

INSPECTION REPORT

MEOPHAM COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gravesend

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118570

Headteacher: Mr A T Crossley-Holland

Lead inspector: Mrs L Brackstone

Dates of inspection: 14th - 17th March 2005

Inspection number: 267308

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: 404
School address: Longfield Road
Meopham
Gravesend
Kent
Postcode: DA13 0JW
Telephone number: (01474) 812 259
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr M Beeby
governors:
Date of previous 7th December 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Meopham is a large primary school that serves a pleasant residential area south of Gravesend. There are slightly more girls than boys. The majority of pupils come from white British families. There are a very small number of pupils who come from other white backgrounds or of mixed ethnicity. There are four pupils for whom English is an additional language, two of whom are at an early stage of acquisition. About 17 per cent of the pupils experience a range of special educational needs and this is an average number for the size of the school. Pupils' specific needs include moderate learning difficulties, hearing impairment and physical disabilities. One pupil has a statement for special educational needs. Attainment on entry is average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21872	Mrs Brackstone L	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology (ICT) Physical education
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7813	K Wood	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs (SEN)
22942	J Cousins	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Religious education English as an additional language
22113	A King	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school where all pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching is **good** and the planned curriculum is both interesting and promotes pupils' creative skills well. The headteacher is a very effective leader who has successfully created a very efficient leadership team. Governance is high quality. School management is good and ensures that **very good** value for money is provided from a budget that is much lower than the national norm.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in science and mathematics are well above average in Year 6. They are well above national expectations in design and technology.
- The leadership of the headteacher and key staff are of very high quality. Governors are very good overall, but there are a few minor omissions in the prospectus and their annual governors' report to parents.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Procedures to assess achievement are very good. They are used well to help teachers plan appropriate work and pupils are steadily developing the information provided by assessments to improve their learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well because personal development is good. Staff support them well on a day-to-day basis but their annual reports are not sharp enough.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported well in class but their learning targets are not specific enough.
- All pupils have equal access to a stimulating curriculum, which provides very good opportunities for enrichment activities.
- The ICT suite and mobile classrooms are not conducive to learning.

Improvement since the last inspection in December 1998 has been very good with all key issues being tackled effectively. Leadership, under the direction of a different headteacher, has improved from good to very good and governors are now very effective. Provision for pupils with SEN and spiritual development is much stronger. The school is well placed to continue to improve, given the motivation and effectiveness of the headteacher.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - very high; 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.*

The 2004 results in Year 6 show consistency in results in mathematics and science but a slight decline in English, which was a result of a significant proportion of pupils with specific language difficulties who entered the upper part of the school. Pupil achievement is good. Children's attainment on entry into school is average overall but a significant number of

pupils have weaker speaking skills, which impacts negatively on all areas of learning. All children achieve well in Reception and by the start of Year 1 of the National Curriculum overall attainment is as expected in all areas of learning. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Standards in design and technology are very high. National expectations are exceeded in information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design. In religious education, the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus are also exceeded. There are no differences in the attainment between boys and girls or of any particular ethnic group. Pupils with SEN, the gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language also achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils' personal qualities are good overall and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. They have good positive attitudes to their work and are eager to please. Pupils are confident and they work and play together very happily. Behaviour is good. Attendance is good and punctuality satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan their lessons to ensure that the pupils acquire appropriate knowledge and skills. Pupils are well challenged through the good use of questioning skills and this ensures that they are encouraged to apply their skills. Teaching methods are good and staff encourage the pupils to work both independently and co-operatively. Teaching assistants are used well to support learning and resources are carefully selected to maximise skills development. Procedures to check and track progress are very good with the information carefully gathered to plan relevant lessons. Pupils are developing their ability to use this information to understand how they can improve. The creative curriculum is interesting and very well enriched by a highly effective programme of extra-curricular activities. Provision for pupils with SEN is very good. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. There is a spacious hall with a separate dining area and corridors are bright and airy where pupils' work is attractively displayed. However, the ICT suite and the two temporary classrooms do not provide effective learning environments. Resources are good and looked after well. Links with local schools, particularly Meopham Secondary, and the local community are very good. Parents work effectively with the school and support their children well in their learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership is very effective and management good. The headteacher encourages his effective team very well by encouraging involvement in new initiatives. Key staff share his drive for improvement and the highly capable governing body very effectively supports the whole leadership team. However, there are a few minor omissions in the school prospectus and annual governors' report to parents.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are good. They feel confident about the leadership and management of the school and are happy to approach staff with problems. Parents appreciate the good induction procedures and know that staff have high expectations of work and behaviour. A small number of parents expressed concerns about bullying but inspectors found that pupils know who to go to if this happens. Some parents felt that they

were not given sufficient information about their children's progress and inspection findings endorse this. Most pupils like school and particularly enjoy lessons where they are actively involved.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Reconsider provision in the ICT suite.
- Ensure that reports to parents on children's progress are more detailed.
- Provide specific targets to help pupils for whom English is an additional language.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents contains all the required information.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children start school with average standards. By the end of Year 6, overall attainment is above average and overall achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved in science and mathematics are well above average in Year 6. They are well above national expectations in design and technology.
- The school is at an early stage of using writing to promote achievement in history and geography.

Commentary

1. Results in the Year 2 National Curriculum tests of 2004 indicate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well above the national average. When compared to similar schools, standards were well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. In the teacher assessments tests in science, standards were in the highest five per cent of national results and also when compared to similar schools. Standards have been improving since a drop in 2002 and 2003 and in relation to the last inspection when they were judged to be average overall.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003¹

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.8 (16.2)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.3 (15.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.8 (16.1)	16.2 (16.3)

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

¹ All levels of the National Curriculum are awarded a points score. The average score for all pupils taking the test is used to grade schools in each year. The expected average points at age seven is 15.6. Tables are adjusted to reflect the national average score before grading. The grades are shown in the summary.

- Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests of 2004 indicate that standards in mathematics and science were well above average and above average in English. When compared to similar schools, standards were well above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Standards have been consistently above the national average since 2001 and have made good improvements since the last inspection in mathematics and science.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003²

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.3 (30.0)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.7 (30.5)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.3 (32.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 64 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Inspection evidence indicates that standards on entry into the Reception class in all areas of learning are as expected, although a significant minority have speech and language weaknesses. This represents a slight difference from the last inspection when attainment on entry was judged to be above average. This can be explained by the changes in the demographic area served by the school. The current children in the Reception class are on target to meet the nationally agreed levels prior to starting the National Curriculum. This represents good achievement, which can be explained by the very well led and managed Foundation Stage where teaching and learning is consistently good.
- Standards in Year 2 are well above average in mathematics and reading and above average in writing. Standards in science are much higher than national expectations and they exceed national expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology. Standards are as expected in art and design, history and geography. The requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education are exceeded. In relation to their prior attainment, they are achieving well.
- Standards in Year 6 are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Standards in design and technology are very good. National expectations in ICT and art and design are exceeded. Standards in history and geography are as expected. The requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education are exceeded. Overall, pupils maintain their good levels of achievement during Years 3 to 6.
- Music and physical education were sampled because there was insufficient information available to make judgements on standards and achievement in these subjects. Numeracy skills are used well to promote learning across the curriculum. Links across the curriculum are good because pupils use their ICT skills to extend their numeracy, literacy, design and technology, and music skills. However, the school is aware that more application of writing skills could improve pupil achievement in history and geography.
- Those pupils with special educational needs (SEN), the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and the minority groups make good progress

² All levels of the National Curriculum are awarded a points score. The average score for all pupils taking the test is used to grade schools in each year. The expected average points at age 11 is 27.5. Tables are adjusted to reflect the national average score before grading. The grades are shown in the summary.

and achieve as well as their peers. Where teaching is good and learning targets are clear, their progress is even better. Pupils who have specific special educational needs work well towards carefully identified targets in both group and individual educational plans. Where there is individual support in classes, the progress of pupils is enhanced. In small group support, pupils make good progress in developing literacy, social and physical skills. Pupils who use English as an additional language are supported well but achievement could be even higher if learning targets were more specific.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, as is their behaviour. The provision made by the school leads to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development being good overall. Pupils' attendance and the school's actions to promote good attendance are good and their punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy very good relationships with staff and with each other, and have high levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their learning and the opportunities provided for them.
- They behave well and this reflects the school's high expectations and the way it works to achieve them.
- The school has a good attendance record and procedures for monitoring it are good.
- There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual development and good provision for their moral and social development.
- Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory but there is insufficient awareness that they live and will work in a multi-ethnic society.

