

INSPECTION REPORT

CRANBROOK C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cranbrook

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118600

Headteacher: Mr D Wood

Lead inspector: Mrs H Bonser

Dates of inspection: 8th - 10th November 2004

Inspection number: 266687

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 Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	260
School address:	Carriers Road Cranbrook Kent
Postcode:	TN17 3JZ
Telephone number:	01580 713249
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Marsh
Date of previous inspection:	14 th - 17 th October 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school draws most of its pupils from the town of Cranbrook. They come from a very wide variety of backgrounds. Children's attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is below average overall. Twenty-five per cent of the pupils across the school are identified as having special educational needs, as a result of a variety of learning, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is above the national average. At present, three per cent have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which is also above average. Four per cent of pupils come from Traveller families and six per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority groups. One per cent of them are at an early stage of acquiring English. The movement of pupils in and out of the school during the school year is about average. There has been a high turnover of teachers in the last two years. The school received the Activemark award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22870	Hilary Bonser	Lead inspector	English; history; geography.
9646	Geraldine Osment	Lay inspector	
28014	Peter Buckley	Team inspector	Foundation Stage; science; religious education; design and technology; physical education.
30705	Graham Stephens	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology; art and design; music; special educational needs; English as an additional language.

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	19
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's effectiveness is now satisfactory and it gives satisfactory value for money. This improving school no longer has serious weaknesses. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and the leadership and management of the school have also improved to satisfactory. Although teaching has improved and is now good, it is too soon to see the full impact of this on achievement or on standards, which are below average overall in Year 6. This is partly due to a high turnover of teachers since the last inspection.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There has been a rapid improvement in achievement and standards in English throughout the school as a result of well-focused school action over the last two years.
- Achievement is now good in English but satisfactory in mathematics and science and unsatisfactory in religious education.
- Children get a good start to their education in the reception class and now continue to achieve well by Year 2, where standards have improved to average overall.
- Good management and good teamwork among staff and governors have helped to bring about effective improvements in several aspects of school life since the last inspection.
- A very good range of additional activities and very good links with the community and other schools contribute significantly to pupils' learning and enthusiasm for school.
- Good care and support for pupils and the good provision for their personal development are reflected in the very good relationships throughout the school and the positive attitudes and good overall behaviour of the pupils.
- The unsatisfactory attendance of a minority of pupils affects their learning adversely.

The school has responded appropriately to the serious weaknesses identified in the previous inspection in 2002, resulting, for example, in good improvements in the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils, including higher attaining pupils, and in standards, especially in English. The overall leadership and management of the school are now satisfactory and fully focused on continuing to raise standards. Much better use is made of assessment information to support pupils' learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	E	D	D	D
mathematics	E	E	D	D
science	E	D	D	C

*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.*

Achievement is now satisfactory overall. Children do well in the reception class in relation to their attainment on entry. Standards are currently a little below average in relation to the goals children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year. In Year 2, this year, standards have continued to improve and are average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils are achieving well. Standards of the current Year 6 are also showing further improvement and are now average in English, although they remain below average in mathematics and science. Boys and girls are now achieving satisfactorily overall but well in English, where the main focus of development has been in the last two years. Standards in religious education are below average and achievement in this subject is unsatisfactory. The main reason for the difference in standards

and achievement in Year 2 and Year 6 is that older pupils are still making up ground from the unsatisfactory teaching and learning noted in the previous inspection.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and the school helps pupils to show a good level of maturity by Year 6. Attendance is improving but is still below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are consistently good in the reception class. They are good in Years 1 to 6 and some is very good. Teachers generally use a good variety of methods and resources to provide interesting lessons that take good account of pupils' differing needs, especially in English, mathematics and science. This encourages pupils to try hard and learn well. Skilful teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils' learning. The curriculum is enriched very well, especially through the very good links with the community and other schools and very good extra-curricular opportunities. This helps to make pupils keen to learn.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher is now sound. The leadership of key staff, several of whom have been recently appointed to their current posts as a result of the high turnover of teachers, is also satisfactory. This is ensuring that the school successfully pursues its programme for continuing improvement. The management of the school is good, with good improvements in the monitoring of teaching and learning and of pupils' progress. The work of the governing body is good and all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents: parents are very satisfied. For example, they feel their children enjoy school and are helped to settle in well, are taught well and are helped to become mature and independent. Some are concerned about their child being bullied. The inspectors found that any such incidents are dealt with effectively.

Pupils: pupils expressed positive views about the school. They know who they can go to if they are worried and feel that teachers listen to them and are fair to them. They feel that other children do not always behave well. The inspection team found that behaviour was good overall and that pupils with behavioural problems are supported well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to raise standards, especially in mathematics and science by Year 6, so that pupils achieve consistently well across the school.
- Raise standards in religious education to improve the unsatisfactory achievement of older pupils.
- Continue to improve the rate of attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is now satisfactory overall. It is good in the reception class and Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. This year, standards are average in English in Year 6, but remain below average in mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is now good in English, mathematics and science by Year 2 and in English by Year 6.
- Standards in English especially, but also in mathematics and science, are improving, but have declined in religious education, where achievement is unsatisfactory.
- These improvements throughout the school are the result of effective school action in response to the key issues in the previous report, although it is too soon to see the full impact of this in Year 6.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.1 (14.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.7 (13.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	14.9 (15.6)	16.2(16.3)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.3 (25.7)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.6 (24.1)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.2 (27.5)	28.6 (26.6)

There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Results in the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 and Year 2 were below the national average overall and below those of similar schools. However, this showed good improvement from the well below average performance of the previous year. The exception was in mathematics at the end of Year 2, which fell back from below average to well below average. School analysis indicates that this was largely due to low expectations of more able pupils and insufficient opportunities for problem-solving work. This is being successfully addressed this year. In Year 6, the improvement in performance was particularly notable as almost a third of the pupils were identified as having special educational needs. There was a significant increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5, reflecting a greater challenge in the work given to higher attaining pupils than that described in the previous report. Pupils achieved broadly satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Over the last 5 years results have risen more quickly than national trends because of the good improvement in standards in the last two years.

