last inspection. In 2004 teacher assessments of Year 2 pupils showed that standards were well above average. In Year 6, test results were well above the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. All pupils achieve well.
59. During the inspection standards in Year 2 were found to be well above average. Pupils design a simple fair test when investigating the speed of a toy car on a gradient and predict results. More able pupils use their literacy skills very well to record their work and write clear explanations about their findings. Work in books in Year 4 shows an over reliance on worksheets and a significant amount of identical, copied work, including an experiment. As a result there were fewer examples of pupils building on the very good investigative and recording skills learned in the earlier years. Year 6 standards were found to be above average which is lower than last year. However, results in earlier tests when the same group of pupils were seven show that they are achieving well. Within this group there are fewer more able pupils than would generally be the case for the school. Work on electricity builds on knowledge learned in earlier years and almost all pupils demonstrate, through for example their parachute experiments, the ability to conduct a fair test to answer their own investigation questions. There is considerable emphasis on making predictions and drawing conclusions and their work shows that they are given very good opportunities to develop their scientific skills. Past work shows that, in some instances, the ways pupils are expected to record their findings are not well matched to individual needs. Sometimes less able pupils have difficulty recording and confuse writing about the method of carrying out the experiment with writing about the results.
60. In all the lessons seen the quality of teaching was good. In the introduction to lessons teachers use their good subject knowledge to help pupils build on previous knowledge. They give clear explanations making sure that pupils know what they are to learn and how to carry out tasks. In a Year 4 lesson about electricity pupils were questioned skilfully at the beginning to ensure that they could remember about the construction of a circuit and about good and poor conductors. Well organised lessons and resources that are plentiful and of a high quality allow all pupils to participate fully in the practical parts of lessons. They are very keen and interested because of the way in which work is presented to them and as a result they try hard and concentrate well. Whilst investigating pitch, pupils in Year 6 were organised into groups and this helped them to learn from one another as well as providing a good opportunity for them to develop their personal and social skills. In all the lessons seen a very small number of pupils who found it hard to learn or concentrate, were very well supported by the teaching assistant so that they made the same good progress as the rest of the class. Marking in pupils' books does not tell them what to do next to improve their work.

61. The subject is well led and managed. The subject leader has made good use of opportunities to monitor standards and an action plan is in place. However, the good information the school has about pupil progress is not sufficiently developed to usefully guide teachers or to track individual pupil progress in order to raise standards further.



## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision in information and communication technology is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths**

- A well-equipped computer room and a space devoted to controlling machines with a computer provide good resources
- Good leadership and management is improving standards and the quality of teaching

### **Commentary**

62. Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The full range of the national curriculum is now being taught and teachers are using ICT more effectively to help improve pupils' learning in other subjects.
63. A good sized and well-equipped computer suite enables whole classes to be taught together. Teachers use this effectively so that teaching in these lessons is good. A computer image can be projected onto a screen so that the teacher can demonstrate what pupils need to do on their own machines. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, the teacher used this very effectively to illustrate sentence structure and discuss the grammar involved. Pupils then worked on related tasks already prepared on their own machines. The school has allocated a room, managed by a teaching assistant trained for the role, for teaching pupils how machines can be controlled by computers. This has dealt with the weakness identified at the last inspection. Classrooms have computers linked to the school's network and these are used appropriately by pupils for a range of activities, particularly writing. Teaching assistants provide good support so that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others in lessons.
64. Leadership and management are good. Teachers' planning is checked to ensure that the curriculum is fully covered and lessons are observed and suggestions made for how teaching can be improved. Pupils' work is checked so that improvement can be measured and a useful system is being introduced so that pupils can assess and record their own progress. Staff training needs have been identified and the subject leader and a local authority adviser are providing help and advice to meet these. The subject leader has clear priorities for improving standards and is making good progress towards achieving these.

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

65. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support learning in other subjects. For example, pupils use special programs to help develop their skills in writing and arithmetic. They use the Internet to research information, particularly in connection with their work with schools in other countries. Programs which enable pupils to explore colour and pattern provide opportunities for them to develop their artistic skills, but few opportunities are provided for them to use computers to manage and interpret information in mathematics and science.

