

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **HILLTOP PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Frindsbury, Rochester

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118473

Headteacher: Mr John Allen

Lead inspector: Mrs Patricia Davies

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005

Inspection number: 267023

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 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	416
School address:	Hilltop Road Frindsbury Rochester Kent
Postcode:	ME2 4QN
Telephone number:	01634 710312
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Les Hoskins
Date of previous inspection:	19 April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Hilltop is a large primary school with 416 pupils, including 60 children in the Reception classes who all attend full-time. There are two entry points to the Reception year, one in September and the second in January, and requests for places exceed the number that is available. There are more girls overall in the school and some imbalances across individual year groups, but these factors do not have a marked impact on the balance of boys and girls within individual classes. There is some movement of pupils to and from other schools in addition to that at the expected starting and departure points, but the extent of this is generally not significant. Staffing has been very stable over time, including the period since the previous inspection.
- Most pupils come from the immediate vicinity of the school, although some come from further afield. The socio-economic background of pupils is mixed, but broadly average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average but the school's own analysis suggests eligibility for this support is greater. There are no pupils in care.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a diverse mix of minority ethnic background is represented among other pupils, with the largest group coming from an Asian-Indian heritage. Currently, two pupils are at the early stages of learning English, and other pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English competently. A significant minority of parents and carers chose not to give information about their ethnic background.
- The school's most recent figures for pupils with special educational needs are close to the national average at 16.3 per cent, but still a little below it. Earlier school figures taken up to 2004 indicate the proportion to have fallen over recent years. There is a broad range of needs including hearing impairment, dyslexia, moderate learning, speech and communication and social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of need is broadly average.
- When children join the Reception class their attainment is broadly similar to that of children of a similar age.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22460	Patricia Davies	<i>Lead inspector</i>	English; English as an additional language.
19677	Marion Cumbers	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
30544	Gillian Battarbee	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Design and technology; Music; Physical education.
1578	Maureen Sinclair	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Religious education; Foundation Stage; Special educational needs.
20846	Alan Wilson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Art and design; Information and communication technology.

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Hilltop is a **satisfactory** school, keen to give all its pupils a wide range of experiences, and with a good ethos. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is achievement, and there are particular areas of strength in each. The present Year 6 pupils are reaching standards that are in line with national expectations for English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), while standards are above the expectations for science. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school manages its money well to create a safe and attractive environment, and gives sound value for money overall.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good teaching of science and history, leading to good overall levels of achievement in these subjects. Pupils also achieve well in physical education, where sporting activities are excellent, in reading in Years 3 to 6 and in religious education in Years 1 and 2.
- A lack of detailed analysis and use of assessment information to guide the planning of activities in lessons so that all pupils are suitably challenged in all instances.
- Good levels of pastoral care and attention given to pupils' personal and social development.
- The time allocated for teaching, which is below nationally recommended minimum levels.
- Good links with parents and the community.

The degree of improvement made since the school was last inspected, in April 1999, is satisfactory, especially in view of the positive effect of recent improvements. Key issues from before, relating to leadership and management, provision for Reception aged children and to resources, have been satisfactorily taken forward, with much improvement to resources for ICT and to outdoor facilities for Reception aged children. Strengths have been maintained in the school's pastoral care of pupils and its promotion of their personal development. There have been some good improvements to particular subjects, some of which are already influencing academic achievement. However, inconsistencies in provision and in pupils' performance remain, partly because some developments are relatively new; despite improvements to assessment, issues to do with the effective use of assessment data and the promotion of high levels of attainment have still to be fully resolved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.*

*Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Some caution needs to be applied to the comparison of the school's national test results with those of similar schools, because results sometimes fall close to the benchmark grouping for another set of similar schools. This was true for the 2004 results and is also the case for the present Year 6. This means that the similar school comparisons given above do not give a wholly accurate illustration of the progress made by these pupils since their Year 2 tests, the comparison for 2004 being much more positive when compared with the next benchmark group. Nevertheless, results have shown quite a lot of variation over time, and those for science have fallen almost consistently since 2000. Neither has the school always got its targets right; sometimes there have been significant differences between the predicted proportion and the actual result for the higher Level 5, particularly in mathematics. In response to the school's work to improve the performance of more

able pupils, the unvalidated results of the national tests taken this term show an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in science. The proportion gaining the higher Level 3 in the 2005 Year 2 national tests has also increased from the previous year in reading and writing. The school has been more successful in gaining Level 5 test results in reading than in writing in the present Year 6.

Inspection evidence shows current **achievement to be satisfactory** for all ability groups, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). When children enter the Reception classes their attainment is broadly similar to children of a similar age. They make sound progress, and standards remain broadly similar to expectations when they enter Year 1. Progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6, where teaching and learning are almost always good, and other pockets of good achievement are also to be found, as noted earlier under the school's strengths. Pupils now in Year 2 are reaching standards broadly in line with national expectations in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT. Standards in the current Year 6 also meet national expectations in writing, mathematics and ICT and are above them for reading and science. Standards are also above national expectations in Years 2 and 6 in history and physical education. Pupils in Year 2 are exceeding the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus, and they meet the objectives in Year 6. Not enough evidence was collected to make judgements about standards or achievement in other subjects.

Pupils' personal qualities as a whole, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **good**. Relationships are very good, and so is behaviour overall, the school having high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils enjoy school life and have good attitudes to their work. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory, and the school is improving its procedures for following up unexplained absence on the first day it occurs.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education is satisfactory**, with a wide range of opportunities for enriching pupils' experience and participation, particularly in sport. **Teaching and learning are also satisfactory**, and a significant proportion is good. Assessment systems are sound, but the use of data for detailed analysis and planning is unsatisfactory.

The curriculum is satisfactory, but the less than recommended amount of time given for teaching is inhibiting learning in some subjects. Provision for SEN and EAL is satisfactory, with some very good areas of support within that for EAL. Systems for pupils' welfare and care are good, as are links with parent and community. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Accommodation is good and resourcing is satisfactory.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Leadership and management are satisfactory.** The headteacher leads a well-organised community, and the stable, experienced staff works well as a team. The school has a sound grasp of its relative strengths and areas needing improvement, but does not yet review its performance in enough detail to ensure that it resolves inconsistencies in the quality of its work. Governance is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. Governors are supportive and keen. They have increased their capacity for monitoring the school's work but have yet fully to formalise their systems for judging the impact of initiatives.

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

Most parents and pupils show good levels of satisfaction with the school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Refine the analysis and use of assessment information to direct the planning of lesson activities, in order to ensure that all pupils consistently make good or better progress.
- Increase the time allocated for teaching to meet nationally recommended minimum levels, so that pupils' learning is not inhibited.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

**Achievement as a whole is satisfactory**, and there is good achievement within some subjects. Pupils in the present Year 6 are reaching standards above national expectations in science and reading, and broadly in line with expectations in other aspects of English, in mathematics, ICT and religious education.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement in history, music and physical education throughout the school, in religious education in Years 1 and 2, and in science in Years 3 to 6.

#### Commentary

1. The most recent assessments of children's attainment when they very first join the Reception year reflect the findings of the previous inspection and indicate that children's attainment at this point is broadly similar to what is normally found. Having achieved satisfactorily, the children's attainment remains at the expected level by the time they join Year 1.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.6 (26.3)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	28.5 (26.9)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.0 (29.4)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 61 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The picture of attainment shown in the school's national test results, and in the findings of this inspection, is a mixed one and different in some of its detail from the findings of the previous inspection. At that time the academic performance in the Reception year and in Years 1 and 2 was more favourable than it was in Years 3 to 6. The national test results for Year 6 over the last four years, however, have tended to be better than those for Year 2. They have more often been above, or well above, the average for all schools nationally in relation to individual subjects, with the exception of reading at Year 2.