2. In the current reception class, children are likely to reach standards just below the expected goals by the end of the year in all areas of their learning. In Year 2, standards have improved further from last year and are now broadly average in reading, writing, mathematics and science, as a result of effective school action. In the current Year 6, where, as last year, nearly a third of pupils have special educational needs, standards remain below average overall in mathematics and science but have improved again to average in English. National test results at the time of the last inspection were well below average in all three subjects. This rapid improvement in English especially has been brought about by a strong and successful focus throughout the school on improving standards in reading and particularly in writing over the last two years. There has been steady improvement in science and also in mathematics, although here improvement has been hindered to some extent by staff turnover, which has led to a lack of continuity in the management of the subject.
3. Records of children's assessments show that standards on entry to the school vary from year to year but are below average overall. Children currently in their reception year are achieving well as a result of consistently good teaching and continue to receive a good start in their learning, as at the time of the last report. Individual progress is now tracked carefully across the school from baseline assessments, through the national statutory and optional tests and other annual assessments. This information, together with past work and lesson observations, shows that achievement in Year 2 is now good in English, mathematics and science. In Year 6, it is also good in English but satisfactory in mathematics and science. However, this is a good improvement from the previous inspection, when achievement was judged to be unsatisfactory in all three subjects. It is a tribute to the hard work of teachers, effective action of the school and good external support, especially in the light of past recruitment difficulties and turnover of staff.
4. It is too soon to see the full effects on standards of the well-planned school action taken in the last two years and especially the improvements in teaching and learning, although these are reflected in pupils' improving achievement. There have been significant improvements in assessment, analysis of performance and the tracking of pupils' progress. These have enabled the school to identify and focus support on particular individuals or groups of pupils who do not make the expected progress. Wide-ranging measures have been taken to address identified weaknesses. These include the careful deployment of teachers across the school and significant improvements in planning that help pupils to build on previous learning. Additional teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils' learning, and very good enrichment of the curriculum, especially in English, increases pupils' motivation to learn. Nevertheless, older pupils in particular still have to make up gaps in their knowledge and skills, arising from the unsatisfactory teaching and learning noted in the previous report. This is the main reason why standards and achievement are different in Years 2 and 6.
5. Achievement for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, a similar outcome to the last inspection. However, pupils with speech and language difficulties achieve well and this is an improvement. This group achieves well because programmes of work and advice from the speech and language service are adhered to and well taught by a dedicated teaching assistant. The very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily. Their needs are identified early and advice from the support service is sought, if necessary. Support from teaching assistants, especially in writing activities, is very good and resources are used effectively to enhance learning. While some pupils from Travellers' families achieve satisfactorily as a result of a high level of support, the poor attendance of others has a negative impact on their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Although most of the pupils arrive at school on time, their rate of attendance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school expects high standards of behaviour and the pupils' response to this is good.
- Relationships between pupils and adults and with each other are very good.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development.
- The rate of attendance is below the national average.

Commentary

6. Although a high number of parents and pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires do not feel that pupils behave well, the inspection team judges behaviour to be good overall. Parents also expressed concerns about bullying but there were no signs of unpleasantness or harassment during the inspection. The school supports pupils well with their behaviour in lessons and around the school. Strategies include class rules that teachers and pupils devise, the awards system with merits from teachers, the lunchtime supervisors' special certificates and the opportunity to sit on the 'best' table for lunch. Teachers plan interesting and challenging activities that motivate the pupils and they are developing a love of learning. This was clearly evident during a very good Year 2 numeracy lesson. A prompt and enthusiastic start by the teacher gained the pupils' attention so that they focused well as they recalled paired numbers with a total of twenty.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	116	2	0
Any other ethnic group	15	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	123	0	0

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

7. The school is successful in promoting the personal development of pupils, including that of children in the reception class. Pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups and in many lessons they are able to co-operate with each other very successfully. Teachers, teaching assistants and pupils have very good mutual trusting relationships. Year 6 pupils interviewed during the inspection believe that their teachers are fair and they feel confident when seeking help from them. Break and lunchtimes are boisterous but good-natured and boys and girls of all ages and play happily together. Teaching assistants are skilled at encouraging pupils with special educational needs and boosting their self-esteem through explaining questions and encouraging them to answer in front of the class. In some lessons, notably in Year 6 in information and communication technology lessons, these pupils work with a more able partner and this peer support does much to develop their confidence and positive attitudes to learning.
8. Pupils' spiritual awareness is promoted well in assemblies and in religious education lessons. For example, the pupils were learning about forgiveness by role-playing the story of 'The Prodigal Son' and during a visit to St. Dunstan's Church, a young pupil said that, 'This house is different to ours because it is the House of God'. Pupils' awareness of social and moral issues is developing well through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, assemblies and the opportunities that the school provides for them to take responsibility for themselves and others. Pupils organise fund raising activities for a number of charities including Macmillan Nurses and Seeds into Africa. Year 6 pupils run the Farmer's Market, which is encouraging pupils to eat more healthy snacks at break times. The school council has contributed ideas for the fitness trail, collected litter, planted bulbs and is now canvassing pupils' views on how to develop the recently cleared area in the school grounds.
9. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own heritage, including visits to the museum, and St. Dunstan's Church and visits from church groups and astronaut Piers

Sellers. The school has a number of pupils with a Romany background and ensures that their rich culture is celebrated with a Traveller Festival each year. The school's traveller teacher has also produced plans for literacy; art and PSHE lessons to further promote understanding of travellers' way of life. Pupils are becoming aware of the cultural diversity of this country through the many opportunities that the school provides. These include visits from African drummers, Indian dancers and a steel band; opportunities to take part in Afro-Caribbean tie-dyeing and cooking and preparing a meal for the Chinese New Year. Diwali was celebrated through work in the reception class and a display in the hall. However, there is a weakness in religious education lessons in that pupils do not study faiths other than Christianity in sufficient depth.

10. The attendance rate is unsatisfactory, which is a decline since the inspection of October 2002. A new initiative for raising attendance was put in place at the beginning of the autumn term but its impact has yet to be evaluated. Traveller children who do not attend school regularly account for a high number of the absences. However, the designated traveller teacher, together with the traveller education welfare officer, works very closely with the families to support them and to promote the importance of their children attending regularly so that the continuity of their learning is not broken.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/4 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.7	School data	0.6
National data	5.1	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 is good overall. It is good in teaching and learning and the curricular provision is satisfactory overall, although the level of extra-curricular activities is very good. The attention given to the care and welfare of pupils and the partnership with parents is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are good in the reception class, in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is now good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- The commitment, hard work and good teamwork among the current staff is reflected in a more consistent approach to most aspects of teaching and learning, which is helping many pupils to build more effectively on previous learning.
- There has been a good improvement in the use of assessment information since the last inspection.
- Teachers use a good variety of methods and interesting contexts for learning, which contribute to pupils' positive attitudes.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	4 (10%)	27 (69%)	8 (21%)	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.

