

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Gillingham, Kent

LEA area: The Medway Towns

Unique reference number: 118767

Headteacher: Mr N McKenzie

Lead inspector: Mr P Sudworth

Dates of inspection: 12 – 14 January 2004

Inspection number: 257986

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Voluntary Aided
School category:	Primary
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	264
School address:	Romany Road Rainham Gillingham Kent
Postcode:	ME8 6JH
Telephone number:	01634 234677
Fax number:	01634 319627
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Barrow
Date of previous inspection:	8 <sup>th</sup> June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School is situated about two miles from the centre of Gillingham in the district of Twydall. It educates boys and girls aged four to 11 years in 11 classes and has 264 pupils on roll, slightly above the national average for primary schools. Most pupils are of white British heritage. Approximately one fifth of pupils are from other ethnic groups. No pupils have English as an additional language. Seventy-six pupils have special educational needs mainly for learning difficulties, a greater percentage than in most primary schools, and they include two pupils who have statements because they have more profound learning difficulties. The proportion of parents who apply for free school meals is below that nationally. Attainment on entry, whilst varying annually with different groups of pupils, is broadly average. The percentage of pupils who leave or join the school at times other than the normal age of transfer is below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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30705	Mr G Stephens	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology History
20003	Mrs S Metcalfe	Team inspector	Science Geography Music Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage English as an additional language

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**St Thomas of Canterbury Roman Catholic School is an effective school with a good ethos because it is well managed and satisfactorily led.** Good teamwork has created a relevant curriculum enabling most pupils to reach the expected standards for their age. Teaching and learning are often good. The provision in the foundation stage is a particular strength. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in reading throughout the school, in writing in Years 1 and 2 and in science by ages seven and 11. The children achieve well in the foundation stage because of the good provision.
- The management of the headteacher is good and contributes to a harmonious school and a good ethos. Greater rigour is needed in monitoring teaching and learning.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is good, but individual pupils do not know well enough what to do to improve their work and able pupils need more challenge in some lessons.
- There are very good relationships, care arrangements and attention to pupils' welfare.
- The school does not pay enough attention to managing the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The governing body is not questioning and challenging enough.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Good links with parents and the community support the pupils' learning.

The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection. The school has given very good attention to the previous issues for improvement. Whilst attainment on entry has fallen, standards in English, mathematics and science have been maintained. They have improved in ICT as result of better provision and more informed teaching. Standards of attainment have also improved in geography. The general quality of teaching has improved and there is a much higher proportion of good teaching. The provision and quality of teaching in the foundation stage are now strengths. Assessment systems have improved and the curriculum contains a more appropriate balance of work. Greater challenge is given to pupils who are more capable in mathematics in some lessons but further development is still needed. Health and safety concerns have been dealt with effectively. There is better communication with parents. There is improved provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	B	C	A	C
Mathematics	C	C	A	A
Science	C	C	C	C

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

**Pupils achieve satisfactorily in most aspects of the curriculum and are currently attaining the standard set for their age in all subjects.** Children achieve well in the foundation stage and reach the goals expected by the end of reception. Pupils in the rest of the school achieve well in reading, in writing in Years 1 and 2 and in science by ages seven and 11. Pupils with special educational needs and more capable pupils achieve soundly.

**Pupils' personal qualities are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** It is very good for their moral and social development and good for the spiritual and cultural

aspects. Pupils' have good attitudes to school and to their work and they behave well. Attendance is above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils.** The quality of teaching is good overall because of the good teaching in the foundation stage and the generally good teaching in English, mathematics and science. Teachers keep pupils interested in lessons and they respond positively and adopt good attitudes to their work.

The curriculum is well organised and has a good balance of practical and more academic subjects. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, in which the school is very successful. The staff provides a very good level of care for the pupils' welfare and guidance but pupils are not sufficiently aware of how they can improve their work. The school has good links with its parents, other schools and with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The management of the headteacher and senior staff are good and their leadership is satisfactory.** These features help to create a good atmosphere in the school, which is conducive to pupils' learning and a good team spirit. There is scope for improvement in the work of the governing body in adopting a more questioning and challenging approach to what the school does. It is currently fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.

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

Parents have positive views of the school and are supportive of their children's education. The pupils enjoy school. They find the teachers friendly and supportive. One new pupil's comments typify the pupils' views. "I have moved from another school but I love this school now. It is cool and loving".

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Strengthen the monitoring procedures for teaching and learning so the outcomes are more developmental in improving the quality of provision.
- Make better use of the results from assessment so that individual pupils are more clearly aware of what they must do to improve the quality of their work.
- Ensure there is better oversight of the provision for pupils with special educational needs across the school by affording greater importance to the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- Refine further the lesson planning arrangements to challenge able pupils more consistently.
- Help the governing body to become a more vigorous instrument as the school's critical friend so that it is more questioning and challenging of the way the school operates and the standards it achieves.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Children reach the goals expected in their learning for the end of the reception year. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 **achieve soundly** in most aspects of their work and **achieve well** in some. Standards are **average** in both Years 2 and 6. Pupils show a **satisfactory** competence in mathematics, English and ICT. Pupils with special educational needs and more capable pupils achieve **satisfactorily**, and those with a special talent in sport **achieve well**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the foundation stage.
- Pupils' achievements are good in reading, science in Years 2 and 6, writing in Years 1 and 2 and in competitive sport.