Commentary

8. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well in their personal and social development. They behave well, are generally attentive and have positive attitudes to their learning. The children learn to share, take turns and co-operate and to show tolerance and understanding for the needs of others.
9. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning as a consequence of the school's good efforts to stimulate their interest in the classroom and with a range of other activities. This was exemplified during a scintillating science extravaganza for Years 4 and 5 where pupils responded enthusiastically to the range of interesting opportunities they were provided with. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and each other. Therefore, they are able to work collaboratively and effectively together. The pupils show very good confidence and self-esteem, which enhances the quality of their learning. They are very polite to each other and to visitors and enthusiastically and diligently carry out any responsibilities, such as monitors or members of the school council, which they are given.
10. Pupils' behaviour, both within and outside the classroom, is good. Class rules are developed in conjunction with pupils and these, together with school rules, are prominently displayed and effectively applied through a range of rewards and sanctions, including house points and use of warning cards, which are consistently used by all staff. As a result of pupils' overall good behaviour and attitudes, no pupil has been excluded during the last few years. Pupils are confident in their

surroundings, which promote good behaviour, and this impacts well on their attitudes to learning.

11. Some parents, in the meeting and questionnaire prior to the inspection, and pupils during the inspection reported that incidents of bad behaviour or bullying occur. However, observations in the playground did not confirm this view and no incidents of bullying were noted during the inspection. Parents and pupils also largely reported that any such incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with. In fact, three incidents of bullying and one of racial abuse have been recorded by the school in the current academic year but these were all dealt with appropriately.
12. Pupils' development of self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is very good as a result of the school's efforts in personal, social, health and emotional education (PSHE), assemblies and in features such as the thought for the week. Their moral and social development is good. Friendship is actively promoted, pupils can distinguish right from wrong and they act responsibly as members of the school community, for instance as playground friends and mentors or as members of the school council. Pupils are provided with a wide range of activities and this enables them to understand and appreciate other cultures and faiths. French lessons promote a good awareness of life in another country. However, they receive only limited preparation for the multi-faith and multi-ethnic British society they will eventually encounter.
13. The last reported figure, for the year 2003/2004, for overall attendance is good, being above that of most other schools. The amount of authorised and unauthorised absence was below the national rates. Figures for the current year show that this good performance is being maintained. The school has good procedures to monitor attendance and is diligent in establishing reasons for absence and working to improve the record of pupils who cause concern.
14. Punctuality is satisfactory, which is a slight improvement since the last inspection, with only a relatively small number of pupils being habitually late. The school operates a late book system as a means of improving punctuality and monitors any particular pupils who cause concern.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.7	School data	0.2
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 provided by the school is good. Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and the curriculum provided is rich and stimulating. Pupils are well cared for and benefit from very strong links with the community and other schools. Links between home and school are good and this contributes well to the quality of education provided by the school.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teacher assessment is good overall. Assessment procedures are very good and pupils understand well how to improve their work.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good and have been well maintained since the last inspection.
- In Years 1-6, teachers mostly provide good challenge and plan interesting activities.
- Pupils have good work practices and understand well how they can improve their work.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	14 (27%)	27 (55%)	7 (14%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

- Teaching is good in Reception where teachers have good understanding of the needs of this age group. A pleasant working atmosphere is conducive to pupils' learning and achievement. Consequently, well-planned practical activities ensure that the children apply the skills they are developing. The teachers have high expectations and use good resources so that effective learning is assured. There is a good partnership with the teaching assistants who make a significant contribution to the learning process by consistently interacting well with the children. For example, the teacher's planning enables the teaching assistant to use the outdoor area to role-play 'Noah's Ark', thus supporting the children's spoken language needs.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 1-6 and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Good, sometimes very good, teaching is characterised by well-planned, brisk lessons that deliver a strong challenge to pupils yet provide the support necessary for many less capable pupils. All these qualities were evident in a very good literacy session in Year 3, where the lesson included well-planned tasks; the teacher had high expectations and could motivate all pupils, including those pupils with SEN, to produce good quality work. Lessons mostly flag up the learning intentions and the success criteria by which pupils may judge their performance. In a very good religious education lesson in Year 4, the teacher structured the lesson into specific targets and steps about which pupils were very clear. In a Year 5 session, the more capable group moved at a swift pace because the prepared work was well suited to challenge pupils through very clear directions and high teacher expectations. Less capable pupils were well supported in a high quality mathematics session in Year 6, where very effective methods and high expectations extended all the pupils in the set so that they all achieved well. However, teaching is weaker when class management is not secure and, consequently, the pupils' progress is inhibited. For example, in a session of literacy in the upper part of the school, although the pupils were well supported by the learning intention and its associated success criteria, the teacher questioned the pupils too much and this did not give them time to work.
- Learning is mostly good. It is effective where pupils understand what they are doing and follow usual procedures. Pupils enjoy calm working atmospheres and the

provision of good resources, such as, where learning is promoted visually, through the good use of the interactive whiteboards and through artefacts such as school logbooks in a Year 6 history lesson. Lesson planning clearly identifies the learning intentions of the teacher, so that pupils have good understanding. Moreover, the accompanying success criteria enable learners to judge how well they are doing. For example, in Year 1, pupils judged that they were organising their museum artefacts in a '*sensible*' manner. Learning is not as effective as it should be when there are weaknesses in class management. For instance, pupil achievement is negatively affected when they are not given sufficient time by the teacher to complete their collaborative tasks. Homework is used satisfactorily to promote learning, such as when the young readers take their logbooks home.

18. The teaching of pupils with SEN is good overall. The specialist reading sessions each morning allows group work with SEN pupils across the school. This is very good provision using many adults, some parents and grandparents as volunteers. Pupils with SEN are provided with suitable differentiated work, for example, using writing frames or simpler ways of recording. More capable pupils are also taught well. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics session, two very able pupils use a computer program very well to calculate money sums. The teaching assistants are effective, sometimes very effective, when they help pupils with tact and rigour. They liaise well with teachers and provide pupils with learning difficulties good quality guidance in their learning. The good provision and support given to those pupils who need it, reflect the school's caring ethos and its commitment to inclusion.
19. The teaching of pupils who use English as an additional language is good. This is as a result of teachers carefully explaining key vocabulary. Paired discussion work allows pupils to learn to speak clearly. Structured literacy lessons mean that pupils learn how to plan their writing effectively. However, pupils' individual targets do not measure or contain consistently specific objectives and so pupils are not sure about which areas of learning they are working on at present.
20. There is a strong culture of assessment and it is a whole-school approach. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are very good throughout the school and their progress consistently charted at regular intervals. Teacher concerns lead directly to carefully crafted individual or group education plans, with specific targets. The analysis of statutory and optional tests in English and mathematics is good and leads to focused interventions and consequent tracking. It is the same through most subjects. The review and evaluation procedures are well embedded. There is comprehensive record keeping, so that, for example, the assessment co-ordinator can very efficiently explore data for comparisons of pupils' Year 2 and Year 6 scores. Pupils understanding of how they can improve is satisfactory. They are becoming more aware of how they can improve their work through the use of shared target-setting and informal discussions with their teachers. For pupils with specific needs there is comprehensive record keeping. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) sets clear direction and the needs of pupils with SEN are carefully assessed.