Commentary

11. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good improvement in the overall quality of teaching and learning from unsatisfactory to good, although half of the teaching staff has changed since then. In the lessons seen, there was no unsatisfactory teaching and the amount of teaching that was good or very good has increased considerably. Effective action by the headteacher and senior managers, supported by helpful external advice, especially through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, has helped to bring this about. Well-planned, ongoing training and support for teachers and teaching assistants and the successful promotion of good teamwork have also made a strong contribution. There is a clear sense of commitment among staff and a determination to improve further.
12. Teaching is now consistently good in the reception class, which gives children a good start in their learning. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is good overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. As a result, many pupils are making good progress in their learning and this is reflected in the good achievement now evident in Years 1 and 2 in these subjects. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of improved teaching and learning on standards and achievement in these subjects by Year 6, except in English, where the main thrust of development has been over the last two years and pupils now achieve well. The teaching and learning that was seen in information and communication technology and religious education was also good, although again it is too early to see the impact on standards and achievement due to previous shortcomings in pupils' learning.
13. Teaching observed of pupils with special educational needs was good overall. Some pupils are withdrawn and taught in small groups for literacy and mathematics by a teaching assistant who ensures that learning is relevant to the identified needs of the pupils. Teaching assistants also provide very effective support for these pupils within the whole class, successfully encouraging them to apply the skills they are taught and enabling them to take a full and active part in discussions and activities. Planning indicates that teachers are beginning to match work well to these pupils' needs in English, mathematics and science, but this is not yet consistent in other subjects.
14. There were strong features in many of the lessons seen. There has been a considerable improvement in the way pupils' work is planned, especially in English, mathematics and science. New schemes have been adopted and tailored to the school's needs to take account, for example, of both single and mixed age classes. This promotes continuity in pupils' learning. Teachers of the same year groups plan together weekly and compare and discuss learning outcomes regularly. This team approach, combined with staff training and improved assessment, has contributed well to overcoming the marked inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning noted in the last inspection. Particular attention is now given in the core subjects to planning more challenging work for higher attaining pupils. Teachers also have higher expectations of them. This is reflected in a good increase in the proportion of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils now exceeding the expected levels in the national tests. However, a scrutiny of work showed, that in other subjects, the same task is often given to the whole class irrespective of differing ages and abilities.
15. Teachers use the very good links with the local community and other schools, visits and visitors well to make learning interesting and relevant to pupils. They also use a good range of

resources well for this purpose. The visit of author, Nigel Hinton, during the inspection was a good example of the way that teachers harness pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment to maximise their learning – in this case to move on their writing skills successfully as seen in subsequent literacy lessons. Parents agree with their children that they are expected to work hard. There was also considerable agreement among pupils in the questionnaire and in talking to them that teachers listen to them and value their ideas. This was evident in lessons throughout the school. All of these factors contribute well to pupils' positive attitudes to their work.

16. While there is now a much more consistent approach to teaching and learning, some variations remain that often made the difference between satisfactory and good lessons. This is partly because of the changes in the teaching team in the last two years and because some whole school improvements are not yet fully embedded. Some strategies are used well across the school. For example, teachers make very good use of frequent opportunities for pupils to exchange thoughts quickly with a partner to help them articulate and extend their ideas. This also keeps all pupils fully involved and aids their concentration and learning. In some lessons, however, teachers' questioning skills did not fully extend pupils of differing abilities and especially the higher attaining pupils. The pace of the lesson was not always well judged and reduced its sense of purpose. In many lessons, although the learning intentions were shared with pupils initially, there was little reference to them during the lesson to keep pupils' focused on them and the end of the lesson was not used well enough to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.
17. Teachers make much better use of assessment information to support pupils' learning than at the time of the previous inspection, when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. This has contributed to the improved achievement in English, mathematics and science. In these subjects, assessment is now integrated well with planning. Learning targets for pupils of differing levels of attainment are linked to each unit of work. These are shared with pupils and their parents to help them know how to improve their work and help teachers to be precise in their assessment of what pupils have learnt. This is particularly effective in promoting pupils' learning in English where the subject manager has refined the targets in considerable detail.
18. The accuracy of teachers' assessment is a continuing focus for development this year, although it has improved over the last two years, especially in English where examples of pupils' writing are moderated regularly. In most other subjects teachers assess pupils' understanding at the end of each topic of work so that they know how to plan the next steps in learning. In ICT, where assessment procedures have not yet been developed, it is difficult for teachers to plan subsequent work effectively. Some very good examples were seen of teachers making useful comments when marking work so that pupils knew exactly what to do to improve their work, for example, dialogues between pupil and teacher in reading journals clearly motivated pupils to read more extensively. Although all work is marked, there are still considerable variations in its usefulness to support pupils' learning.

The curriculum

The breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory and it meets statutory requirements. Enrichment through extra-curricular provision is very good and contributes very well to pupils' personal development. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning is secure and has improved since the last inspection, with that in the Foundation Stage being good.
- Skilful teaching assistants are deployed well and provide very good support for pupils' learning, especially for those with special educational needs.
- A very good range of sporting and other activities, visits and visitors to the school enhance the curriculum.
- The school's accommodation and the outdoor areas contribute well to pupils' learning.