## **HUMANITIES**

66. No lessons were seen in geography or religious education and only one in history therefore it is not possible to make judgements about teaching. Inspectors talked to pupils and teachers, and looked at planning and enough pupils' work from the current year to make a judgement about standards and the quality of the curriculum.
67. In **geography** pupils' past work suggests that standards are average with variations where it is better. The subject is well planned and covers the National Curriculum requirements. Younger pupils learn well through using the school environment and make story maps of their walks. The three bears "Little B" and "Edward and Edwina" accompany pupils of all ages on their visits and give a purpose to their writing. The Year 6 visit to the Isle of Wight provides a rich first hand experience with which to contrast and compare Maidstone. The school's involvement in the European Dimension is an excellent source of enrichment for this subject and helps them to make good links with other areas of learning. This creative

way of presenting geography stimulates pupils' interest and enthusiasm and as a result the quality of work they produce is good.

68. In **history** the one good lesson seen and pupil's past work suggests that standards are average. In the lesson seen older pupils learned and achieved well because of the good use of information communication technology combined with practising historical skills. The teacher challenged pupils to use the Egyptian artefact displayed on the screen as a means to interpreting a view of the past and justifying it. The teaching of history and the use of the computers was effective because the teacher has good knowledge of both subjects and used them together as a vehicle for extending pupils' learning. There is little recorded work for younger pupils but the work of older pupils is well presented, of good quality and covered in some depth. Occasionally, as with a project on the Tudors, there is insufficient attention to the development of skills and an over emphasis on content in the form of copied information in pupils' books. Year 6 pupils use their literacy skills well to devise a play script and to produce a written argument about whether or not the Parthenon Marbles should be returned to Greece. The lesson seen and other examples from pupils' work demonstrate the good links that are being made with other subjects.
69. In **religious education**, pupils' past work shows that the curriculum in most classes provides a good range and balance of content and amply meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The exception is Year 4 where there is less recorded work than in other classes. As at the last inspection, by Year 2 and Year 6, standards are about the same as those expected for pupils' ages. For example, in Year 2, pupils cover a good range of work about 'celebrations', including Christian festivals and those of Hinduism. They find out about what happens at celebrations such as Divali, and they also begin to recognise the common features of celebrations, for example wearing special clothes, giving gifts and playing music. They begin to consider moral messages from religion. For example, after listening to the story of The Good Samaritan, one pupil wrote, "Jesus told the story to show how we should treat each other". During Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to study aspects of Christianity. In Year 3, thinking about the Ten Commandments leads to devising rules by which pupils might live their own lives, and to a consideration of the more complex religious idea of 'faith'. In Year 6, pupils look closely at the guidance given by various parts of the Bible. Re-visiting the story of The Good Samaritan, they note that its meaning is that God wants us to treat all people fairly and with respect. Alongside this work, pupils also develop their understanding of other major world religions. For example, in Year 5, particularly good work on Sikhism explores its beliefs, traditions and major religious figures. Work in religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including their understanding of other faiths and cultures. A good feature of the work is when pupils extend what they have learnt to their own lives, for example by thinking about how they should treat each other to create a happy class.

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

70. Two lessons were observed in each of art and design and music because the school asked that these subjects be a focus for the inspection. No lessons were seen in design and technology or physical education. Because the evidence is limited, it is not possible to make judgements about overall provision in any of these subjects. In art and design, a reasonable selection of pupils' work was available from which to make judgements about the quality of the curriculum and standards. Teachers' planning and the views of subject leaders were also taken into account. The overall picture is that work in art and design is of a good standard and a good range of musical activities enriches the curriculum for many pupils.
71. Standards in **art and design** are better than expected for pupils' ages and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils experience a good range of work, which helps them to build their skills effectively. For example, Year 1 pupils looked closely at lots of different types of materials before using them for weaving. Their attractive finished pieces are of good quality and reflect a variety of ideas and techniques. In Year 2, pupils' good observational skills are clear from their very careful drawings of primulas, in pencil and crayon, some of which are

outstanding in their detail. Expressive work in Year 3, inspired by the work of Monet, explores varying ways of depicting water using bubble prints, marbling and paint. These form a striking montage in the school hall entitled 'Water of Life'. In Year 4, observational drawings from nature, particularly of catkins, show that pupils' skills using pencil, crayon and pastel develop well. Some of these pieces are far better than normally seen for pupils' ages, capturing the detail and colour of the subject very well. Book illustrations by Jan Pienkowski, using silhouettes on subtle water-colour backgrounds have inspired Year 6 pupils to produce their own illustrations linked to work in English about Macbeth. Very well observed oil pastel drawings of the cross-section of vegetables show how Year 6 pupils capitalise on skills learnt earlier in the school. In all classrooms, and in many other areas around the school, pupils' art work is on display, celebrating its good quality. In Years 3 to 6, sketch books are used well to gather and develop art ideas.