3. Comparisons with national data made after the 2004 tests indicate that the overall trends in test results had fallen below the national trend for both year groups, although the fall was largely due to two sets of poorer than usual results: in 2003 in the case of Year 6, and in 2004 in Year 2. The Year 2 results in 2004 were affected by a higher than normal proportion of pupils with SEN. Without the lower results in these years the trend is broadly in keeping with the national trend for both year groups. Nevertheless, there has been a downward trend in science results at Year 6 since 2000, and girls have not performed as well as boys in this subject.

4. Some caution should also be taken when considering the similar schools comparison based on pupils' prior attainment in the Year 2 tests. This comparison gives an indication of the level of pupils' progress since that time but does not always give a wholly accurate picture, because overall Year 2 attainment often hovers close to the cusp of the next benchmark group. Such was the case for the Year 6 group taking their test in 2004, and for the present Year 6 group. When the 2004 results are compared within the adjacent, lower benchmark group, progress looks to have been much greater.

5. The other indicator of progress over time, the 'value added' comparison, indicates that Year 6 pupils taking the 2004 tests made sound gains in their learning across Years 3 to 6. Evidence from this inspection supports this comparison, also showing **achievement to be satisfactory** as a whole for all ability groups, including the more able. Achievement accelerates during Years 5 and 6, where good teaching takes place more consistently than anywhere else in the school. In broad terms the school has a sound grasp of where it needs to take action. Recent improvements to science, for instance, are having a significant effect on progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6, where all pupils, including girls, achieve well. The results of this year's Year 6 science tests show a larger proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 than before. The school has also seen greater success in writing in the present Year 2 tests, where Level 3 results have improved upon those of 2004, as they also have in reading. However, the same impact has not been made in the present Year 6 tests, in which pupils have continued to do better in reading than in writing at Level 5. Despite the improvements to assessment these are too recent to have influenced the accuracy of earlier target setting, particularly for Level 5 in mathematics. Shortcomings in the close analysis and use of assessment information are the main reasons why there are remaining inconsistencies in the rate of progress, including that of the more able pupils, which remains a whole-school priority.

6. Other areas of good achievement are in reading in Years 3 to 6, in history, music and physical education throughout the school, and in religious education in Years 1 and 2. Pupils with SEN and those with EAL are enabled to make the same progress as others because of the focused support they receive, individually or in small groups, from learning support staff. The present Year 6 are reaching standards that broadly match national expectations for English, mathematics and ICT, and to the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Those currently in Year 2 are also meeting national expectations in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT. Standards are above expectations in science and reading in Year 6 and religious education in Year 2, and in history, music and physical education in both year groups. Not enough information was collected to make overall judgements about standards and achievement in other subjects.

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

Pupils' personal qualities as a whole are **good**. Behaviour is very good, as are pupils' relationships with others, and they have good attitudes to learning. These attributes are successfully promoted by the school's **good** overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good ethos which enables pupils to work productively and enjoy school life.
- High expectations of conduct and behaviour.
- Limited arrangements for following up absence on the first day.

### **Commentary**

7. Strengths in this aspect of the school have been sustained since the last inspection. Two influential features are the very good attention paid to pupils' moral development and the good support for nurturing social skills. Children's personal and social development is promoted well in the Reception classes and helps to create confidence, self-esteem and a good sense of co-operation right at the start of their education, and also for the minority who find it more difficult to respond to expectations of behaviour. Another successful area is pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own culture, which is promoted well through the good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities available to them. The advancement of spiritual development and awareness, and the appreciation of other cultures and ways of life, is satisfactory.

8. The school has an all-pervading positive ethos which makes it a pleasant and calm place where pupils feel valued and can concentrate on their learning. Despite some concerns expressed before the inspection by a minority of parents and some pupils, inspection evidence found that the behaviour of pupils as a whole is very good, and that they know the school has high expectations of their conduct. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and fairness, but they are realistic, and are aware that bullying occasionally occurs. However, no example of such behaviour was seen during this inspection, and pupils confirmed the views of parents that the school deals very swiftly and effectively with any problems. Exclusions are rare and, in response to two short-term exclusions early this year, the school has reviewed its procedures to ensure their effectiveness.

#### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

#### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	380	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	12	0	0

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

9. Relationships are very good throughout the school, and the staff team is a good role model for pupils. The school promotes inclusion well, and involves as many of its pupils as it can in everything it does. It aims to boost their confidence and self-esteem with sensitive support when necessary. In all areas of school life the pupils are encouraged to do their best 'for their team, win or lose', and are reminded that they are allowed to make mistakes. Pupils with EAL are supported particularly well, both socially and academically, and are encouraged to take a full part in the life of the school; they speak with appreciation of their experiences at this school.

10. Where lessons grab their attention, all pupils display a lively desire to learn, and often maintain good levels of interest, even when lessons are not delivered in a stimulating way and they are not fully challenged. They enjoy taking part in the various activities available to them after school, and there are very high levels of participation in sporting activities, with many belonging to the sports teams, which represent the school with much success.

11. Pupils are encouraged to be enterprising and to take responsibility. They take part enthusiastically in the school council and are proud of their achievements, for instance in raising funds for a beautiful tank of fish and setting it up in the entrance hall. They perform many helpful duties and tasks around the school, such as staffing the tuck shop, filling pupils' water bottles and unlocking the gates to the playground. Action is also being taken to develop those aspects of subjects and activities in lessons that allow pupils the chance to take a greater responsibility for their learning. World events often form the focus for pupils to ponder on deeper issues and ideas, as do occasions during assemblies. In lessons, too, events spark a sense of wonder, such as the amazement caused among Year 2 pupils when they were investigating seeds in fruit and vegetables. The support assistant working with pupils who do not have English as their first language plays an invaluable role in raising pupils' awareness of traditions and cultures other than

their own, although full use is not always made of the potential among the school's minority ethnic families to extend pupils' experiences in this area. The school has also sustained links with France and, until recently, has taken older pupils there for a yearly residential visit to support their lessons in French at school.

12. Most pupils attend regularly and punctually. Robust procedures are in place to promote good attendance, and reasons for absence are followed up with the help of the Educational Welfare Officer. However, the same thoroughness has not been applied to following up absence on the first day, although the school has now established the feasibility of such a scheme and plans to introduce measures as soon as possible.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.3	School data	0.7
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 **satisfactory**, with particular strengths in extra-curricular activities and additional experiences which broaden and enrich pupils' learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but the use of assessment information to sharpen lesson planning is unsatisfactory. Pastoral care, including arrangements for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils, is good and has some very strong features. There are also good links with parents and the community, while those with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning as a whole are **satisfactory**. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Limited use of assessment to fine-tune activities to the needs of pupils of different abilities and set challenging targets, particularly in relation to pupils with higher attainment.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils, which create a positive and industrious working environment.

### Commentary

13. Many parents expressed particular satisfaction with the quality of teaching. Inspection evidence shows teaching and learning to be satisfactory overall, although, as the table given below shows, there is also a significant proportion that is good. Effective teaching is to be found in all year groups, but the greatest proportion is in Years 3 to 6, especially in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is almost always good. Strong teaching of reading and science takes place in Years 3 to 6, while history is well taught across the school. Although the pattern of good and satisfactory teaching is not exactly the same as it was at the time of the school's previous inspection, the overall quality remains broadly similar, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen this time. However, despite improvements to assessment and the analysis of data, the use of assessment information still remains an issue, and is unsatisfactory. The effect of this shortcoming was seen in lessons and in work completed by pupils over the course of the year, and is an important reason why satisfactory teaching is not better, and why limited evidence of very good or better teaching was seen. Not enough information was collected to make judgements about teaching and learning for art and design, design and technology, geography, music, physical and religious education.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very poor</b>
0	0	22 (54%)	19 (46%)	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.*

14. Teaching and learning in the Reception classes are satisfactory. There is often a good variety of interesting activities and an appropriate balance between opportunities for independent tasks and learning and those directed more closely by adults.