Commentary

19. Curriculum planning for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is sound overall. It promotes continuity in pupils' learning and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The recently appointed curriculum manager has a clear action plan to evaluate the curriculum and develop imaginative changes that make best use of cross-curricular links and ICT. The curriculum for the reception children is well planned and provides a wide range of challenging and stimulating activities, which are well matched to their needs. The outdoor area has been imaginatively developed since the last inspection and is well used.
20. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall, a similar outcome to the last inspection. Systems are in place for both teachers and teaching assistants to monitor progress and this is reviewed regularly. Individual education plans identify needs and staff understand the need to encourage independent learning. The 'sunshine room,' where pupils are withdrawn for additional support, also provides a refuge for pupils who need 'time out' for behavioural support and this ensures that any disruptions to teaching in classes are minimised.
21. The curriculum is enriched by a very wide variety of extra-curricular activities run by staff, teaching assistants and other volunteers and includes seasonal sports, such as sailing and golf, as well as indoor clubs, including a choir. A lunchtime club is run every day for pupils who have difficulties in sustaining appropriate behaviour in the playground. A computer club is run before school for pupils who do not have access to a computer at home. Another strength of the provision is that several of the activities are for the younger pupils. There is a good range of visitors to the school who enrich the curriculum. The school is situated in a rich historical and geographical environment and all classes make much use of this. Visits further afield are made to places of interest related to subjects they are studying. Very good use is made of the local Travellers community and their culture is celebrated through a Travellers' Week, when they take up residence in the school grounds and share their traditional skills with pupils and the local community.
22. The accommodation is very good and very well maintained by the site manager. A small music room, a library, which is being developed further as a learning resource following its move to a larger room, and a well-equipped ICT suite contribute well to pupils' learning. The spacious ground and environmental areas, which include two ponds, increase pupils' breadth of experience. The school is well resourced and teachers are beginning to make good use of the recently purchased interactive whiteboards to extend the use of ICT to support pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure the care, guidance and welfare of the pupils are effective. Achievement and personal development are monitored well. The involvement of the pupils in the school's work and development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures to settle children into the reception class ensure they are eager to learn.
- The school takes good steps to ensure that the pupils are safe.
- The very good relationships between pupils and adults help the pupils feel secure in school.
- Pupils' personal and academic development is monitored closely.

Commentary

23. Parents commented positively on the arrangements for helping their children settle in when they start school. A high number of parents show their support for the teacher by regularly helping in the reception class. The reception class teacher works closely with local pre-school groups. The children have opportunities to spend time in the classroom prior to starting, the teacher visits the children in their homes and meetings are held for parents so that they can discuss any concerns that they might have. Older pupils look after the youngest children well at break and lunchtimes and it was obvious during the inspection that the reception children enjoy being in school.
24. The school's formal procedures for dealing with matters of health and safety, child protection and first aid are in place and understood well by staff. Health, sex and drugs education are well planned and through the good personal, social and health programme the pupils are learning to keep themselves safe and healthy. The lunchtime club is providing good support for pupils who benefit from being in a smaller group. The pupils are well supervised at break times and routines, such as the way lunchtimes are managed, are helping pupils to develop good social skills.
25. Very good relationships were seen between pupils and adults and during a discussion with the oldest pupils they all said that they could easily talk to their teachers if they had any problems. Teachers listen to pupils well during lessons and pupils feel that their opinions are valued. For example pupils suggest charities for the Lent Appeal and then organise activities to raise money for the chosen charity. Through the school council, pupils also have the opportunity to make a difference to their school. In personal, social and health education lessons and 'circle times' pupils are able to discuss concerns with their teachers and classmates and this is also helping to build strong and trusting relationships throughout the school.
26. During the inspection, teachers were seen sharing lesson intentions with the class. This helps the pupils to understand what they will be learning. Skilled teaching assistants are very well used to ensure that pupils get the most out of their lessons. They are very sensitive to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and offer very good support and encouragement. The teaching assistant based in the 'sunshine room' especially offers good support and counselling when required. Personal and academic targets are discussed with the pupils and are used well in English to help pupils understand how well they are doing. Marking of English work is helping pupils to understand what they need to do next to improve, although in other subjects marking is not as informative. However, there is no formal provision for pupils with special educational needs to be involved when learning targets for their individual education plans are set. This means they are less aware of what they need to do to improve. There are very good systems in place to monitor pupils' personal development and the awarding of merits and certificates is helping pupils to be proud of their efforts both in and out of school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are encouraged to be full partners in their children's education.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- The school makes very good use of the local and wider community.

Commentary

27. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting were mainly positive. However, a high number of parents do not feel that the school is well led and managed and inspection findings judge this to be satisfactory overall. They also do not think that the school seeks their views but there are good procedures in place to ensure that this can happen. For example, the governors send out questionnaires and responds and acts on suggestions where possible; parents are invited to open meetings with governors and governors make themselves available to parents at other times as well. Teachers are very welcoming to parents and will talk to them at the beginning and end of the day and many parents and teacher have a good dialogue through the home-school contact books. At the pre-inspection meeting, some parents said that they were concerned about the progress their children are making in the mixed age classes. This was not borne out during the inspection. Teachers match tasks well to the needs of the different pupils in their classes and group pupils carefully to ensure that all are making progress in their learning.
28. Written information is well presented. The newsletters are detailed and class teachers write to parents to show what their children will be learning. The school's website also contains useful information for parents. The school organises workshops for parents but they are not always well attended. Parents have been well informed about the RATS reading scheme and the use of story sacks and the help that many give to their children in reading is helping to raise standards across the school. The annual reports to parents are of a good quality. They clearly state what children know, understand and can do and give targets for improvement. The reports are issued in the spring term and the targets are discussed at a consultation evening. These are revisited at another meeting in the summer term to see what progress the pupils have made. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are given written notice of the targets set each term and are consulted at the end of the summer term with regard to progress. However, they are not encouraged to take part in termly reviews and so the opportunities for them to support their children's learning are limited. Pupils interviewed during the inspection said that homework has increased in preparation for their move to secondary school but when they were in Years 3 and 4 it was very repetitive. This confirms the view of some parents that 'the same old stuff is not very interesting'.
29. Pupils have opportunities to take part in sporting activities against other schools; these include football, netball, cricket and athletics. They also participate in the Weald of Kent Music Festival. The school has very good links with the two secondary schools in the town. Physical education teachers from Angley School visit to train staff in how to raise standards and extend opportunities in this subject. Cranbrook School provides support for maths and science teaching. Parents of pupils who left the school last year were very happy with the transfer arrangements for their children to Angley School. A display of photographs and thoughts from past pupils show that they were very well prepared for their move to secondary education. The school worked very closely with the two secondary schools last year to produce the Cranbrook Big Read. This has been very well received by other schools locally and nationally and has had a very positive impact in raising interest in books and reading in all year groups and amongst parents.
30. The school uses the local and wider community very well to enrich the curriculum. The local clergy lead assemblies in school and pupils visit St. Dunstan's Church to support the religious education curriculum and for services. Harvest gifts are collected for senior citizens and the choir entertains senior citizens both in school and in a residential home. They also sing in the town at the switch on of the Christmas lights. There are also good links with Cranbrook Library, the museum and the Vine Church and volunteers from the local community come into school

to listen to readers. The annual Traveller Festival brings many community members into the school and has helped to foster good relationships and an appreciation of the rich heritage of the travellers. All of these very good opportunities enhance pupils' personal and social development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory. The management and governance of the school are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The management of the school is now firmly focused on further improving standards and achievement.
- The governing body takes an active and well-informed part in the life of the school.
- The role of subject managers in monitoring teaching is not yet sufficiently developed.