The curriculum is very good with enhancement of the pupils' learning and a creative approach to developing thinking.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and well balanced, with a good integration of subjects to support learning.
- A very good range of clubs and after-school activities is offered.
- There are good links to other subjects to make learning meaningful.
- Pupils' autonomy for their learning is well promoted in the curriculum.

Commentary

21. There have been good improvements in the curriculum for the Foundation Stage since the last inspection. The learning programme is effectively planned and based on the six areas of learning that work towards the Early Learning Goals. There is an effective range of interesting and engaging activities for the children to select in their work and play. Child-initiated activities and tasks directed by an adult are very well balanced and aid the children's skills in concentrating and persevering at a task and having autonomy for their learning. There is a relatively new outdoor area for the Foundation Stage children and staff have made a good start developing it as an integral part of the school day.
22. Effective improvements have also been made in the curriculum for Years 1 to 6, which is now good. Schemes of work and planning are now secure and these are very carefully monitored. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements and has a relevant match of activities suitable to their different needs and abilities. One pupil is disapplied from the National Curriculum but is provided with a suitable alternative programme of study. There is a very inclusive approach to learning for all groups of pupils, who are well prepared for the next steps in their education. There is good breadth and balance and well-integrated subjects to support learning. The National Strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively. There is an emphasis on a creative curriculum, child-initiated work is very well balanced and is a developing feature of learning throughout the school. There is a successful focus on science, design and technology, and mathematics through topic weeks, with time also devoted to multicultural aspects, health weeks and poetry. French is also taught and this gives the pupils a good opportunity to learn a foreign language at an early stage in their education. The strong curriculum is also very well enriched through a very good range of activities and residential visits that enhance learning. This is also an improvement since the last inspection.
23. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good with the school fully complying with the Code of Practice. Children are quickly identified in Reception and all pupils are given individual education plans that have identified manageable targets for them to achieve. This enables the plans to be used on a day-to-day basis to ensure that the pupils gain appropriate support. They are assessed regularly and this leads to an informed review of their progress. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory. They are well supported but their learning targets could be sharper.
24. Accommodation, staffing and resources are good, with well-qualified staff that are deployed effectively, with a good mix of experience. This is a good improvement

since the last inspection. There is good access to learning areas, which is currently being improved further, and outdoors accommodation is good with an adventure playground and garden. There are various small areas for specialist teaching, an ICT suite, and the building is in a reasonable state of repair. Some classrooms are a good size, but the mobile classrooms are cramped and not as good as the rest of the accommodation in the school. The ICT suite is not conducive to learning because it is poorly ventilated and furnished inappropriately. However, all pupils have good access to the stimulating curriculum the school provides, suitably enriched with a very good range of activities. Progress since the previous inspection is very good.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good care for its pupils, in a safe and healthy environment. It provides good advice, support and guidance for the pupils. It makes good arrangements to seek their views and involve them in the work of the school and its development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures and practices for child protection concerns are very good.
- Pupils receive good support and advice for their personal and academic development.
- The school actively gains the views of its pupils, who enjoy trusting relationships with adults.
- There are good arrangements for pupils' entry into school.

Commentary

25. The school has very good arrangements for child protection. It has updated its policy and practices to recognise recent legislation and has completed the necessary training for all staff, representing an improvement since the last inspection. The school closely monitors situations that may give rise to child protection concerns. There are satisfactory procedures and practices to meet the medical needs of pupils. There are no pupils in care.
26. Pupils work in a safe and healthy environment. Regular property checks and statutory testing of fittings and equipment are carried out. However, some deficiencies were noted during the inspection and the school has been made aware of these. Risk assessments are satisfactorily carried out prior to any external visits.
27. Pupils receive good support and guidance in regard to their personal and academic development. As a result of the very good relationships within the school, pupils feel confident to approach an adult regarding any matters that might trouble them. Their personal development is aided through features such as the '*friendship benches*' in the playground and the '*buddying and mentor systems*'. An effective programme, run by a learning mentor, supports those with particular needs. Regular '*Circle Time*' sessions, where pupils sit together to discuss issues, provides them with good opportunities to raise matters that concern them, as do the new '*Problem Boxes*'. However, some pupils report that these are not yet regularly used. Pupils' academic progress is well supported through targeted provision and the effective use of assessment.
28. The school has good induction arrangements for new pupils that help to reduce any potential trauma for the child and assist with their early learning. For instance, home visits prior to the pupil's entry provide basic information on the stage of the child's

development and children make preliminary visits to the school. Parents are provided with information to assist them with home learning and their child attends school for morning sessions only during the first few weeks.

29. The school makes a good provision for seeking and acting upon the views of pupils. There are occasional whole-school surveys and an influential school council that, for instance, has been involved in developing the new behaviour policy and was instrumental in bringing about the redecoration of the toilets and improved playground markings.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents' links with the school are good and these links make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Links with both the community and other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very strong links with other schools through the cluster arrangements.
- The very strong links with the local community are used to enhance pupils' learning.
- Parents contribute well to pupils' learning at home and at school.
- There are good arrangements for seeking and acting upon the views of parents.
- The quality and usefulness of pupils' annual reports could be improved.

Commentary

30. Some parents who responded to the questionnaire prior to the inspection felt that they are not well informed about their child's progress and inspection findings support this concern. The school provides a written report in the summer term which details what pupils have been doing. The report also sometimes gives targets for English and mathematics and the pupils' personal development. However, these targets are not consistently given nor are they always written in clear language or very explicit or helpful to parents as to how they could assist their child's learning at home or their personal development. There are also deficiencies in, or omissions from, other statutory documents such as the school prospectus and the annual report by governors, but these do not adversely affect pupils' achievement or the standards that they reach.
31. The school operates a useful website and parents receive newsletters which keep them informed of forthcoming events. They also receive good information regarding curriculum and topic work for the term and some guidance about assisting their child at home with this work. Instructional booklets on reading and mathematics are provided. A reading notebook and a contact book are used for all pupils, together with a homework diary for older pupils, as a means of communication between home and school.
32. Occasional '*Open Days*' are held to demonstrate pupils' work in particular subjects and parent consultation evenings are held each term. These meetings are well attended and provide parents with good opportunities to discuss their child's progress.

The school makes a strong effort to see all parents, including providing flexible timing arrangements and speaking at the gate to parents who do not attend.

33. The school is successful in encouraging a large number of parents and grandparents into school on a regular basis. They provide valuable assistance in classrooms, for instance, in the '*Repeated Reading*' sessions each morning, and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. An evaluation of SEN provision is included in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents. Parents are appropriately involved in the process of reviews and target setting.
34. Regular surveys are held to discover the views of parents. Questions cover a wide range of topics and the responses are analysed before the results are reported to parents. A subsequent action plan reflects the outcomes and means that parents are able to make a good contribution to the school's development.
35. The school has very good links with the local community, which are well used to improve the teaching and learning of pupils. Some local organisations use the school's facilities. Furthermore, the school takes pupils on day trips to a range of local facilities, such as a pig farm, and pupils, parents and staff take regular walks around Meopham. A wide range of visitors, including a drama workshop on bullying, farmyard animals and a drugs workshop, and weeklong residential trips also make significant contributions to pupils' learning and personal development.
36. The school also has very good links with other schools through its membership of cluster groups. These links enable the school to share practices, run joint activities and provide additional help for more able pupils. It is also developing a scheme to promote parent partnerships. Additionally, the school has strong links with the after-school club, which operates on its premises, and with pre-school providers and, through the consortium, receives services from the Family Learning unit to run courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT for parents. Collectively, these links make a significant contribution to the teaching and learning of pupils.
37. There are good arrangements for the transfer of pupils into secondary education and these help pupils to settle in quickly. Parents are provided with relevant information about the choices available and pupils visit prospective schools, taking samples of their work with them. The school's learning mentor identifies pupils who may find the transition particularly difficult and specific measures are taken to ease their burden.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good overall. Leadership of the headteacher is very good. Management is good. Governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and deputy provide very clear leadership.
- The governing body is very well informed about the strengths and development areas for the school.
- The improvement plan is very effective in structuring the school's development.
- Performance management has been very effectively used to raise standards since the last inspection.
- The school has a higher than expected underspend.
- A few minor omissions have been made on the documentation sent out to parents.