15. A conspicuous strength of teaching right across the school is rooted in the very good relationships adults have with pupils. Staff are encouraging and create a learning environment in which pupils feel comfortable and unafraid to answer questions and share ideas. Indeed, most do so readily when given the opportunity. They take the same positive approach to their work, which they tackle with interest and much concentration, even when activities are not always exciting or imaginative. Pupils therefore get their work completed, set about more demanding tasks with thoughtfulness and care, and work productively together. Learning support staff often give individual pupils and small groups heartening and attentive help, so that lower attaining pupils and those with SEN keep pace with others in the class and, in many cases, make good progress. This is also true for those few pupils who are learning to speak English and also have extra help. However, support staff are not always deployed as effectively during whole-class sessions to give guidance and support.

16. Key features of teaching which transform pupils' interest into enthusiasm and accelerate learning include:

- wide ranging discussion with groups and individuals which thoroughly explores, evaluates and extends pupils' thinking, knowledge and understanding;
- focused questioning which targets all pupils in the group, and not just a few, and demands detailed answers;
- varied tasks carefully matched in terms of challenge to pupils' particular levels of skill and understanding;
- exciting and imaginative resources and activities;
- high expectations of achievement demonstrated in closely focused activities and clearly given time limits.

17. Teaching and learning become satisfactory, instead of good or better, when the sharpness described above is lost. This can happen during discussion when there are too few opportunities for pupils to take part, or as a result of more mundane tasks. Structured worksheet activities, for example, often require all pupils to complete similar work. Although they are varied in terms of quantity and of how much adult support the pupils have to complete them, they do not always allow enough scope for independent learning and so extend the achievements of higher attaining pupils in particular. More able pupils also sometimes miss out on the focused attention given to other ability groups. The majority of lessons have a quiet, calm and industrious atmosphere where pupils can concentrate well but, very occasionally, too much noise is tolerated.

18. Homework is provided for all pupils and, in some cases, is well used to support the classroom learning. For example, in Year 6 pupils have regular English and mathematics tasks which are linked to their class work, and pupils in Year 4 had prepared ideas for burglar alarms at home in readiness for a design and technology lesson. However, there are some inconsistencies in practice across classes, largely because the school has not yet drawn up a homework policy. This finding mirrors the concerns expressed by some parents at their meeting.

19. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are sound, but the use of assessment information is unsatisfactory. Regular assessments are made in the core subjects, and yearly targets are set for each pupil in English and mathematics. Assessments are now also made in most other subjects, although staff do not always do them in the same way; new initiatives are under way to ensure a greater consistency in practice. However, assessment information is not analysed closely enough. For example, the school has yet to take a close look at its target setting data to track the progress pupils are making over time in order to ensure that:

- the reasons behind any peaks or troughs in performance by individuals or groups can be explored;
- senior staff can be sure that all targets are challenging enough.

20. As a result of this weakness, assessment information is not used as effectively as it could be for planning lesson activities, a shortcoming highlighted at the time of the previous inspection. This in turn accounts for much of the inconsistency seen in the quality of teaching and learning. This having been said, significant improvements have been made recently by the new co-ordinator, who has introduced common formats for gathering and recording data and has trialled and modelled different ways of working in preparation for their adoption throughout the school. One such trial is a more developmental approach to marking which gives pupils more information about how to make their work better. Improvements also mean that assessment is generally satisfactory in important areas such as science and ICT, in the Reception classes, and for SEN. Advances have additionally been made in target setting and in the analysis of test information for drawing out areas of relative strength and weakness within particular subjects. As a result, the school's academic priorities are appropriate and have resulted in action to bring about improvements.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum overall is **satisfactory**. There is a good range of extra activities and opportunities that enrich pupils' experience. Additional sporting opportunities for pupils are excellent. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The amount of time given for teaching, which is below the recommended minimum.
- The good range of enrichment activities, which add interest and variety to the curriculum and contribute to the good social development of the pupils.
- Excellent sporting opportunities.

## **Commentary**

21. The findings of this inspection are broadly similar to those of the previous inspection in that the curriculum is satisfactory overall and meets statutory requirements, though there are some variations within that picture. The school has responded well in several respects to the key issue requiring improvements to resources, particularly in ICT and to outdoor education in the Reception classes. The library has been refurbished and is used regularly, while book resources are now adequate; the use of practical resources in mathematics is helping to accelerate learning. The level of improvement has been such that resources as a whole are now satisfactory. Provision for Reception aged children is satisfactory, and the very recent review of this area is contributing to improvements in their curriculum. Over the course of the last year, steps have been taken to look more widely at the effectiveness of the curriculum. The deputy headteacher is taking a central role in this review and has been working closely with subject leaders to enhance their strategic role and increase the capacity for innovation. However, developments are at an early stage, and inconsistencies in provision have yet to be fully monitored, identified and resolved.

22. The school places appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics, and there are some good links between subjects which help pupils to understand the purpose of their learning. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and includes a well-structured sex education curriculum supported by the school nurse. Some subjects are well developed: history is one such, and so is physical education. Improvements to science are also beginning to bite. However, the time the school has allocated for teaching falls short of the nationally recommended minimum, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Inspection evidence indicates that this is inhibiting learning in some areas, most notably in geography, in religious education in Years 3 to 6, and in ensuring that sufficient time is given for pupils to develop skills as independent learners, particularly in science.

23. The school is fully committed to ensuring that all pupils, irrespective of race, gender, ability or ethnicity, have full access to all opportunities to succeed. In many respects the school is successful in this aim, although it recognises that it still has more to do to ensure that higher attaining pupils are fully challenged in all subjects. Provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory, although further development has been constrained more recently by staffing difficulties. Some pupils with SEN benefit significantly from detailed targets set out in individual education plans (IEPs), which are regularly reviewed, but this practice is not in place in all classes. The support for pupils with EAL is also satisfactory as a whole. The support provided through the local education authority (LEA) for pupils with EAL is very good, as a support assistant visits the school once a week and gives substantial support to individual pupils and their families, as well as liaising closely with staff. There has been rapid progress recently in what the school has to offer those pupils with particular gifts and talents, but these measures have yet to take effect fully.

24. The school places a high emphasis on activities to enrich the curriculum, with a wide range of visits and visitors, and provision made for all pupils in Years 3 to 6 to have French lessons. The school also organises a substantial number of extra-curricular clubs. The subject leader for physical education has developed an excellent range of sporting activities, including a rolling programme of sports clubs, involvement in competitive events and professional coaching. She responded positively to requests for more activities for younger pupils and has plans to develop these further. The music co-ordinator also offers a very good range of activities. In addition to recorder clubs, instrumental tuition and choirs, there is a wide range of performance opportunities both in the school and within the community. The confidence and enjoyment shown by pupils demonstrate the contribution these activities make to their academic learning and social skills.