Commentary

31. The headteacher has worked hard to help to bring about a good improvement in the overall leadership and management of the school, as well as his own leadership, which are now satisfactory. They were judged to be unsatisfactory in the last inspection. He has focused particularly on improving systems and procedures in management and this, together with good external support, has been instrumental in developing a firm commitment and whole school focus on raising standards, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. He has established a very broad but secure vision that he has shared with governors. Although there are no long-time priorities or time scales in association with this, short-term priorities are established annually when the school improvement plan is reviewed and rewritten.
32. The leadership of key staff is satisfactory, an improvement since the last inspection. However, the high turnover of teachers in the last two years has hindered the development of the roles of subject managers, especially in the monitoring of teaching. Several managers and also the deputy headteacher have been appointed recently to their posts and consequently, whilst they have made a good start in their new roles, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their work on either teaching or standards. Where teachers have been in post longer, for example in literacy, then the work undertaken to raise standards has been effective, as reflected in pupils' work and national test results. The leadership of the temporary part-time manager for special educational needs is satisfactory. She is available to both teachers and teaching assistants requiring support and advises regarding initial planning. However, there are no planned opportunities for her to either teach individuals or groups or to visit classes systematically to monitor the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching they receive. Administration, assessment and record keeping procedures are secure.
33. The headteacher has established effective planning teams. This is evident from the good quality of teaching plans produced. The direct involvement of members of the senior management team in this process enables them to monitor the implementation of school policies. The good teamwork and liaison between teachers and teaching assistants not only presents a very good role model to pupils but also effectively enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and those from Travellers' families to participate fully in activities in classes.
34. Thorough self-evaluation has ensured the accurate identification of key areas for school improvement. There has been a good response to the previous key issue relating to the monitoring of pupils' progress. A good range of performance and assessment data is now used effectively to track and set targets for the progress of individual pupils. The information is used so that additional help or challenge can be given to any who are not making the expected

progress. The performance management process has been developed effectively to provide focused support for key priorities on the school improvement plan. It has the added benefit of keeping all staff focused well on these priorities, which are carefully linked to well-planned training. Performance data is now also used well to identify any weaknesses in the curriculum, such as a lack of investigative and problem-solving skills in mathematics, which have become a specific focus in teachers' planning this year.

35. A much more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice has been taken since the last inspection. This includes regular observations of lessons by the headteacher, together with local education authority advisors and, more recently, the new deputy headteacher. Managers of core subjects, especially in English and science, have monitored pupils' learning through scrutinising work and discussions with pupils, although opportunities to monitor teaching have been limited. Action has then been taken to remedy identified weaknesses and to improve consistency, as with the strategies for guided reading. The number of teaching assistants has been increased to enable one to be placed in each class. They have good training opportunities and provide very effective support for pupils' learning. All of these factors are contributing significantly to the rapid improvements in teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
36. Governors are very supportive of the school and carry out their statutory duties well. Since the last inspection, there have been some changes in membership of the governing body and this opportunity has been used to create a more efficient committee structure. They are pro-active in, for example, their communication with parents and in aspects of management where they have particular expertise, such as workforce remodelling. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Good communication with staff, a well-planned programme of classroom visits linked to a strong partnership with subject managers, ongoing training and their understanding of performance data all contribute to this. This puts them in a strong position to take an active part in monitoring the school improvement plan and to question and discuss issues constructively with the headteacher and staff.
37. The governing body is very clear about obtaining value for money. It works well to seek out any available funding and to ensure that it is used well in support of school priorities and pupils' learning. It takes judicious and balanced account of a fall in the number of pupils and consequent funding and the needs of the school. As a result, financial planning and management are very good. The efficient administrative staff contribute very well to this.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	896502	Balance from previous year (included in total income)	51029
Total expenditure	829934	Balance carried forward to the next	66567
Expenditure per pupil	2943		

The high carry forward is mainly to cover the expected clawback for the fall in the number of pupils on roll.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

38. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and children achieve well because the teaching is good and the curriculum provides a wide range of challenging, stimulating activities, which are very well matched to their needs. The classroom is well laid out so that children know where to find equipment and can tidy away quickly. The teacher makes every effort to use the out door area imaginatively. The induction of the children is very thorough, providing parents and children with a range of opportunities to visit the school. Very good links with the local pre-school groups contribute to a smooth start to school. Children's attainment on entry covers the full ability range but from 2004 Foundation Stage Profile data, previous baseline information and inspection evidence, it is below average overall.
39. Good provision has been sustained since the last report. In addition, the school has developed a well-resourced outdoor area in response to weaknesses identified in this aspect and fully implemented all the national guidance in recent years and so improvement since the previous inspection is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between children and adults are good.
- The children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions from an early age.
- The daily routines offer security and lead children towards good achievement in increasing their independence.

Commentary

40. Over half the children are on course to reach or exceed the goals expected in this area of development by the end of reception, which is a little below average. From when the children enter the reception class, the teacher, teaching assistant and other adults work hard at promoting good relationships, and as a result, all children are happy, relaxed, and benefit fully from the wide range of activities provided. In the morning, they come into their classroom happily, accompanied by a parent and quickly register their arrival on a board. There is a planned balance between direct teaching and children making choices, enabling them to develop their independence and this contributes to learning the correct way to behave. They quickly learn how to share with each other and take turns, but although they talk to adults they do not readily talk to each other when working in a group. High expectations and the opportunities given to the children through good teaching enable them to achieve well, many often coming from a low base.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every opportunity is used to develop children's language skills, and teaching is good.
- Strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of early reading and writing skills.

Commentary

41. Approximately half the children are on course to attain the goals expected by the end of the reception year, with a few exceeding them. This is below average, but represents good achievement for this group of children. They develop speaking and listening skills well through many opportunities in the daily class routines. After reading and talking about the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', the children engaged in a wide range of related activities. One group, supported by an adult, role-played the story in a theme area with different size furniture, while another group sequenced the story in pictures. An example of the wide range of ability in the class was highlighted by the number of children who had difficulty in understanding the difference between 'bigger' and 'biggest'. Opportunities such as circle times, as well as good questioning during lessons and other activities promote these skills.
42. Good attention is given to the development of writing skills. The good teaching is characterised by well-organised and appropriate activities that motivate children, and a good supply of paper, pencils and crayons is available for children to use. They enjoy practicing their letter formation, but although it is early in the school year, only a few children are beginning to write words with any independence.
43. The development of reading skills has a high priority. There is a good programme of teaching sounds, children take books home to share with their parents and careful records are kept of each child's development so that appropriate help can be given to move children on. There are many opportunities for children to listen to stories and to enjoy looking at books.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults question children very well and use a wide variety of activities to support learning, which contributes to their good achievement.
- Good teaching emphasises the correct use of mathematical vocabulary.