- The leadership of the school is very committed to including pupils in all aspects of school life.

Commentary

38. The headteacher is a very good leader. His dedication to the school over the last few years has been very effective in developing standards. At the time of the last inspection, standards were average and they are now above average overall. The headteacher has implemented a range of strategies that have led to very significant improvement in the school's ethos through the development of a wider curriculum and greater emphasis on pupils' spiritual awareness. The deputy headteacher and senior management team take account of identified weaknesses in the school and rectify them. This is helping to drive through specific initiatives such as the development of thinking skills, assessment and tracking of pupils' attainment. This has also led to a climate where communication is more open and where there is a free exchange of ideas and views. There is a strong sense of teamwork between all staff in which the school's aims are shared and understood. The school is well placed for further improvement.
39. The senior management team functions well. Performance management is used very well to improve the quality of provision and standards. Pupils' results are carefully analysed and targets prepared, with the result that teachers are developing a better understanding of their pupils' abilities, especially in English, mathematics and science.
40. The school manages its provision for SEN well. Its policy is clear, helpful, up-to-date and conforms to the Code of Practice. There is good communication between the governor with responsibility for SEN, the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), teaching assistants and outside agencies. The SENCO is very able and well organised. She leads appropriate staff training on, for example, ways of identifying needs. Using devolved budgets, the school provides a good level of resources, including staffing to support pupils with SEN. The move to provision of whole-school strategies, rather than the group or individual planning, is commended.
41. The leadership of the provision for pupils who use English as an additional language is good. The progress of these pupils is carefully monitored and appropriate education plans are used. Teachers and the co-ordinator quickly assess new pupils when they arrive. The school works very hard to integrate pupils from all backgrounds.
42. The quality of teaching and learning has been monitored well in English, mathematics and science. Staff have had access to shared criteria for good teaching and learning. There is a systematic plan for subject co-ordinators to carry out evaluative monitoring of teaching through regular lesson observations, with verbal and written feedback to staff that outlines strengths and areas for further development. Future monitoring is planned by senior managers to ensure areas identified for improvement have been implemented. Pupils' books are regularly analysed by co-ordinators so they are able to discuss with staff how provision can be improved.
43. The school successfully evaluates itself well and areas identified for improvement is fed into a very clear three-year plan. This improvement plan thoroughly informs the work of the school for the coming year through an effective set of specific and measurable objectives for improvement on whole-school aspects for development.

44. The governing body, under the leadership of a hardworking chairperson, is in a very good position to offer the school well-founded advice and support when they help to create the school's improvement plan. Governors are very supportive and take a keen interest in the performance of pupils and in the ethos of the school. They seek information and explanation on the school's progress towards further improvement and are not prepared to be complacent about the school's success. Legal requirements are satisfactorily met but there are a few omissions on the documentation sent out to parents, which includes any provision for pupils who are withdrawn from assembly for religious reasons. In the annual report to parents, there is no reference to the progress made by pupils with SEN, staff training and financial information is vague and the targets for the forthcoming national tests are not included. However, the governors plan to rectify these omissions immediately.
45. Approaches to financial management are good and resources are used directly to enrich pupils' learning whenever possible. The finance committee makes judicious spending decisions and ensures effective working practices by involving representatives from other committees. The school carefully monitors budgetary expenditure and the headteacher and governors are appropriately briefed on its financial position. The school's underspend this year was higher than normal but this money is to pay for further improvements in ICT, the provision of a pre-school unit and to fund teachers' extra time away from the classroom. The finance manager has established clear procedures for the day-to-day administration of the budget and the school makes good use of best value principles when purchasing supplies or services. The school receives below average funding and, therefore, offers very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	934,650
Total expenditure	911,779
Expenditure per pupil	1,909

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	79,308
Balance carried forward to the next year	102,179

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. It now has clear curricular guidelines and outdoor provision. This improvement is significant as a National Curriculum for the Foundation Stage of learning has been introduced and implemented since then, which has given a sharper remit to the teaching of young children. Children come into the Reception class around their fifth birthday when they attend on a part-time basis for the first three complete weeks of term. Their levels of attainment are about the expected level for their age, although several have weak skills in speech and language. However, there is a wide spectrum of abilities, with some children being more capable, and the staff strive successfully to meet the different needs of the children. By the time the children reach Year 1, they have made good progress and achieve well, especially in their literacy skills. Their overall attainment by then is at the expected level for their age, although a few children exceed this. The quality of teaching and learning in the Reception classes is consistently good, with significant strengths in the teaching of literacy. Staff are developing the provision successfully and integrating the use of the outdoor area, which is a relatively recent addition to the accommodation. This area is used well during child-initiated sessions, but due to levels of supervision cannot be used continuously throughout the day. Adults encourage and motivate the children very well and have high expectations for behaviour, to which the children respond well. The curriculum is good, carefully thought through to meet the diverse needs of the children, which include SEN, gifted and talented, those who use English as an additional language and minority groups. The staff work very well together as a team supporting the children's learning. Considering the significant improvement in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection, and the impact of the child-initiated work that is ongoing throughout the school, leadership and management are very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are confident and happy in school because the staff offer a secure and caring learning environment.
- Children behave well and are carefully inducted into school life.

COMMENTARY

46. Children are making good progress and achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because the quality of teaching and learning is good. The children are confident and feel secure in school, and leave their parents and carers happily, to start their tasks and activities. They are carefully introduced to school life, have secure relationships with staff and are aware of the daily routines and expectations. They behave well, are generally attentive and have positive attitudes to their learning. They are learning to share, take turns and co-operate in their play and to show tolerance and understanding for the needs of others. There is a very good emphasis on activities which the children select for themselves, which is very effective in developing their autonomy for their own learning and also to enhance their skills in

concentrating and persevering. They are generally responsible for their own needs, although a few are still learning how to do this without help. Most children are keen to be involved with others and play co-operatively together and collaborate successfully, for example, in role-play activities. By the time the children leave the Reception class, it is expected that they will have achieved the Early Learning Goals and a few will exceed these.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's skills in literacy are developing very well.
- Speaking and listening are encouraged and promoted effectively.
- Children handle books properly and understand that print has meaning.
- Role-play opportunities are well promoted and skills in writing are developed effectively.