25. The school has a stable complement of teachers, who work as a team. They are ably assisted by the learning support staff, who contribute well to the school's positive sense of community. Good use is made of part-time teachers and support staff to create smaller teaching groups and to work with lower attaining pupils, and those with SEN or EAL. Administrative staff are efficient and effective in the day-to-day running of the school, and the caretaker and cleaning staff maintain the school well. Accommodation is good and contributes significantly to pupils' achievement: the indoor swimming pool, large hall and substantial grounds all add to the good progress made in physical education. Classrooms are attractive and well organised. Since the previous inspection there has been a real commitment to making improvements, and significant resources have been allocated. Further plans include major developments to benefit the pupils, such as better cloakroom facilities for the older pupils, a lottery bid to develop the swimming facilities and plans to replace the oldest mobile units.

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

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good**, and have some very good features. Arrangements made for gaining and acting on pupils' opinions are also **good**. Pupils' access to well-informed guidance and support is satisfactory; it is stronger in pastoral matters than in academic advice and direction.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good medical arrangements and those for ensuring that pupils have a trusted adult to turn to if needed.
- The substantial attention given to solving problems caused by parking outside the school gate.
- Underdeveloped systems for monitoring and guiding pupils' academic performance.

### **Commentary**

26. The school's pastoral care of its pupils continues to be a strong area of its work, with some very close attention to particular areas of pupils' care and welfare. This is true of the arrangements for the administration of medicines, which are thorough and meticulously followed and, whenever possible, allow pupils to attend school while completing a course of treatment or taking regular medication. The school is an orderly and well-organised community. Safety and security issues are

taken seriously, particularly in relation to access and parking problems at the start and finish of the school day. Difficulties still remain, but the school has put considerable effort into easing the situation, including a consultation with local residents and the funding of a parking bay. A staggered finish to the day is also operated, and the school has encouraged the setting up and use of 'walking buses', with parents acting as escorts, to reduce the number of cars. Security around the school site has been strengthened, and the school is vigorously seeking ways to reduce vandalism and remove the public footpath which cuts across the school grounds.

27. Child Protection procedures are well known to all staff and there is regular training. The local 'Healthy Schools' project is proving a valuable source of initiatives which have a good impact on the health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils. Contact with outside agencies is an area the school would like to develop further. There is already good liaison with the local Behavioural Support team, and with the Education Welfare Officer to promote good attendance. The school has already started to take action to improve its systems for following up immediately any incidents of unexplained absence.

28. The pastoral care, guidance and support given to pupils are good. The majority of pupils have very good relationships with trusted adults on the staff, and they are supported by consistently applied behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Some concern with induction procedures was expressed at the parents' meeting, but these procedures were found to be thorough and practical, and to encourage pupils to settle in as quickly as possible. The PSHE curriculum makes a good contribution to the provision of guidance and information as pupils grow up and approach maturity. Individual targets also focus on aspects of pupils' personal development as well as pinpointing areas where they should improve their work. Arrangements for seeking the views of pupils are good, and pupils agree that this is the case. The work of the school council plays a significant role in gaining and acting on pupils' comments and opinions.

29. The support, guidance and advice given to pupils about their academic work do not match the effectiveness of the pastoral support. The school is taking action to improve shortcomings in the analysis and use of assessment data, but some developments are at an early stage. New approaches to marking, for example, are being trialled by the assessment co-ordinator in readiness for their introduction in all classes. Arrangements made for pupils with SEN are similarly inconsistent. The school's caring and inclusive ethos supports them well, but while the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has been absent there have been some problems in maintaining the frequency of meetings to review pupils' progress. However, those pupils with English as an additional language benefit from the detailed assessments maintained by the learning support assistant attached to the school.

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

There are **good** links with parents and the community. Links with other schools are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very active involvement of parents in school activities.



## Commentary

30. Maintaining good links with parents and the community is another area in which the school continues to be effective, and it is ready to review and adjust procedures, if necessary, to keep them so. The majority of parents feel well informed and able to approach the school should they have a problem. Most expressed the view that the school responded promptly and efficiently, and most found that difficulties were sorted out to their satisfaction. Information for parents is given not only in the attractive and easily read prospectus and the annual report from the governors, but also by regular detailed letters and by termly year topic sheets, which involve them directly in supporting the education of their children. The creation a school website is being planned.

31. Parents also feel that they are kept well informed about the progress of their children. Annual written reports contain National Curriculum levels for Years 2 and 6, but not other year groups. The subsequent parents' evening, however, allows parents the chance to discuss the report with their child's teacher promptly. At their meeting before the inspection took place, parents also expressed the view that the school is happy to speak with them at other times should they make this request, though the school does not make as much use as it could of opportunities for informal contact at the start and end of the school day by, for example, staff being available in the playground.

32. Parents have a particularly strong presence at the school, both in a paid and a voluntary capacity. The parents' association raises money for the school and is also involved in deciding how it should be spent. A number of committed parents serve as parent governors. Volunteers help in numerous ways in the classrooms, and with such things as escorting trips. Parents have also been trained as lifeguards so that they can help with swimming in more than an informal way. Indeed the school 'does not know how it would manage without them'.

33. Links with the local community are strong. There are good relationships with a number of local churches and religious groups, whose representatives regularly take assembly. Celebrations are also shared with the community at Christmas and Harvest Festival times. Trips are arranged for each class on a regular basis, often taking advantage of the historical opportunities within the local area. The many trips and visitors to the school extend pupils' experience of a wider community, and of their own and other cultures. French pen friends extend their experience in this way, as do the opportunities to visit France. Sporting and cultural events and visits arranged through the school's PSHE curriculum all make valuable contributions.

34. Links with other schools and educational establishments are satisfactorily maintained. There are links through the local cluster of schools and good opportunities in sporting activities. Parents praised the good information the school gave them about transfer arrangements for their children entering secondary education, although it is difficult for the school to form close links with the many different secondary settings to which their pupils move. There have been no recent placements for students training to become teachers.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is **satisfactory** as a whole. Governance is also satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Efficient organisation, so that the school runs smoothly.
- Not enough close scrutiny of information about the quality of the school's work and pupils' performance to iron out inconsistencies and extend good practices.
- Good leadership of assessment, science, physical education, music and history, and very good management of work with pupils who do not have English as their first language.
- Keen and supportive governors, but underdeveloped systems for giving them the means of judging the effectiveness of their decisions.

## Commentary

35. The school gains much from having experienced, long-standing staff members who know pupils well and who are thoroughly familiar with its well-established structures, routines and expectations. This valuable foundation ensures that everyday life runs smoothly even when, as the school reports, the headteacher was temporarily absent having taken over the 'acting' leadership of another school. Administrative systems are efficient, and financial control and monitoring are good. The headteacher gives sound overall leadership. Importantly, he is at the forefront of creating this well-ordered community, and such conspicuous stability underpins the school's strong pastoral care and the successful nurturing of pupils' moral and social development. Many parents expressed their satisfaction with the school in general and in the extent to which it was well led and managed.

36. At the same time, the school appreciates the importance of having new ideas. Its keenness to promote the work of more recently appointed staff has strengthened the senior management team and brought about rapid improvement to provision for science and to assessment, although initiatives are still too new to have had a full impact. Physical education, music and history are also ably led, while what the school offers its pupils with EAL is managed with considerable energy and vision by the LEA's learning support assistant. Over time, the role and influence of senior staff and subject leaders have seen a satisfactory level of improvement, and key responsibilities have been suitably allocated across the school. Immediately following the last inspection, the deputy headteacher became more closely involved with strategic planning and direction. More recently he has taken steps to review the effectiveness of the curriculum as a whole, and he meets regularly with subject leaders. Staff expressed their appreciation of his support, which they feel has significantly improved strategic planning.