Commentary

44. Over half the children are on course to reach the goals expected by the end of the reception year. Pupils join in well with all number activities and good planning contributes their understanding of the use of mathematics. In one lesson, the children enjoyed a wide range of mathematical experience when making chapattis. As an adult weighed the ingredients the children looked closely at the scales and measuring jugs to make sure the quantities were correct. They worked well in small groups with a high ratio of adults who, guided by the teacher, questioned the children well to assess their understanding. They talked about shapes and timed the minutes that children kneaded the dough. There are good resources, such as board games, large number tracks, and objects for sorting and counting. Planning for mathematical development is carefully matched to children's different abilities, so that all are well challenged and achieve well.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

45. Not enough teaching was seen in this area of learning to make an overall provision judgement. Children are interested in the changes they have seen in autumn and are increasingly aware of the world around them. In ICT, they used appropriate skills in controlling the mouse and programmes are well suited to their abilities. In religious education, they are learning about the symbolism associated with Hindu festival of Divali. From planning, learning is wide ranging and makes good use of the rich locality of the school.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

46. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards in this area of learning, although from the work displayed in the classrooms there is a very strong emphasis on children's creative artwork, using a wide range of media. Children enjoy music and regularly sing songs and rhymes.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

47. There is no overall judgement of provision, however, best use is made of the high quality outside area for children's physical development. Planning ensures that children have regular access to a wide range of equipment, and by working together, this also contributes well to the development of their personal and social skills. Children handle small tools sensibly and use construction toys and malleable materials, such as play dough, well.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 and in Year 6 have improved since the last inspection, especially in writing, as a result of effective school action.
- Pupils now achieve well overall as a result of good teaching across the school, although a few inconsistencies remain.
- The subject manager has made a very effective contribution to the rapid improvements in pupils' reading and writing skills.

Commentary

48. There has been a very good improvement in standards from well below average to broadly average by Year 6 and Year 2. Achievement has improved from unsatisfactory to good. Consistently challenging work, evident, for example, from their books this term, and good teaching is helping Year 6 pupils to overcome previous shortcomings in their learning noted in the last report two years ago. The improvement in standards across the school is particularly marked in writing, which has been a key priority for school development in the last two years. This is reflected at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils both reaching and exceeding the expected National Curriculum levels.
49. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in English was very varied and unsatisfactory overall. In spite of the disruption caused by a high turnover of teachers in the last two years, teaching and learning are now good across the school and there is greater consistency of approach. This is partly due to effective joint planning between teachers. As a result, the majority of boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, are making good progress in both their reading and writing skills. This was illustrated in a very well taught lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2 which built very well on work undertaken with author Nigel Hinton the previous day. The teacher immediately captured pupils' interest in a skilfully led review to help pupils recall the main suggestions made by the author for improving story writing. She extended pupils' vocabulary well, ensuring the meaning of challenging words, such as 'elements' and 'concentration', were fully explored. Well focused questioning and the use of paired discussion ensured that all pupils were fully involved and this reinforced their learning well. Tasks were matched very well to pupils' differing ages and levels of attainment and were clearly explained. All of these features helped pupils to settle quickly, successfully and enthusiastically to their writing and to sustain a high level of concentration. The older pupils in particular worked independently very well, applying what they had learnt, being careful to keep checking their work to make sure it made sense and to use their word books to assist their spelling. By the

end of the lesson, this resulted in high quality work, such as, 'She felt terrified. She felt her heart beat really fast'.

50. Teachers take care to choose interesting and relevant contexts for writing that motivate pupils well. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher gave pupils the opportunity to write their report on the visit of Nigel Hinton for the school newspaper or the school website. This not only gave a good sense of purpose to the lesson but was also used well by the teacher to extend pupils' understanding of the need to adapt their language to their chosen audience. Teachers provide more consistent opportunities for pupils to re-draft their work and to write at length. Pupils' handwriting and presentation of work has improved from that described at the time of the last inspection. However, handwriting policy needs to be reviewed, as it does not promote a clear and smooth development from non-cursive to cursive handwriting for younger pupils.
51. A number of factors have contributed to the very good improvement in pupils' achievement across the school. The most significant is the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has contributed to the improvement, together with well-focused staff training and regular opportunities to moderate pupils' writing across the school. There has been a good improvement in the tracking of pupils' progress through the National Curriculum levels. This has helped to raise teachers' expectations for pupils of all abilities. It is now used well to identify at an early stage those pupils who are not making the expected progress and to provide support through programmes such as the early literacy strategy and booster classes. The school has allocated additional time for English for every class beyond the literacy hour. This year it is used for guided reading.
52. The knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject manager leads and manages the subject very well and has contributed significantly to the improvements since the last inspection. She has been instrumental in helping to implement an effective new planning framework for literacy that is helping pupils to build progressively on previous learning. She has worked very hard to produce a series of finely tuned targets related to each unit of the framework at word, sentence and text level. These enable teachers to provide pupils with very relevant individual targets that help them to know exactly what they need to do to improve their current work, thus contributing to their good progress. The targets are also shared with parents to enable them to help their child. The manager has also produced a reading scheme to promote the skills of older pupils when they have become independent readers. It is very successful in motivating and challenging them to read a broad range of genres and authors and, through its website, informing interested parents as well. In this way, it is contributing to the rising standards in reading that are particularly evident in Year 6. Other initiatives to successfully increase pupils' interest and enjoyment in reading include visits from authors and poets, a Book Club and the organisation of events such as the recent 'Big Read' to which the two local secondary schools also contributed.
53. The manager has monitored the implementation of a revised, common approach to guided reading in all classes to promote consistency and continuity of learning for pupils. As yet, she has not had the opportunity to monitor full literacy lessons. This is now needed in order to evaluate the effectiveness and continuity of developments from Year 1 to Year 6 and to inform further staff training to eliminate remaining inconsistencies. These include, for example, the effectiveness of the end of lessons to review and assess pupils' learning, the use of reading journals and the quality of marking.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Teachers make satisfactory use of opportunities, especially in history and geography to create interesting and relevant contexts for pupils to develop and apply their literacy skills, which help to motivate pupils well. Examples include writing in role as a Victorian child and summarising researched information about river features. However, opportunities are not fully exploited in subjects such as science or in religious education where insufficient written recording currently takes place. Teachers generally extend pupils' vocabulary well across the curriculum by ensuring that they understand and use subject terminology correctly.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, an improvement since the last inspection.
- Teaching assistants support learning very well.
- All staff are now focused on raising standards and this is beginning to impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge need to increase still further.
- Mental recall of number facts and patterns needs to improve.