72. The quality of teaching was very good in both of the lessons seen. Teachers planned the learning and prepared resources very carefully so that the pupils had challenging tasks and good-quality materials to develop their skills. Teachers had very good subject expertise. In Year 2, the pupils had been using viewfinders (a piece of card with a 'window' cut in it) to look closely at and draw a specific part of a view or object. The teacher successfully reviewed past work by looking carefully at shape, texture and colour. She then gave them part of a picture, with the rest covered up, and asked them to draw what they thought would be in the part they could not see, making use of visual clues. Because the teacher made sure that the pupils were carefully focused on the task, they worked with purpose and enjoyment. Their finished pieces were of a better standard than normally seen in Year 2 because most pupils used oil pastel skilfully to complete their picture. In Year 5, very skilful teaching used portraits from the work of Matisse to get the pupils to consider his style. The pupils had taken photographs of their own faces and manipulated them to create distorted images typical of Matisse's work. The teacher encouraged the pupils to experiment with different ways of colouring their portraits, using a variety of materials, and so they produced imaginative work. In both lessons, staff provided expert support for pupils, encouraged them to evaluate their work, and drew together the learning very skilfully in the final part of the lesson. Leadership and management of the subject are good, providing support for colleagues, setting high expectations and being aware of ways in which the current curriculum can be improved. Visiting artists and visits to galleries enrich pupils' experiences effectively.
73. No lessons were observed in **design and technology**. Samples of pupils' work in which they designed and made puppets, made books with moving pictures operated by rods and levers indicates that standards are appropriate for the pupils' ages. The requirements of the National Curriculum are being met.
74. In **music**, a good range of activities, particularly for the older pupils, provides lots of opportunities to develop musical skills. There are clear, detailed plans for class music lessons. Teaching and learning were good in one of the lessons observed and satisfactory in the other. In Year 2, the pupils composed music to accompany their story about Treasure Island. The teacher set the scene well, with a large map and the pupils sang their pirate song enthusiastically. A wide range of instruments encouraged the pupils to work well in groups composing music to match the various settings on the island, such as the waterfall, the jungle and stormy mountain. They practised sensibly, but this lasted rather longer than needed, and the teacher missed opportunities for the pupils to appraise their work and that of others. The final performance was much enjoyed by the pupils and showed that their skills are about as expected for their ages. In Year 5, the pupils listened to a piece of Blues music before practising, in small groups, their own 12 bar blues. At times, the pupils were too noisy and the teacher did not focus their learning sufficiently. The teacher provided good explanation and demonstration using her skills on the piano and xylophone, which

helped the pupils to understand what they were trying to achieve. The practice session was productive, with pupils working well together, but the teacher had to work hard to improve the pupils' understanding of tempo because only a few played at a steady speed. The final performance drew the lesson together successfully. During both lessons, opportunities were missed to develop the pupils' understanding of musical elements, such as dynamics (varying levels of volume of sound) and pitch.

75. About 20 pupils are learning to play an instrument, taught by visiting specialists. The choir and recorder groups provide very good opportunities for older pupils to extend their music making. During the inspection, a brief observation of a choir rehearsal indicated that this singing is of good quality, and the pupils clearly enjoy the activity. The school provided a wealth of documentary evidence showing how the choir and recorder groups take part in a range of special events in the community, with letters from organisations saying how much people have enjoyed the performances. All pupils' musical and social skills are developed well through concerts and performances in school, which are much enjoyed by parents. Management of the subject is good, supported by the fact that a specialist takes all music lessons and organises other musical activities. The school has plenty of musical instruments, but some of these are rather old and not of the quality seen in many schools.
76. No lessons were observed in **physical education**. Although the school's hall is inadequate for teaching the full range of gymnastics, the small indoor swimming pool and outdoor facilities for games contribute to good resources for the subject. Opportunities for learning are further enhanced by the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which are provided by school staff and visiting specialist teachers. The school successfully enters teams in local inter-school competitions and leagues, often providing the winners or runners-up. Its commitment to planned, good quality provision for the subject has resulted in the school receiving the nationally recognised Activemark award.

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

77. No lessons were seen in this subject and there was no past work completed by the pupils that could be used to evaluate the standards achieved. As a result, it is not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievement or the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as good.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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