37. The school has also sought to improve its monitoring capacity by enabling senior staff to take part in nationally recognised training. New skills have been satisfactorily employed to guide lesson observation for performance management and to look at pupils' work. Information gained in this way, and through the analysis of data about pupils' academic performance, has given staff a sound measure of the school's broad areas of strength and relative weaknesses. Nevertheless, the school does not yet scrutinise its effectiveness in sufficient detail, and this is another reason why inconsistencies in the quality of its work still remain. Neither is management time planned with an eye to using it as productively as possible, including the chance for subject leaders routinely to follow up their monitoring within lessons.

38. A similar picture emerges of the work of the governing body. Management structures are good and new members are being well supported through training and mentoring. Governors are keen to take an active and proactive part in taking the school forward. They like being better informed about the school from governor visits, reports from key staff and national test information. However, they have not yet evolved formal structures for the exchange of pertinent information across sub-committees, or for judging the impact of improvements to, for example, developing accommodation and facilities. Nevertheless, in these last areas, the work of governors is strong and has brought about much improvement to the environment in which pupils learn. The substantial financial balances carried forward into the next year have been appropriately set aside for additional building work.

### ***Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005***

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>		<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Total income	1,169,000	Balance from previous year	102,447
Total expenditure	1,168,528	Balance carried forward to the next	141,343
Expenditure per pupil	2,810		

39. When account is taken of the school's overall effectiveness, particularly in relation to the satisfactory level of academic achievement, and the average level of expenditure for each pupil, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

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

40. The school's most recent assessments of children when they first enter the school show their attainment to be broadly similar to that of children of a similar age. No early assessments have been made for the last two years, but it is the school's perception that more children now enter with low attainment in speaking and listening, and in personal and social skills. Children in this age group achieve satisfactorily so that, by the end of the year, attainment is broadly similar to the expectations of the learning goals for children of this age. The exceptions are reading, mathematical and creative development, and personal and social skills, in which children achieve well and standards are above expectations when they enter Year 1. These areas broadly reflect strengths highlighted at the time of the previous inspection.

41. The leadership and management of this key stage are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection there have been good improvements to accommodation and resources. A recent major refurbishment programme has transformed traditional classrooms into a suitably organised and resourced environment. Designated areas and resources have improved the children's experiences, for example through a role-play corner and a writing area. A new outdoor area, which has been added to over time, has resulted in a stimulating place where children play with much enthusiasm, and with good opportunities for physical and social development. Support staff have also been placed to work with each class.

42. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and there are some areas of good teaching. The new physical changes have enabled staff, supported by external expertise, to begin to enhance the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage curriculum in line with current good practice. It is too soon for these developments to have had a major impact on provision, but the curriculum is sound, with a suitable balance between teacher-directed tasks and opportunities for children to choose their activities. However, staff have yet to fine-tune the management of these activities to ensure that children gain as much as possible from what is happening. For example, groups are sometimes left too long without adult support. Assessment is sound, although opportunities are sometimes missed to record achievements during lessons.

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

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

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

- The great importance placed on creating a caring and happy environment.

#### **Commentary**

43. This area is well taught and children continue to make the good progress seen during the previous inspection. Staff are highly committed to ensuring that all children feel comfortable and secure. In order to make sure that they succeed in this from the very beginning, staff have reviewed induction strategies, and children now have several visits to the school before they start, so that they settle into school easily. Warm and friendly relationships promote children's confidence, such that many were happy to lead the singing during a music lesson and readily to recognise the efforts of others, clapping their performance without any prompting. Class routines and responsibilities are well established and followed. Children work well together, doing puzzles or running mini transport systems outside, and show an awareness of others' needs during these

activities. During role-play activities in the 'vet's surgery', children were mature and sensible, showing much care towards the 'injured' toy animals. As a result of this good provision, most behave well, although a few find it more difficult to respond quickly and appropriately to expectations.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory** as a whole.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good teaching of reading skills.
- Inconsistencies in the extent to which children are encouraged to write about their ideas and apply their knowledge of letter sounds in their writing.

### **Commentary**

44. Careful planning helps to ensure that this area is satisfactorily taught, and with a strength in the teaching of early reading skills. Imaginative play successfully enables children to gain confidence in speaking and listening, and these activities greatly help those who enter the school with speech and language difficulties. Staff work hard to promote confidence through discussion, as they did during conversation about what a farmer might want to buy on a visit to town. The teaching of reading is good because it is well structured so that children develop a thorough knowledge of letters and their sounds. This approach also ensures that children's strengths and weaknesses are recognised and helps to promote the good achievement of all, including the lower attaining and those with SEN. Children are also well supported by parents and enjoy talking about books and stories, such as 'Billy Goat Gruff'. Many children are well on the way to reaching National Curriculum Level 1 in this area.

45. The teaching of writing is satisfactory. A close focus on handwriting techniques ensures that children shape and orientate their letters correctly. Nearly all write their names and are beginning to link words meaningfully, although many still have only a hazy idea of full stops and capital letters. Good quality discussion draws out children's ideas, but teachers are sometimes less successful at getting children, and particularly the more able, to write their ideas down, and they do not always draw enough on children's knowledge of letter sounds to help with spelling.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good range of practical activities to reinforce mathematical skills.

### **Commentary**

47. This area of learning is effectively taught, and children achieve well in response to teachers' high expectations. Good relationships give children the confidence to try without fear of making a mistake. As a result, most are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of this school year, and many will exceed them. An interesting range of practical activities is planned to promote mathematical development: for example, in order to reinforce concepts about size and measurement, children cut different lengths of ribbon to decorate teddy bears. More able children, especially, are encouraged to predict and estimate, and begin to learn about non-standard units. Staff continually refer to the correct language, which reinforces and extends understanding and gives children a language to explain what they know. Children also benefit from teachers' focus on

mental arithmetic and counting practices: the majority count beyond 30 and some add or take away 1 or 2 from a given total.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Some exciting first-hand experiences to extend children's understanding of the natural world.

### **Commentary**

47. Teaching and learning in this area are satisfactory. Children achieve satisfactorily, and many are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year. Resources were well used to make children's experiences real and exciting during a study of snails, when they looked at the creatures in detail through a microscope. Simple design and construction skills are learned at first hand. Children also independently operate a computer program when designing a home for Goldilocks, and benefit from the use of the computer suite to extend their skills. Planning indicates that constructive use is made of the school's environment to extend learning about local features, and that children have the opportunity to discuss the past. They know about some of the main events in the Christian calendar and are aware of features of other cultures and traditions.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good outdoor play facilities.
- Missed opportunities to assess and focus on the physical performance of individual pupils.

### **Commentary**

48. This aspect is satisfactorily taught and children's achievement is also satisfactory. There are good opportunities for developing manipulative skills, such as cutting and sticking, or making dough models of animals. Good improvement to the outdoor facilities has allowed for children to practise and enhance their co-ordination and balance; the newly painted road markings encourage them to use wheeled toys with care and precision. Children happily demonstrated their skills during a lesson in which there was a good variety of physical activities. However, in this satisfactory lesson, opportunities were sometimes missed to evaluate children's performance and help them to improve.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A wide range of activities, and opportunities to express themselves as individuals.
- Good teaching of subject vocabulary.