Commentary

55. National tests in 2004 indicate that standards were below average at the end of Year 2, because too few pupils attained the higher levels expected. However, inspection evidence shows that teachers' expectations are now higher as pupils are achieving well and standards have improved to average working at the expected levels. Standards in Year 6 remain just below average as indicated by the national test results of 2004. This shows a marked improvement from the well below average performance at the time of last inspection and a reversal of a declining trend in results. Achievement has improved from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. Ongoing intensive support from the Local Education Authority, staff training, the employment of additional staff to reduce class sizes prior to national tests and the creation of booster classes have all had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and standards.
56. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to very good and is good overall, an improvement since the last inspection. Work is generally well matched to ability and teaching assistants support pupils, including those with special educational needs, very well. As a result, pupils are beginning to develop positive attitudes to mathematics. Some teachers use the newly installed white boards very effectively to support learning and this good practice needs to become consistent throughout the school. Whilst information technology is having a positive impact on learning, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to give pupils the opportunity to use apparatus to consolidate understanding. Improvements in monitoring and tracking pupils' progress mean that teachers can identify those aspects of work that need further consolidation, such as investigations and problem solving. Individual learning targets are set but, although the quality of marking has improved, targets are not referred to when work is marked. Consequently, pupils are not always sure of what they need to do in order to improve.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The manager, the third in three years, has led the subject for just over a year. This lack of continuity, due to staff changes, has hindered improvement to some extent. With the support of the local authority and headteacher, the current manager has taken on greater responsibility for the subject. He has recently established clear objectives for improvement in standards and teaching and has begun to monitor these in all classes. He shows a good understanding of the importance of teamwork and since September this is reflected in the effective joint planning in year groups throughout the school. He is beginning to share his high expectations with staff and is determined to raise standards further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Teachers are beginning to recognise and seize opportunities to apply mathematics in subjects across the curriculum. For example, pupils have interrogated census data in history, studied

rainfall distribution in geography and drawn graphs to show the decline in the local newt population and other outcomes in science.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good.
- The school places an appropriate emphasis on investigative and practical work.
- Good leadership and management of the subject have contributed to raising standards.
- Good resources and use of the school's environmental areas contributes well to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

59. The Year 6 National Curriculum test results in science, while showing an improving trend, were below average in 2004, although an increased proportion of pupils achieved the higher level. This is an improvement from the well below average performance two years ago. Standards in the current Year 6 are similar to this and achievement is satisfactory. Teacher assessments in 2004 and inspection evidence confirm that by Year 2 standards are average and have also improved since the last inspection.
60. Teaching and learning is now good overall and this is reflected in pupils' improving achievement. Teachers throughout the school encourage pupils to investigate and think about science. They provide interesting and motivating activities, such as those in a lesson for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils that helped them to explore forces in air and water. In a Year 3 and Year 4 lesson, the teacher organised pupils into groups to monitor the changes in temperature of hot and cold water. Learning was well supported by using probes in three water containers linked to a computer to give a visual display of the changes. Pupils' understanding and personal development is further promoted by environmental studies using the two ponds and other areas in the school grounds. For example, pupils have monitored the declining newt population in the two ponds since 1993, recorded this graphically and written reasoned arguments for this, while the fitness trail contributes to pupils' understanding of aspects of a healthy life style.
61. Good teaching focuses on well-planned lessons with a strong investigative element. However, while pupils are asked to make predictions, the reasons for their predictions are not sufficiently well explored. In a Year 3 and Year 4 lesson, too many pupils predicted that hot water left at room temperature would get hotter and that cold water would get colder without explaining why, although by the end of the lesson, through a well planned investigation, pupils had clarified their thinking. Pupils are encouraged to record their results and targets are displayed in their books although not always referred to when the work is marked.
62. Since the last inspection the improvement in the leadership and management of science has been good, although there has been insufficient time for this to impact fully on the standards and achievement of the older pupils. The scheme of work has been successfully revised and includes a common planning format. Teachers are becoming more skilled at moderating pupils' work against National Curriculum criteria and assessment procedures are being developed. Links with the local secondary school, which has specialised science status, are being productively forged and there is planned development of the monitoring of the subject, which until now has been mainly through teachers' planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The newly equipped ICT suite is a valuable resource and places the school in a strong position to raise pupils' standards and achievement further.
- Monitoring, tracking and assessment procedures need to be developed further.
- The installation of interactive whiteboards has enhanced learning in some classes.
- Some teachers need further training to increase their confidence and ensure that interactive whiteboards are used effectively to promote learning.
- Good links are being established with a local secondary school to share expertise and resources.