Commentary

47. Most children start school with average skills in communication, language and literacy, although several have weaker skills in speaking and listening. However, they achieve very well overall in this area of learning, because teaching and learning are consistently good and frequently very good. All activities to reinforce literacy are very well planned, the staff have a very structured and clear approach to the teaching of reading, helping the children recognise simple words and to work out new words using their skills and knowledge about sounds and letters. For instance, children had very good guidance during the inspection on how to handle books, look for information and they have a very good developing understanding of elements in books. They explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction books, understand the terms '*contents, blurb and index*', also that '*high frequency or key words*' are those which they come across regularly in their reading. Their skills in literacy are developing well, as there is a very good emphasis on aspects of reading, deciphering print and recognising simple words. This means they handle books properly and understand that print has meaning. The staff interact and participate effectively with children in their work and play and encourage the acquisition of vocabulary; because of this, speaking and listening are developing well. Role-play opportunities are well promoted as adults support this work effectively. The staff provide good opportunities for the children to write and make marks on paper. The '*write dance*' approach, which is an innovative approach to learning, is also successful in developing the children's skills in large movements, rotating their arms and hands and then refining these movements to manipulate their small hand muscles to promote strength and flexibility. This means they are well prepared to handle writing implements, and using malleable materials also benefits this type of work. The children draw and write outdoors with chalk and paintbrushes dipped in water to make marks on the ground or other surfaces. They can usually write their own names, but these are not always accurately formed, using appropriate upper and lower case letters. Nevertheless, overall teaching and learning are very good, which results in very good progress in the children's learning.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall.
- The children have good opportunities to develop their mathematical ideas through incidental activities.
- Staff effectively reinforce mathematical language.

Commentary

48. The children come into school with average skills in understanding mathematical ideas and many have had some practical experiences handling shapes and working with numbers. Teaching is good overall, which means children achieve well and make good progress. The children are encouraged to talk about what they observe when working with numbers, and to recognise numerals to ten and beyond. By the time they leave the Reception Year, their skills are about the expected level for this age group, with a few more capable children exceeding the Early Learning Goals. Those children identified as having SEN and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because they are well supported in their learning. Staff have good questioning skills to challenge and extend the children's thinking as they play, especially as the children have good opportunities to develop their mathematical ideas through incidental activities. For example, when they play in the '*greengrocers*' and staff reinforce mathematical language effectively. Sessions in mathematical development are very well linked to everyday life situations that make learning meaningful. The staff offer a good level of challenge and encourage the children to extend their mathematical ideas.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is given good emphasis.
- A good range of activities supports this area of learning effectively.
- Finding out about living things is a feature of the children's learning.

Commentary

49. The children achieve well in their knowledge and understanding of the world, because teaching and learning are good, their skills are developing well and there is a good emphasis on this area of learning within the curriculum. By the time the children go into Year 1, they are likely to have attained the expected level for this age group. Staff very carefully plan a good, interesting programme, which supports the children's learning about the environment. There is a good variety of experiences for the children to explore natural and manufactured objects using their senses. For example, outdoors they are learning to tend the seeds and flowers they have planted. Sessions are well planned to offer a variety of learning experiences. For instance, handling natural objects such as vegetables in their role-play in the '*greengrocers*', the children are encouraged to examine these and make comments about the similarities and differences they notice. They are encouraged to appreciate the range of different cultures within society and there is a reasonable range of resources and artefacts to support this aspect of their work. This is an area that the staff intend to develop

further, especially in providing a greater range of toys and equipment to reflect the diverse nature of modern day society. There is a good range of activities to support this area of learning in finding out about living things.

50. Studying animals is a feature of the children's learning. During the inspection, the children enjoyed a visit from a local farm; small domestic animals were brought into the school for the children to observe and study as part of the current topic. The children's skills in designing and making models are fostered effectively and they use computers appropriately, working towards the Early Learning Goals. However, the layout of the ICT suite is not at the appropriate height for this age group and seating is not suitable for young children.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good co-ordination and control are being developed through the '*write dance*' approach.
- This is also having a positive impact on the children's skills using their hands.
- Being aware of healthy eating is encouraged effectively.

COMMENTARY

51. Standards are average when the children come into school. They make progress quickly and are developing good co-ordination and control. The '*write dance*' approach is helping the children develop confidence in their abilities. This is also having a positive impact on the children's skills using their hands. For example, the children move imaginatively to music, rotate their arms in time to the beat, wiggle their bodies to illustrate cat movements and develop wrist movements when they flick their hands up and down. The programme is carefully structured and the staff ensure there is regular practice to ensure progression of skills. The children use their hands to manipulate malleable materials, such as dough, to roll, press, cut and twist. However, when practising writing patterns, the use of whiteboards means it is not easy for children to develop their expertise on a '*slippery*' writing surface. In the outdoor space, they can use tricycles to pedal, push and propel themselves along, negotiating space and other children effectively. Achievement is good in physical development and the children's understanding about keeping healthy, for instance, being aware of healthy eating, is promoted well. Teaching and learning is good overall. Achievement is good and most children are likely to achieve, and several will exceed, the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching means the children make good progress.
- Children have good opportunities to explore sound and make music.
- Children's creativity is valued and encouraged effectively through child-initiated work.

Commentary

52. The children come into the Reception class with skills in creative development at the expected stage for their age. They have a varied range of experiences and are keen to join in songs and explore sound with musical instruments and make music. In music sessions, the staff are skilled at helping the children become aware of the beat to music, to clap in time and to sing with an awareness of themselves and others as performers. Children enjoy their role-play activities to develop their imaginative ideas and the staff participate with them very well. For example, a member of staff took on the role of '*Mrs Wishy Washy*' and was fully involved in developing the children's imaginative ideas and mathematical understanding. The children enjoy working with a variety of media, such as paints and crayons, and use these properly in their paintings and drawings, which are reasonably detailed. They are given good opportunities to develop their ideas, and this is also reflected in three-dimensional work. However, when they use junk packages to create models, it restricts the amount of designing they do and also limits opportunities to fold, bend and cut to create their own three-dimensional shapes. Achievement is good overall and the child-centred approach is encouraging children to self-select from a range of activities. This is effective in inspiring the children to develop independent thinking and in promoting creativity.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good, effectively maintaining high standards for pupils' attainments and achievements. This report is on writing, where standards are above national averages, but not as high as reading.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- There is very good co-ordination and management.
- Test data is analysed very effectively and this ensures consistent monitoring.
- The curriculum is innovative.
- The subject is well resourced.
- There is not enough time allotted for developing writing skills.

COMMENTARY

53. Standards are good in English. Inspection findings indicate that pupils' reading levels by the end of Year 2 are well above national averages. Writing and speaking and listening standards are not as high as those for reading, but nevertheless are above average. Standards for speaking, listening, reading and writing by the end of Year 6 are also above national averages, but the number of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment is disappointing, and writing is a relative weakness. After a dip in writing standards last year, due to a weak cohort, standards have risen again and are improved even from the picture at the last inspection. Spelling is usually correct because pupils develop good habits of collecting words for future reference. Standards of presentation are good throughout the school, especially in the pupils' writing portfolios that give the exercise appropriate importance. The strength of teaching overall, and the full inclusion of all pupils in the lessons, means that achievement is good, and sometimes very good, for all pupils. This includes pupils with SEN, the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and minority groups.