### **Commentary**

49. Creative development is well taught. Attainment in this area is above expectations, with most children on course to reach the Early Learning Goals and a significant proportion likely to exceed them. Children benefit from a wide range of interesting and varied activities, including role-play, which allow them the opportunity to respond individually. Work based on painting by Matisse shows imaginative use of colour and paint. In preparation for drawing and painting birds, children carefully observed differences, encouraged by good prompts to use precise language and to look at details. Children reacted very positively to teachers' high expectations of a good performance during a music lesson and showed themselves to be confident performers. They sang in tune and kept a steady pulse while singing familiar nursery rhymes. They listened attentively to classmates who were acting as 'conductors' and responded well to the teachers' instructions and use of specialist vocabulary.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

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

- Good achievement in reading in Years 3 to 6.
- Limited analysis of assessment information to modify activities so that they are consistently challenging enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- The good attention given to developing technical aspects of writing such as grammar, punctuation and spelling.

#### **Commentary**

50. Achievement in English is satisfactory, with areas of good achievement in reading in Years 3 to 6, and in some aspects of writing. Inspection evidence shows the current Year 2 to be reaching standards that are in line with national expectations in reading and in writing. The present Year 6 is reaching standards that are above national expectations in reading, and is meeting expectations for writing. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection for Year 6, but are lower in the case of Year 2.

51. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Sound leadership and management of the subject makes sure that, in broad terms, the school has a good grasp of those aspects in which pupils perform best and of areas where they need to focus more attention. Regular monitoring of pupils' work, for example, has allowed the two subject leaders to gain a valuable insight into teaching and learning, and strategic planning is sound. Inspection evidence supports the school's view of its strengths and of where its priorities lie. Reading, for example, is identified as being the strongest aspect of the subject, and Year 2 test results in general bear this out, having been above or well above national averages for all schools until results fell in 2004. Early and unvalidated results from this term's Year 2 national reading tests show a recovery from those of 2004, with increases in the proportion reaching the expected level or beyond (Levels 2 and above), and a more modest rise at the higher Level 3.

52. Areas selected for improvement are writing and the achievement of the more able. The reason for the attention given to these areas is illustrated in the writing results in 2004 for pupils in Year 2, where no Level 3 was gained. The school's efforts at improvement have made an impact in this summer's Year 2 writing tests, in which results at the expected and higher levels are better than in the previous year. However, there has been less success in this term's Year 6 tests: the school reports that performance in these tests has traditionally been higher for reading than for writing, and the same pattern has been repeated. There are several reasons why the school has yet to fully resolve these relative weaknesses. Crucially, assessment information is not scrutinised and used in

enough detail to ensure that National Curriculum targets and activities in lessons are always challenging enough, or to check that progress is constantly well maintained as pupils move through the school. These shortcomings cause inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning which, in turn, constrict the overall level of achievement to satisfactory, rather than extending the good achievement found in some aspects of the subject across all aspects of English.

53. Speaking and listening skills meet national expectations. Most pupils listen well and many speak confidently, but a significant minority of pupils are hesitant when asked to talk about or explain ideas. Confidence and skill are boosted when pupils are pushed to explain answers in more detail, or have the chance to chat about possibilities with a partner first, but this does not happen routinely in all lessons. Pupils meet a fairly wide range of literature, and improvements to the library and regular access to its adequate range of books help to promote good reading habits and an appreciation of fiction and non-fiction. The more exacting reading skills, which require an analysis of text, character and plot, are generally promoted well throughout the school. In younger year groups these skills are largely developed through structured exercises and activities, given alongside the teaching of phonic knowledge and understanding, so that pupils read accurately and identify unfamiliar words. As they move through the school, activities become more challenging and interesting; by Year 6 they are studying Shakespeare and making, for example, thoughtful comparisons between written adaptations of 'The Tempest' and a video version of the play. They usually explain their observations clearly, because good attention is given to the use of subject vocabulary. Work of this calibre allows the more able pupils to flourish. In Years 1 and 2 higher attainment is also encouraged by allowing more able pupils to choose books which are suitably challenging.

54. Good emphasis is placed on developing the more technical skills of writing to do with grammar, punctuation and spelling, so that all pupils tend to make good progress in these aspects. The quantity of pupils' work also increases at a good rate over time and to the extent that pupils in all ability groups in both Years 2 and 6 produce sustained writing of good length at a level appropriate for their age. Nevertheless, higher attainment in writing is not as effectively nurtured as it is in reading, largely because pupils are not encouraged enough to improve the maturity and sophistication of the content of their writing. For example, while selected ideas for writing gain pupils' interest because they tap into their culture and interests, they sometimes offer too little scope for deepening pupils' ideas or widening their vocabulary. In Years 1 and 2 there are also some inconsistencies across classes in the extent to which pupils are given the opportunity to write about exciting and imaginative topics.

55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with the strongest teaching in Years 5 and 6. Good teaching here is lively and closely focused. Teachers have high expectations, illustrated in demanding questioning, well-matched tasks and time limits given for the completion of work. Lower attaining pupils and those with SEN often make good progress over time because they have much close support from additional staff during lessons. In other classes, teaching and learning are satisfactory, with pupils' good levels of interest and productivity often contributing much to their progress. Learning in these lessons is not as successful as it is in Years 5 and 6 because:

- while activities are suitably matched, they tend to be varied more by the level of adult support and the amount to be completed than by the degree of challenge in the task;
- whole-group discussion is sometimes overly dominated by the class teacher, so that pupils' ideas and understanding are not thoroughly explored;
- higher attaining pupils are enabled to work independently, but are not always given specific, focused attention during activities to move their learning on at a faster pace.

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

56. Language and literacy skills are satisfactorily used in other subjects, particularly in history, where pupils have many opportunities to write independently. However, the same opportunity is not as well developed in geography or in religious education in Years 3 to 6. There are also useful links made with other subjects, such as PSHE. Information and communication technology (ICT) figures in most English lessons, particularly in encouraging word-processing skills. Pupils also valuably use computers to research information. Some parents raised concerns about the teaching of research

skills. The promotion of these skills is good in history, and has recently been boosted by the circulation of guidance to staff, although the subject leaders have not yet had the chance to get into lessons to see how effective it has been. Subject vocabulary is generally well taught, in mathematics and history especially.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good attention given to using practical activities to support learning.
- Not enough close analysis and use of assessment information to make sure work is consistently well planned for pupils of different abilities.

### **Commentary**

57. There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the previous inspection, when standards were above national expectations in Year 2 and in line with expectations in Year 6. The national test results over recent years indicate a change in this position, with those for Year 6 pupils having been above the national average in the period 2001 to 2004, apart from a drop to average in 2003. On the other hand, national test results in Year 2 have been consistently in line with the national average up to, and including, 2004. Teachers throughout the school have successfully addressed the need for a greater range of teaching strategies, a point raised in the previous inspection, by more frequently planning practical activities to support learning. This has enabled pupils throughout the school to gain greater confidence in working out problems for themselves, and accounts for the fact that the majority achieve at least the expected standards for their age by Year 2 and by Year 6. Clear evidence of this improvement was seen in all year groups, for example in Year 2, where pupils used plastic money to help them to work out their change in shopping activities, and in Year 5, where they tossed coins to test probability.

58. The findings of this inspection largely reflect the national test results of the last few years. Pupils in the present Years 2 and 6 are reaching standards broadly in line with national expectations and, as a whole, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Sound leadership and management ensure that areas in need of attention are picked up and taken forward. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and is often good in individual lessons in Years 5 and 6. Indeed, the work seen in Year 5 indicates that many pupils are achieving standards above national expectations. However, there is a degree of unevenness within the quality of provision, in standards and in achievement, which is directly related to inconsistencies in the school's use of its assessment information. The school has reliable systems in place for tracking pupils' progress and uses the information gained from regular assessments to give additional support for some targeted pupils. This extra closely focused assistance ensures that pupils with SEN, for example, make the same progress as their classmates. Assessment information also helps to bring to the fore broad areas in



need of improvement. However, its analysis is not used as effectively as it might be to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance, so as to set sharp and clearly defined targets, and to give guidance about performance, which could then be shared with pupils and parents.