Commentary

63. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory by Year 2 and Year 6, a similar outcome to the last inspection. Until very recently the computers in the ICT suite were unreliable and this impacted negatively on achievement because both teachers and pupils became less confident as opportunities for ICT to support learning were lost. However, very recently installed equipment has rectified this problem and the suite is now well used. Resource provision is good overall and the developing links with one of the local secondary schools, for example in providing equipment to support control technology and the use of sensors, enhance learning well. Tracking and assessment procedures need to be revised in order that staff can identify what pupils need to learn next and thereby ensure that all are challenged to attain still higher standards.
64. The teaching and learning observed varied from satisfactory to good, but discussions with pupils and scrutiny of work in subjects across the curriculum confirm that teaching is satisfactory overall. The most successful lessons were characterised by a very good computer to pupil ratio, confident teachers and clearly defined learning objectives. They also benefited from very good support from teaching assistants either in the ICT suite or by taking a group for activities in the adjacent library, allowing the teacher to work with a small group. Pupils' communication and social skills were also enhanced in a Year 2 lesson when mixed ability pairs, including pupils with special educational needs worked together for the mutual benefit of both pupils. Lessons were less successful when more able pupils were not challenged to work at a faster pace but spent too much time consolidating skills already mastered. Some teachers also need to gain more confidence in using interactive whiteboards effectively to promote learning.
65. Discussions with pupils confirm that they have very positive attitudes to ICT. Many gain from having access to computers at home but, in a very good and effective initiative, the school runs an early morning computer club for the benefit of pupils who do not have access to hardware outside school. Pupils talk confidently about using sensors to record the impact of temperature on the rate ice cubes melt, plotting items on spreadsheets, controlling devices on the computer screen and word processing in various fonts and formats to support their writing and presentation skills. Overall they are presented with an appropriate range of work but need to further develop their ability to control devices.
66. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The very recently appointed co-ordinator has clarified her vision with the support of the local advisor and has correctly identified the improvement of tracking, monitoring and assessment procedures as priorities for development. She has the enthusiasm, skills, knowledge and understanding to support staff as they continue to explore the potential of ICT in supporting learning in subjects across the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is now being re-established and is satisfactory. Good examples were seen of its use enhancing pupils' understanding in

mathematics, science, history and geography. Older pupils in particular make frequent use of the Internet to research information and teachers in Years 5 and 6, for example, gave pupils good guidance over selecting and summarising material, linked to their current work in English.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. Geography and history were sampled.

68. In **geography**, a scrutiny of planning and pupils' work shows an appropriate balance between the development of geographical skills and knowledge and understanding of the locations and themes studied. In a satisfactory lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, pupils drew appropriate comparisons between trading in Chembokalli and their local area and considered the advantages and disadvantages of each. While planning promotes progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school, not enough account is taken of what pupils already know, as the same task is usually given to the whole class. Previous work on this topic showed a satisfactory level of map reading skills. Teachers make good use of the local environment. For example, Year 2 pupils studied the variety of buildings in Cranbrook High Street and their uses and how their locality is used for leisure. Older pupils have investigated features of the Crane Brook and undertake practical work in the extensive school grounds, for example, measuring the rate of evaporation of puddles in the playground.
69. In a well-taught **history** lesson in Years 5 and 6, pupils were researching key dates in the Tudor period. The teacher made good use of this planned opportunity to enable pupils to practise and apply the skills of note-taking and summarising which were a current focus in their literacy lessons. She ensured that tasks provided a good level of challenge for pupils of varying levels of attainment and she questioned pupils well to prompt useful group discussion about efficient ways of working together. This increased pupils' sense of purpose and pace of work. In a Year 5 lesson, good use was made of ICT for pupils to practise their skills of evaluating the usefulness of websites for specific purposes and to consolidate their knowledge of the Armada. However, subsequent work in the lesson offered little challenge to the higher attaining pupils. This was also reflected in a scrutiny of previous work, which also showed that the same task was usually given to all pupils.
70. The curriculum has an appropriate balance between the development of historical skills and knowledge and is enriched well by a good variety of visits, a good range of learning resources and close links with the local museum.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in lessons is not supported by sufficient recorded work for the older pupils and by Year 6 standards are below the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus.
- Good links with the local church contribute well to pupils' understanding of Christianity.
- The revised scheme of work currently being implemented is helping to correct the imbalance in the curriculum.

Commentary

71. By Year 2, standards are average and achievement in religious education is satisfactory. However, the lack of recorded work for the older pupils constrains their ability to reflect and reinforce their understanding and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils study Christianity and other world religions in line with the locally agreed syllabus, which focuses on learning

about and from religious and human experiences, but the similarities and differences between religions are not explored in depth and older pupils cannot make comparisons.

72. In the lessons seen, which were all based on Christianity, teachers involved pupils well in discussions. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, pupils acted out the parable of 'The Prodigal Son' and then took questions in the 'hot seat'. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to project an image of a parish church, although the planned virtual reality exploration of the church met technical faults!
73. There are very strong links with the local church, and the clergy play an important role in visiting the school and, for example, talking to Year 6 pupils about the bible as a religious and historical document. They also welcome the younger pupils, for example, into the church to study its main features. This contributes not only to pupils' religious education, but also to their spiritual development.
74. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There are adequate artefacts to support the planned teaching of major religions and the scheme of work has been recently revised. Monitoring of the subject is currently through teachers' planning. The assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding in line with the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus is planned but not yet in place. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory. While standards are lower than last reported, there is now a scheme of work that provides for a better balance between the teaching of world faiths and there is a clear distinction between the teaching of religious education and personal, social and health education. The good teaching seen in lessons has not yet had time to impact on standards and achievement by Year 6.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design and design and technology were sampled. Physical education and music were not inspected.

75. Only one lesson was observed in **art and design**. Displays around the school were examined and pupils interviewed and this indicates that standards are average - a similar outcome to the last inspection. In the satisfactory Year 6 lesson observed, the teacher encouraged pupils to discuss and plan starting points for a design for a 'story quilt.' Resources were well prepared and the teacher received good support from a volunteer parent and the teaching assistant. Displays indicate that pupils have applied a broad range of skills and techniques and explored opportunities to incorporate art into learning in subjects across the curriculum, such as the printing of designs for traditional Indian clothes and colour washing autumn leaves for the background of a display of poetry. The headteacher has just taken over the leadership of the subject and has a very clear vision for its future development beginning with a review of the existing scheme of work.
76. No lessons were seen in **design and technology** but curriculum planning ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are covered. The evidence is limited as the main units are planned for later in the year. There were good examples of work in a wide range of shelters that pupils throughout the school had made during the half term break. Some reception class children had made a room for the Three Bears, while older pupils had designed and made good quality shelters such as igloos and wigwams. Older pupils had included appropriate designs and descriptions with their shelters. Other examples of work from around the school included photographs of models of the changing accommodation of the Travelling community over time, and, in Year 2, models of buildings in Cranbrook.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area of the curriculum was sampled.

77. All of the pupils benefit from the good personal, social and health education and citizenship programme that the school has in place. Drugs, sex and health education are delivered

through PSHE and other areas of the curriculum including science and physical education. The school nurse, the police and fire service and the local authority advisor on drugs education support the programme well. Lessons seen during the inspection covered valuable topics including making choices, co-operative working and problem solving and in these lessons the pupils were given good opportunities to share their thoughts and express their opinions. PSHE is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and personal development and its success is reflected in the good attitudes and very good relationships throughout the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	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	2
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).