54. Teaching is good overall and this impacts well on the pupils' learning. For example, the working atmosphere in a very good Year 2 lesson allowed pupils to concentrate on the shared reading book, *'Handa's Surprise'*. The teacher's very good analysis drew well upon the pupils' own experiences. The effective partnership with the teaching assistant supported the less capable pupils with a writing frame. In Year 6, the teacher's planning of a session of drama had a positive effect in focusing pupils' concentration on the text. For instance, the pupils were keenly interested in the clash of imagination and reality in *'Come away from the water, Shirley'*. However, when pupils are interrupted by too much questioning, the quality of teaching is weaker and the amount of progress made by the pupils is limited. Pupils who use English as an additional language are supported well in class but their individual targets are not specific enough and this means that their next learning steps are unclear.
55. Support for pupils' writing is mostly good throughout the school. The setting of pupils by ability in literacy lessons in Year 5 and Year 6 makes a positive contribution to the maintenance of high standards. All pupils' work, including both statutory and optional national tests, is properly assessed and pupils' progress is carefully monitored throughout the school. Some classes use *'writing frames'*, which provide effective support for the wide range of ability in each class. However, this is not consistent through the school. Teachers teach handwriting explicitly and pupils respond positively.
56. A wide range of opportunities for pupils to write is provided. For example, pupils in Year 6 choose adventurous words for effect, *'The Iron Man lifted a big handful of chains and let them dangle into his mouth – better than any spaghetti'*. After reading *Cider with Rosie*, an average capability pupil illustrated the mood of a character, *'When Laurie got back home, he was in a terrible temper'*. A less capable pupil used alliteration well; *'The scaly, slippery (sic) fish swam swiftly through the dirty sea'*. Pupil writers in Year 2 are well supported by the very familiar story, *Little Red Riding Hood*, so that they are not lost for words or ideas. More capable pupils in Year 2 enliven the nursery rhyme, *'Jill bellowed, "Come back, Jack!'*. Pupils in Year 3 prepare their poetry for performance after looking at the style of Jazz poetry and Rap.
57. The very capable co-ordinator has detailed knowledge of the current state of her subject. She has a very clear understanding of year group changes over time and their effect on standards. Teachers' planning and the delivery of the curriculum are effectively managed. The current emphasis on guided reading explains the high standards, sometimes very high standards, in this aspect of the English curriculum. However, there is not a sufficient focus on writing as a priority. The school's analysis of the test data and its use in modifying provision is good overall. The co-ordinator has innovative ideas, for example, planning and introducing a writing scale with built-in target setting, in line with the school's declared priority. The school is well placed, given the quality of subject leadership, supported by very good assessment procedures, to make a significant improvement in writing standards to match the high reading standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Speaking, listening and reading skills are used well to support learning across the curriculum. However, writing skills are not used sufficiently well to develop learning in subjects such as history and geography.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils, including those with SEN and those who use English as an additional language, achieve well.
- Mental warm-up sessions are used well.
- Pupils learn many effective strategies to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils do not have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.
- Teaching assistants rarely record assessments of pupils during the introduction of a lesson.
- Good leadership and management mean that pupils' strengths and weaknesses have been carefully analysed.

Commentary

59. Standards in the Year 6 tests in 2004 were well above average compared with those in all schools. In relation to schools whose pupils attained similarly in Year 2, attainment by these Year 6 pupils was also well above average. Over half the Year 6 pupils attained the highest level in tests. In 2004, standards in tests in Year 2 were well above average. Inspection findings confirm that standards are well above average in both Years 2 and 6. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection when standards were average.
60. A significant strength is in pupils' abilities to solve complex challenges. For example, Year 6 pupils solve complex problems involving number when they try to prove Pythagoras' Theorem. This is because teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to carry out multi-step problems and they teach pupils different ways to structure their thinking.
61. There are several reasons for the well above average standards attained. The curriculum is well planned and structured, including high emphasis on developing quick mental recall of number as well as recording work on paper. A recent focus on the development of thinking skills has enabled pupils to learn how to systematically work through problems and complex calculations. Lessons are challenging and pupils respond well and have positive attitudes to the subject. This was evident in the four very good lessons seen. For instance, the teacher's high expectations allow Year 6 pupils to develop accuracy of measurement when they learn to draw triangles using protractors and rulers. Effective teaching methods ensure that teachers are always looking for ways pupils can use and apply their skills. This was seen when Year 6 pupils learn to program a small robot using their knowledge of angles well. Basic skills are taught particularly effectively when Year 1 pupils learn to find the correct coins to make amounts of money up to ten pence. Teachers build on this firm foundation in later years through a good balance of discussion and explanation as well as investigation of complex ideas. Pupils who are gifted and talented receive suitable work, which extends their learning well.
62. Teaching and learning are good overall. As a result, pupils achieve well from Years 1 to 6. Lessons are lively and use resources effectively. Planning uses time well. Teachers use open-ended questioning effectively to challenge pupils that enables them to learn how to explain their thinking. Good use of demonstration allows pupils to learn how to set out their written work and thinking. Most pupils behave well,

concentrate and co-operate due to effective teacher management skills. Teachers' encouragement and positive comments mean that pupils enjoy lessons. However, teachers do not consistently explain to pupils what they have done well or say how they could improve orally. This means that pupils are not clear about the next steps they could take to develop their skills in the future. Teaching assistants are not often used to record assessments of pupils at the start or end of sessions and so the teacher does not gain valuable extra information on pupils' attainment.

63. Teaching and learning for pupils who have SEN are good. A key factor here is the clear and easy-to-follow explanations given by teachers that enable all pupils, especially those who use English as an additional language, to take a full part in lessons. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are supported effectively and so they achieve well.
64. Leadership and management are good. Provision in mathematics has improved significantly since the last inspection. A detailed file of information about performance in mathematics throughout the school includes a good analysis of strengths and weaknesses of pupils' work. As a result, the school has a challenging action plan and a determination to further improve provision. Pupils' attainment is tracked effectively and the co-ordinator is knowledgeable about specific year groups who would benefit from extra support in particular areas of mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Provision is good. Pupils in Year 6 apply their knowledge of number effectively to create formulae and use them in spreadsheets. Pupils use measurement well in design and technology planning. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows examples of graphs and pie charts being used in ICT and data handling supporting learning effectively.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Very good teaching and learning leads to very good achievement.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Pupils enjoy learning and the quality of investigation and experiment is very good.

Commentary

66. Standards in Year 2 are well above national expectations. This is a similar picture to the most recent teacher assessment tests and represents a very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were considered poor. Standards in Year 6 are well above average, which is similar to the most recent national test results. It also represents a good improvement since the last inspection. Differences between the attainment of boys and girls were noted in the 2003 national test results. However, the school has successfully rectified this issue by ensuring that boys have improved support with writing test answers more confidently.
67. Pupils in Year 2 understand the importance of pulse rates, identify the characteristics of living and non-living things and match adult animals to their offspring. Year 6 pupils are knowledgeable about the solar system, food preservation, the properties of

different materials and electrical circuits. They devise and test a hypothesis about experiments and collect and analyse results to draw conclusions. More capable pupils re-do tests and provide plausible explanations. All pupils, including those with SEN, the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and minority groups, achieve well because they are provided with well-matched activities and are fully included in all sessions.

68. Teaching and learning are very good. Subject knowledge is very secure and this ensures that the pupils accurately develop scientific knowledge and skills. Lessons are very well planned to ensure that they are stimulating but also safe. This was clearly evident in a Year 6 session where pupils were required to use naked flames to heat up a range of substances. The teacher had carefully carried out a risk assessment and ensured that additional adult support was available for this ambitious session. Lessons are fast-paced and challenging and teachers use their expert knowledge to stimulate the pupils. For example, in a special scientific workshop for Years 4 and 5, teachers, assistants and voluntary helpers were encouraged to use open-ended questions such as, '*What if . . . ?*' and, '*How do you know?*'. This really helped the pupils think scientifically. Teachers have high expectations and are insistent on accuracy and consistency in measurement and recording. The good use of resources, including electronic whiteboards and the computer network, also serves to broaden the pupils' knowledge of the solar system, electrical circuits, materials and their properties, and food preservation. It is clear that both boys and girls enjoy science: all are very well behaved, attentive and enthusiastic about what they have learned.
69. The very good procedures for recording pupils' achievements are consistent throughout the school and are used well to help pupils move on in their learning. The pupils are developing an awareness of how they can improve their knowledge because teachers mark work regularly and give the pupils helpful points to consider for the future.
70. The subject leader is very good. She has a high level of commitment and enthusiasm. This has enabled her to very effectively inspire staff to raise standards and this has been achieved through challenge, investigative activities and the introduction of the consistent assessment procedures. Improvements in planning, the use of investigative activities and the continuous development of the curriculum have all contributed to the raising of standards and achievement for all the pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very competent.
- The ICT suite is unsatisfactory.
- More practical classroom resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are being gradually introduced.