59. In Years 1 and 2 this shortcoming is exemplified in particular by teachers putting too much reliance on the use of worksheets. Although these are designed to meet the needs of groups of different abilities, they are very broad in their range and some pupils inevitably find the work either too hard or too easy. Nevertheless, this is not true in all year groups, and where teaching is most successful, teachers generate work based on their knowledge of what pupils can and cannot do, and activities tend to be more interesting and imaginative. This strength was more often observed in Years 3 to 6, and in Years 5 and 6 in particular. In these lessons, discussion with pupils purposefully drew out their understanding, made them think, and sought to consolidate understanding and move it on. More able pupils especially benefited from this approach and it enabled higher attaining Year 6 pupils, for example, to construct, interpret and compare graphs without adult assistance. By using strategies of this kind these teachers were also able to spot quickly when pupils needed help.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

60. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils have a range of opportunities to use their mathematical skills, for example during design and technology work and when drawing graphs in science. However, these links are not always formally planned.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision for science is **good**.

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

- Good leadership and management, which has had a positive impact on teaching and on standards in Years 3 to 6.
- Limited opportunities for developing independent investigative skills.
- The good links made between science and other subjects, which help pupils to understand the relevance of their learning to everyday life.

### **Commentary**

61. The subject leader has made a substantial impact on science since joining the school last September, such that standards in the current Year 6 are above national expectations; pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well, including those with higher attainment. This success is reflected in the increased proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in this term's national tests in comparison with the previous year. The achievement of pupils with SEN is also good, because they are well supported in lessons by classroom assistants.

62. These findings represent a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. Information about the strengths and weaknesses of the subject has been gathered quickly, and improvement has been set out in a comprehensive action plan. Planning identifies an agenda for raising the profile of science in the school, including promoting science links with secondary schools, organising science weeks and providing resources to motivate and challenge pupils of all abilities. The subject leader has highlighted the need for consistent approaches throughout the school and the importance of using assessment data more effectively. As a result of these improvements, the current quality of teaching and learning is good. All the lessons seen during this inspection were well taught, although developments are not yet fully embedded in school practice and have not had as much long-term effect on provision and achievement in Years 1 and 2 as they have in Years 3 to 6. Currently, therefore, achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, with the

majority of pupils in Year 2 reaching standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. Opportunities are still limited for pupils to use their scientific knowledge in investigative activities which they have planned for themselves. They are thus not able to develop fully as independent and creative learners, and to reach higher standards of attainment.

63. A good science curriculum is enriched through clear links with mathematics and other subjects, and through the use of ICT. For example, pupils in Year 2 were keen to describe not only the science but also the music they had learnt in their work on sound; those in Year 5 spoke knowledgeably about healthy eating and about the links with their mathematics work and that in PSHE. The teaching of scientific knowledge is thorough, and pupils have good opportunities to learn through practical work. Across the school, pupils also behave very well during science lessons. They concentrate and work together effectively because teachers set high standards of behaviour. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good. By Year 6, pupils gain an extensive knowledge about different aspects of science. For example, they were able to talk in depth about a range of living things, including micro-organisms and their possible harmful effects, while in Year 4 pupils constructed a variety of food chains. Lessons are well organised and interesting, ensuring that pupils are engaged in their learning. Indeed, in some cases, pupils express wonderment at what they discover. They are encouraged to use graphs and tables to show their data and, in some classes, worksheets are carefully selected to challenge and extend the different ability groups.

64. The reasons for pupils' satisfactory, rather than good, achievement in Years 1 and 2 is clearly illustrated in the work they have completed over the year. These pupils have produced a good amount of careful, neat work covering all elements of the subject. However, the wide use of worksheets sometimes limited the chance for these pupils to use their own ideas and initiative. Assessment practices have been developed, and are increasingly being used successfully to match work to need and ability, but work was not always sufficiently adapted for pupils of different abilities. Although lower attaining pupils had well-targeted support from adults, the work for the more able was not always designed in such a way as to extend their learning to a higher level. However, the teaching during the inspection was much more challenging. Imaginative ideas interested the pupils and enabled them to consolidate their knowledge and make good progress. For example, in Year 2, pupils of different ability groups completed increasingly challenging tasks involving a sunflower design, showing the life cycle of the plant. In Year 1, pupils enjoyed using musical instruments to explore the ways in which sounds are created, with the teacher using questioning well to challenge and extend each ability group.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good use made of the computer suite for developing confidence and basic skills.
- Not enough emphasis placed on showing pupils the wider uses of ICT, particularly those in Years 5 and 6.

### **Commentary**

65. Standards are in line with national expectations in Year 2 and Year 6, and similar to those reported in the previous inspection. Improvement since then has been satisfactory and significantly helped by the purchase of new equipment, investment in staff training and the creation of the new computer suite. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed, and the subject leader has ensured that all classes have the opportunity to use the suite at least once a week, enabling the school to broadly keep pace with the subject's rapid development over recent years. Teachers throughout the school conscientiously plan to use the time allocated to them in the computer suite for an adequate range of activities which develop pupils' basic computer skills. The subject leader has also ensured that an appropriate strategy is in place for measuring individual pupils' progress from year to year.

66. Pupils come into school with broadly average ability in most areas of learning and most have had experience of using computers at home. The school enables them to make reasonable gains in confidence and expertise, and they achieve satisfactorily. Through regular lessons in the computer suite most pupils have acquired adequate keyboard skills by Year 2, and have broadly covered the range of activities required by the National Curriculum. By Year 6, most pupils navigate their way independently through the tasks set for them, and some exceed the expected standards of proficiency in using computers to support their day-to-day work, particularly for research.

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

67. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Teachers make appropriate use of the available software to support teaching and learning, particularly in art and design and in mathematics, and as a research tool for subjects such as history. On the other hand, there are not enough up-to-date additional resources to support the work of pupils in Year 5 and 6. This deficiency particularly limits their awareness and experience of the wider and more exciting applications of control technology.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision for history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Systematic planning and a strong emphasis on developing historical skills.
- Good leadership and management.

### **Commentary**

68. The school recognises history as being a strong area of its work, and it is right. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in history, having made good progress over time. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are above national expectations, and this finding represents good improvement since the previous inspection. The work of a well organised and knowledgeable subject leader helps promotes good teaching and learning. She observes lessons, for example, and gives detailed advice to staff about resources.

69. The school is also successful in this subject because:

- a good range of extended writing helps to ensure that pupils extend their factual knowledge;
- pupils are encouraged to investigate and evaluate history as much as they are helped to acquire historical knowledge;
- there is a systematic approach to developing understanding, so that earlier learning is carefully built upon and pupils are encouraged to relate one feature of an historical period to another occurring at the same time.

70. These characteristics were illustrated in a well-planned lesson in a Year 6 class, where precise questioning helped pupils to understand the links between transport and housing in post-war Britain. Pupils' work indicates that lessons are prepared thoroughly, and often supported by a good range of resources, such as artefacts and videos. Visits and visitors are also well used to promote interest and a good sense of the past. For example, Year 2 pupils could talk about a senior citizen's memories of the seaside holidays of her youth. Pupils are taught and use specialist vocabulary well, creating a good basis for developing extensive use of historical skills, such as research. The interpretation of history is also promoted effectively through, for example, an evaluation of dress and design in the Tudor period. Experiences of this kind make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Geography**

Not enough evidence was collected for overall judgements to be made about provision, standards, teaching or pupils' achievement in geography.