Commentary

71. Standards in Years 2 and 6 exceed national expectations and all pupils, including those with SEN, the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and minority groups, achieve well. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when pupils' skills were considered to be as expected for these age groups. All groups of pupils are fully included in the ICT sessions.
72. The school has a new well-structured system that is used to assess pupils' progress and achievement and their work is monitored. This gives a clear picture of how well the pupils are learning. The teaching of skills and techniques is particularly well developed in Years 3 to 6. This enables the pupils to use their skills effectively in all subject areas. There is no significant difference between the standards achieved by boys and girls. All members of staff take great care to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to use computers and their related equipment. All pupils make good progress with their learning in lessons because they are fully included in the activities.
73. The quality of teaching is consistently good. All adults are confident in supporting the pupils and increasing their skills and techniques. They pass their good subject knowledge and enthusiasm on to the pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and quickly realise the advantages of using computers. For example, Year 1 pupils discussed and evaluated the use of database programs as compared to creating information graphs by hand. At the start of lessons, teachers clearly identify learning intentions and this ensures that skills are systematically developed through the school. Teachers give precise instructions and ask probing questions to draw out the pupils' understanding. The teachers' good relationships with the pupils, the expectations of high standards of behaviour and achievement motivate them to work hard. All the pupils enjoy their work and respond enthusiastically to their tasks. Pupils' control technology techniques are well developed through the use of programmable toys in Years 1 and 2 and software programs are used to promote these skills in Years 3 to 6.
74. The good quality support for pupils with SEN enables them to achieve well and work alongside their classmates. This increases their self-esteem and independence. Pupils who are gifted and talented are also encouraged to work at their own level and this promotes their independence well.
75. The very experienced subject leader is working closely with her colleague who will shortly take over responsibility for ICT. Both teachers lead by example and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has been very thoroughly carried out by lesson observations, scrutiny of planning and work sampling. The co-ordinator has a very clear vision for the future direction of the subject. For instance, she clearly understands the importance of interactive whiteboards to support learning and these are shortly to be installed in all classrooms. This is a good improvement on the specialist room where high work surfaces and stools and poor ventilation make learning particularly uncomfortable and unsafe for the younger children because it impacts negatively on their concentration.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

76. Links across the curriculum are good because pupils use their computer skills to extend their numeracy, literacy, design and technology, and music skills. Computers are used to enliven subjects such as history and science when they use the Internet to find out about famous people or help the older pupils with revision for national tests.

The pupils also develop their skills well when they use programs to compose short musical pieces or create three-dimensional patterns in mathematics.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The subject co-ordinator leads and manages the curriculum well.
- Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding through the use of interesting resources.
- There are good links with ICT.
- Writing is not given a high enough status in geography.

COMMENTARY

77. By the end of Year 2, standards in geography are in line with national expectations. All pupils, including those with SEN, the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and minority groups, achieve satisfactorily and are fully included in all sessions. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of human and physical features in different places, through the travels of Barnaby Bear and the stories of Katie Morag. By the end of Year 6, standards are also in line with national expectations. Pupils learn to use secondary sources to investigate other places, such as the Indian village of Chembakolli. No judgement was made on standards at the time of the last inspection so no comparison can be made to the previous report.
78. The teaching of geography is good. In a good lesson in Year 3, pupils enjoyed identifying food labels with their country of origin and then linked this to a world map. In a very good lesson in Year 4, the teacher's open-ended questioning was very effective so that pupils could compare Meopham with Chembakolli and suggest environmental improvements. All pupils are generally well supported by teachers' good subject knowledge and the constructive plenaries where teachers review the learning intention and pupils use the success criteria to judge how well they are doing in the lesson.
79. There are good links with history and ICT when pupils in Year 3 search the Internet for food types, or when geographical skills are developed through the use of an interactive whiteboard. Generally, the writing in geography takes the form of notes, for example, in a brainstorming session, or notes are printed from a web page. However, as yet, the use of a range of writing techniques is not given a high enough status to promote geographical knowledge and skills.
80. The co-ordinator is very new in post, but has already brought good management and clarity of vision to the subject. Policy writing in line with the school's learning policy provides for effective systems of assessment. Indeed, pupils have success criteria to explain how well they have done, or what more needs to be done and, therefore, self-evaluate their work. The contribution of ICT is improving as pupils already make good use of the Internet. Good resources, recently enhanced, support the subject well.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The subject is effectively promoted and the curriculum enriched through visits in the local area and visitors to the school.
- The teaching of history is good. Pupils' enquiry skills are developed well.
- The subject is closely integrated with geography and ICT.
- Links with literacy are not as strong as they could be.
- An experienced co-ordinator leads the subject well.

COMMENTARY

81. By the end of Year 2, standards in history are in line with national expectations. All pupils, including those with SEN, the gifted and talented, those for whom English is an additional language and minority groups, achieve satisfactorily and are fully included in all sessions. Pupils have an adequate knowledge and understanding of chronology through their study of toys old and new. They have also studied the lives of Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale, associating them with the correct century. They enjoy visitors from the local British Legion and have learnt how to play hopscotch when an elderly visitor talked to them about his own toys. By the end of Year 6, standards are also in line with national expectations. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of chronology by comparing Victorian lives with those of their grandparents. They identify social development through famous Victorians, such as Dr Barnardo. Standards are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection.
82. Good opportunities for pupils' first-hand experience are well planned. For example, when pupils visit the Roman Villa at Lullingstone and the Centurion Secundus paid a return visit to school. Pupils also make visits locally to the Windmill and to the War Memorial on Meopham Green. They have entertained visitors from the British Legion and have taken part in local celebrations of the 1,400th Anniversary of the Diocese of Rochester. Thus, the subject is well promoted and the curriculum enriched.
83. The teaching of history is good. Pupils' enquiry skills are developing well using good quality resources, such as computer packages used by pupils in Year 5 when researching the gods of Ancient Egypt. Similarly, pupils in Year 6 use the Internet for information on the Victorians. Pupils in Year 3 have handled Roman artefacts. In Year 1, pupils begin to organise exhibits for the class museum and describe a teddy bear that belongs to their teacher's father as '*old and bald*'. However, teaching is satisfactory when insufficient use is made of photographic resources for pupils' individual research and explanations are rather tedious.
84. The subject is closely linked to geography and ICT. History has important links with aspects of literacy, such as speaking and listening and reading and writing. Pupils listen well and respond to good questioning by offering ideas and explanations for the role of children in Victorian workplaces or in education. However, pupils' could use their writing skills much more in history to help them develop further their knowledge and skills.

85. The experienced co-ordinator brings good organisation and enthusiasm to the subject. Planning is coherent and comprehensive, enabling good arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work. The contribution of ICT is improving, as pupils already make good use of the Internet. A portfolio of pupils' work supports the subject, but is not yet levelled to better guide teachers and learners. A good range of resources, including artefacts, supports the subject well. Local visits, together with visits further afield, enhance the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Discussions in lessons develop pupils' spiritual awareness very well.
- Resources are used effectively to make learning exciting.
- Teachers' spoken feedback does not consistently tell pupils what they have done well or inform them what they need to do to improve.
- Year 6 pupils do not use the Internet or other ICT resources sufficiently well to support their learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and behave well.