## **Commentary**

71. By the end of Year 2 pupils have studied the imaginary Isle of Struary, used simple coordinates and identified directions on a compass. They have also discussed land usage and how to improve the school environment. Year 6 pupils have studied coasts and used the internet for research. However, there is little recorded or written work in pupils' folders, or evidence of the same extensive teaching of skills that is to be found in history. Much of the work involves the use of worksheets, many of which are limited in their scope and do not allow higher attaining pupils fully to develop or demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

## **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good attention given to all aspects of the curriculum for religious education in Years 1 and 2.
- Too few opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to explore attitudes and ideas.

## **Commentary**

72. There has been good improvement in provision for religious education since the previous inspection. Resources, and particularly artefacts, have been upgraded and extended in order to support teaching and to enrich pupils' knowledge. Standards in Year 2 are now above the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well because, in addition to increasing their knowledge and understanding, they also explore ideas and attitudes. For example, they write poems about the meaning of harvest, and learn about St Francis of Assisi; they extend this understanding by looking at their own love for animals, expressing this through the design of a stained glass window. Standards in the present Year 6 meet expectations. Nevertheless, unlike the findings of the previous inspection, when progress was found to be unsatisfactory, older pupils in these classes now make sound progress and achieve satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 6 have a good knowledge of the Gospels, which they used to explore differences in the account of events given in the gospels of Saint Mark and Saint Luke.

73. Teaching and learning are currently satisfactory. At its best, teaching is very well planned, uses interesting strategies to get a point across, and allows pupils to develop research and analytical skills. This was so for a Year 6 lesson, in which pupils enthusiastically took part in a 'Chinese Whispers' type activity to illustrate the oral tradition of story telling; they then analysed written versions of the same story. However, the school is less successful as a whole in Years 3 to 6 than it is in Years 1 and 2, because the amount of time allocated to teach religious education does

not consistently meet the requirements laid out in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Consequently, although the basic facts and teachings of major religions are appropriately covered by these pupils, there is too little time in lessons for them to:

- widely reflect on their attitudes to the religious response to key questions and events in life;
- take part in independent research or write at length often enough to explore and consolidate what they know.

74. The subject leader is aware that staff lack confidence in teaching this more demanding aspect of the subject. Improving their capacity in this area is a major priority within her strategic planning, and she has arranged for training with the LEA. She is committed and knowledgeable and is giving sound leadership and management.

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

As these subjects were sampled during the inspection, not enough evidence was collected to make judgements about the quality of provision in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education, or about standards and achievement in art and design, design and technology, and music.

### **Commentary**

75. Work in pupils' folders, sketchbooks and on display around the school gives a clear indication that a full curriculum is in place for **art and design**, and one which enables pupils to develop skills using an appropriately wide range of media. Work is often well linked to other subjects, and some of the three-dimensional work on display reflects standards above national expectations.

76. Owing to the way in which this subject is timetabled, no lessons in **design and technology** were observed during the inspection. However, work in pupils' books and on display suggests that pupils cover all the elements of the subject and, where seen, achieve standards that are broadly in line with national expectations in Year 2 and Year 6. Those aspects of the subject which require pupils to produce designs and make artefacts are the most firmly established. At Year 6, this led pupils to complete an imaginative range of slippers, having first researched the materials and made templates. Work in Year 2 resulted in a range of model vehicles, showing particular attention to detail. However, the limited quality of pupils' own evaluations of their designs suggests that this aspect of the subject is given less attention than others and therefore limits the extent to which they might make their work even better.

77. The subject leader gives satisfactory leadership and management, and the confidence of staff has been strengthened in response to her support. She has ensured that the subject is taught across all year groups and has first used time given to her recently for monitoring to review planning. Pupils' work illustrates valuable links with other subjects to strengthen and deepen their understanding; for example, Year 5 pupils designed and produced alarm systems, a project carefully linked to their science work on electrical switches. In Year 2 a puppet project was well linked to literacy through the use of appropriately selected poems.

78. No lessons were observed in **music**, but evidence has been taken from discussion with the subject leader and from visits to clubs, hymn practice and assemblies. The subject leader has considerable energy and drive, as well as specialist knowledge and expertise, and leads effectively. She has introduced a whole-school scheme for developing music, which gives pupils a well-organised and well-resourced range of musical experiences, including songs that readily catch their imagination. All pupils in Year 3 learn to play the recorder and learn musical notation. A part-time music teacher gives good support in lessons for specific groups of pupils, and enhances the provision for musical productions. Pupils enjoy the subject and speak enthusiastically about their musical activities in school. Many pupils take part in instrumental tuition; this includes flute, guitar, clarinet and keyboard. In her keenness to promote the subject, the subject leader has organised recorder clubs and choirs for both key stages, and encourages the school to take part in a wide

variety of musical events. The school also makes good use of the Medway and Kent Music School. Where observed, pupils were progressing well and standards were higher than national expectations. During their assembly, Year 2 pupils demonstrated a good ability to sing a wide variety of rhythms and styles, which they and their audience thoroughly enjoyed. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 sang in tune with good rhythm and confidently performed some complex rounds. In this last session, however, opportunities were not always taken to encourage pupils to improve their performance.

79. The subject is satisfactorily managed. The subject leader has recently had some time to monitor the subject and has reviewed the planning; however, as there is no established system for assessing standards and achievement, she is unable to gauge how well pupils are doing.

80. One lesson was observed in **physical education**, and other evidence was gathered from several short observations of teaching, and from planning, school displays and discussion with the subject leader. It is clear from these findings that all aspects of the subject are being taught, including dance. Swimming is given a high priority, and very good use is made of the school's indoor swimming pool. For example, the swimming gala for reception-aged children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 was thoroughly enjoyed by all. It included an imaginative range of events to make sure that pupils of all abilities were able to take part, such as the Seaside Race, using buckets, spades and sunglasses. Consequently the very high swimming standards noted at the previous inspection have been maintained. In other aspects of the subject, standards are above national expectations and achievement is good. Pupils enjoy the wide range of sporting activities and have developed good attitudes towards competitive and non-competitive sport. They work together well and have a good understanding of the concept of sportsmanship.

81. The subject is well led and managed, with much commitment, enthusiasm and support for staff, all of which ensures that the subject leader is a good role model for others. She has developed an excellent range of sporting activities to support and enhance work taking place in lessons. These include a rolling programme of clubs for different sports, involvement in a wide range of local competitive events, and professional coaching in several sports. The pupils' sporting successes are celebrated in attractive displays around the school. Strategic planning is of a good quality and includes a positive response to the need to develop further activities for younger pupils. The impact of provision is monitored well through the subject leader's detailed and careful cross-referencing of strategic planning with assessment information, although the time she has been given for doing this is limited.

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

Provision for PSHE and citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The positive impact of this provision on pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and on the very good relationships throughout the school.
- Good leadership and management.

## **Commentary**

82. There has been good improvement to this aspect of the curriculum since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator has shown good leadership by drawing up a detailed scheme of work which enables pupils to explore fundamental social and moral issues, such as healthy living, physical development and concern for the environment. Teaching and learning are good overall, and lessons are successfully used to promote personal development and to support the school's core values and caring ethos. Where teaching was seen, staff made good use of role-play and games to encourage participation. They were sensitive to pupils' individuality and ensured that everyone's views were listened to and valued, although occasionally questioning did not fully help pupils to refine or extend their ideas.

83. The work of the school council gives genuine opportunities for pupils to influence school improvement and to play an active role within the school community. The co-ordinator has also organised exciting events, such as a visit to the Mayor's parlour, which make a positive and relevant contribution to pupils' development as young citizens.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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