Commentary

86. Year 6 pupils talk about various aspects of Christianity and other faiths convincingly. Such discussions demonstrate the importance the school places on learning facts about different religions as well as Christianity. Pupils, especially those in Year 6, have mature attitudes to their learning and have positive attitudes to all faiths. Year 6 pupils understand that Muslims are washing away their sins when they wash their hands before they go into the Mosque. Pupils' spiritual awareness is enhanced very well by discussions about many aspects of Christianity and other people's beliefs. For example, Year 6 pupils talk maturely about the meanings of stories from the Bible. They say that the message behind the story of *'Saul's Conversion'* is that we can forgive everyone. The teaching of religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The teachers integrate well pupils with specific learning difficulties, those who use English as an additional language, and those who are from minority ethnic groups in lessons.
87. Good teaching and learning means that all pupils achieve well. Strengths of teaching include effective use of interactive whiteboards that ensures that pupils learn to analyse stories and texts. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and include those with special educational needs well in sessions. Good teaching methods are used when Year 2 pupils discuss in pairs what is meant by the title *'Jesus the Miracle Worker'*. Interactive whiteboards are utilised particularly effectively when pupils learn about how to structure their writing about Jesus' visit to the temple. Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work because of teachers' effective management skills and encouraging comments. However, although teachers' oral comments to pupils are positive, they are not consistently telling pupils what their strengths are. Furthermore, they do not inform them what they need to do to make their work better, which means the pupils do not know how to improve. Teachers rarely use ICT or the Internet to deepen pupils' knowledge of religious education. This

means that pupils do not have a deep understanding of the culture of different faith groups.

88. Since the last inspection, the leadership and management of religious education has been satisfactory and improvement has been adequate. Resources are now good. Assessment procedures are good. End of unit assessments are being recorded effectively. The monitoring of the curriculum is developing satisfactorily through the analysis of annual teachers' planning. The provision meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils achieve well and standards by the time they are in Year 6 are good.
- Pupils enjoy art and design and this is reflected in the quality of their work.

COMMENTARY

89. Standards in art and design meet national expectations by the end of Year 2 and exceed these at the end of Year 6. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and progress is good in improving art and design in the school. All groups of pupils, including those identified as having SEN, the gifted and talented, those using English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups, are fully included in the activities and achieve well overall. The curriculum is carefully planned, the subject is well-resourced and pupils also say they enjoy their art work. These all contribute to the good progress pupils make.
90. Teaching and learning are good, which means the pupils achieve well overall and make good progress. Staff have a good understanding of the art and design curriculum and how to teach skills and techniques successfully. Consequently, all pupils have good experiences using a wide range and variety of materials and media in their artwork. Staff are adept at motivating pupils in their artwork and encouraging them to look closely and use their observational skills to produce good quality work. The good range of resources is used effectively to inspire and develop the pupils' creativity. Lessons in Year 2 are well planned to give the pupils good opportunities to discuss their work and what they observe. This effectively promotes their skills in speaking and listening. Some Year 2 pupils produced quite detailed observational work, because staff ensured they used the techniques they were learning to give life to their drawings. However, there is insufficient attention paid to the types of pencils being used for sketching and these are not always sharp. Pupils are learning about the work of different artists. For example, in Year 4, the work of Paul Klee has been used effectively to inspire the pupils to produce their own artwork on journeys, using colour, shape and form creatively. In Year 6, the pupils make good progress, especially in close observational work, although figure drawing is less refined.
91. Additional art and design sessions provide all pupils with good experiences in exploring their own ideas and producing well-executed pieces of work, with good attention to detail. These sessions enrich the pupils' learning and also enhance their

spiritual development very well. Leadership and management of art and design in the school are good. The subject leader for art and design is well informed and ensures the subject is taught properly. She has monitored planning, work and teaching effectively to raise standards and ensure that improvement is sustained. There are good links to other subjects through art and design. For example, in Year 5, the pupils have used their skills well to produce Canopic jars based on their study of the Egyptians in history. ICT is also used effectively to support work in art and design.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design and technology is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards at the end of Year 2 are good and very good at the end of Year 6.
- Work in designing and making three-dimensional working models is particularly good.

COMMENTARY

92. Standards in design and technology exceed national expectations by the end of Year 2 and are well above what is normally expected for Year 6. The subject has been substantially improved since the previous inspection and progress is very good. All pupils, including those identified as having SEN, the gifted and talented, those using English as an additional language and those from minority groups, are fully included in the activities and achieve very well.
93. From Year 1, the pupils produce detailed work, with clear evaluations, which are all very well monitored by the co-ordinator. In Year 3, work on food technology is also thoroughly evaluated with good links to other subjects, such as in mathematics. By Year 6, the pupils produce very good self-evaluations of their work on musical instruments, with very good links to literacy and very good design reporting, and instructional writing evident. Pupils are taught to use tools and implements properly and an annual science and design and technology day contributes very effectively towards the pupils' learning.
94. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. This has a very positive impact on the quality of work produced by the pupils, especially in Year 6, where overall achievement is high. It is evident from photographs of pupils' work and displays of designs and models around the school, that a very good range of work is covered in design and technology. Lessons are well planned and teachers successfully ensure that skills are systematically developed. For example, this was evident in a good Year 5 session where the pupils effectively learnt how to design their own gift bags. Younger pupils show good understanding and skills when designing and building models. For instance, in Year 1, pupils used appropriate materials to create playground equipment, with moveable parts, such as swings. In Year 6, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding very well using a wide range of materials to build very impressive models of fairground equipment, which were enhanced by the pupils using their scientific knowledge to create battery operated roundabouts.
95. Leadership and management of design and technology in the school are very good. Design and technology is used effectively to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and ICT is used to support learning. The curriculum for design and technology has been efficiently planned with very good enrichment

activities that are very well monitored by the co-ordinator. Health and safety issues are given careful consideration and the pupils are very aware of how they should handle tools and equipment safely.

96. The inspection focused on art and design and design and technology. Work was sampled in music and physical education and so it is not possible to make a judgement on provision in these subjects.

MUSIC

97. Evidence from two lessons seen in classes with pupils from Year 3 indicates that standards are above expectations in the composition of music. This indicates a good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils competently read music well and maintain rhythm effectively. For example, Year 3 pupils demonstrated good performance skills when they played simple tunes on a xylophone and accompanied the lead player, who was effectively repeating a rhythm. The co-ordinator is a good role model and uses his expertise well in his own class teaching. Assessment procedures are good because teachers record their findings at the end of units of work. ICT is used well to support pupils in their musical learning and this was evident when Year 3 pupils learnt to investigate ways to compose and combine different sounds. All pupils who wish to learn to play various musical instruments, such as keyboard and wind instruments, are given the opportunity. No judgement on the quality of singing was possible because the pupils did not have an opportunity to practise their singing skills in any of the assemblies seen during the three days of the inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

98. Two short physical education lessons were observed where teaching was of a good standard. This was because the pupils were encouraged to '*warm-up*' at the start of the lessons. The sessions moved at a good pace and effective use was made of the pupils to demonstrate improvements that could be made to the development of their skills. Extra-curricular skills further develop physical skills and these are available to all pupils and thoroughly enjoyed. Adventurous activities are undertaken on two annual residential visits. All pupils who wish to, can attend the wide range of activities on offer and for the gifted and talented, the activities provided challenge them well. The subject is well resourced and led and managed well. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

There is a good, planned programme for the pupils' personal, social and health education, which is effective in promoting their skills and understanding. There is a school council, which is useful to develop the pupils' ideas about democracy and citizenship. Times for pupils to sit together to discuss different issues, is firmly embedded in the school curriculum and offers good opportunities for the pupils to express their feelings, emotions and frustrations, and develop tolerance and empathy with others. The programme of activities is comprehensive and has been developed to offer progression of skills for the youngest children and also for pupils as they progress through the school to Year 6.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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