#### Commentary

- 1 The attainment of the pupils on entry is average and not as high as reported previously. The good achievements in the foundation stage are the result of the good teaching in the two reception classes and the good range of experiences provided for the children. Their horizons are widened as a result. Most children reach the goals that are expected for their age. About one in five children have already reached them and are about to make a start on the National Curriculum. The foundation stage children achieve more highly than they did at the time of the last inspection.
- 2 Results in national tests in the past three years at the end of Year 2 have been around the national average and the trend has been above the national rate of improvement. This is because large percentages of the children have been reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven, although the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels has not compared as favourably with the national picture, particularly in writing. Similarly high proportions of pupils have reached the expected level in teacher assessed work in science in Year 2. The differences between the performance of boys and girls in subjects tested at age seven have largely echoed those nationally.
- 3 On average over the past three years, both boys and girls have been doing better than boys and girls nationally in end of Year 6 tests, particularly in mathematics, in which more pupils have been reaching the higher level. Comparisons of their respective performance indicate that the differences between their respective attainments in national tests broadly parallel the national picture. The trend of the school's results has mirrored the improvement nationally and the pupils have made satisfactory progress given their national test results in Year 2. Results in 2003 at age seven were improved on the previous year, whereas the results at age 11 were not as good. These reflect the different overall level of abilities in the respective groups.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.0 (28.8)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	28.2 (28.6)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	28.7 (29.2)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 46 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- 4 Currently standards are average in both Years 2 and 6 and this represents improved attainment in geography, improved skills in investigation in science and better attainment in ICT since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well in science in Years 2 and 6 as a result of the good teaching in the subject and the interesting choice of work that enables the pupils to think through the investigative process. Pupils achieve well in their reading skills because of the good emphasis on them, the well arranged reading materials and the good support from a large number of the parents. The good focus on computational skills in mathematics enables the pupils to work with generally good levels of accuracy when dealing with number. When the breadth of the rest of the mathematics curriculum is taken into consideration, the pupils achieve satisfactorily in the subject. Pupils mainly achieve satisfactorily in other subjects and aspects of their work, although some good achievement was seen in geography but in a limited number of lessons. The inspection team did not focus on music, physical education, history, art, design and technology and physical education to obtain a sufficient view of achievement and attainment. This is because preliminary work before the inspection did not consider them to be a concern. The brief observations on these subjects during the inspection confirmed this view.
- 5 Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. The quality of the individual education plans is generally good and these pupils have clear targets for improvement. Finance does not allow for a large number of teaching assistants and so they have limited extra support in lessons because the work of the teaching assistants has to be spread around the school. More capable pupils also achieve satisfactorily. The work is generally matched well to their needs in English and mathematics but similar challenges to the rest of the pupils are usually provided in other work. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make the same rates of progress individually as other pupils of a similar ability. Pupils with a particular talent in sport achieve well in competitions because of the good opportunities provided for them to participate and the good coaching they receive from the school's staff and the additional support provided by outside bodies.

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

Attendance is **above the national average**, although a few pupils arrive late. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and show a good interest in what they do. Behaviour is **good** and no racial disharmony or bullying were seen. Relationships are **very good** and pupils enjoy helping each other and taking responsibility appropriate to their age. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall.

### **Major strengths and weaknesses**

- Behaviour is good and pupils have good attitudes towards their work.
  - Pupils are supportive of one another and relationships are very good.
  - Provision for pupils' social and moral development is very good and it is good for their spiritual and cultural development.
- 6 Pupils continue to enjoy their education, as they did at the time of the last inspection and they retain the same good approach to their work. Parents' and pupils' views confirm the great deal of enjoyment the pupils get from their education and the above average level of attendance confirms this. A few children arrive late. Most pupils show good attitudes to learning and they are enthusiastic when thinking of solutions to problems. In a science lesson about magnetic fields, the pupils were loath to stop at break-time as they tried to untangle cause and effect in this mystery of science. Behaviour is good and the pupils are polite and helpful. Pupils are expected to take some responsibility and they are keen to do so. The older pupils look after the younger ones and pupils undertake various other responsibilities in school, such as regular classroom jobs. All show a concern for others and this is seen when new pupils are admitted during the term. All pupils wear school uniform

and take pride in doing so. Pupils with special needs are fully included in the life of the school. Their emotional needs and self-esteem are well supported in the caring atmosphere.

- 7 The provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is very good for the pupils' moral and social development and good for their cultural and spiritual development. Pupils have a good understanding of the rights and wrongs of issues. As they get older, they are able to understand more of the complexities surrounding personal, local and national issues. Pupils have a wide experience in all types of social activities and take part in a good range of school activities. There are good links with other schools in various sports. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and the very good provision for pupils' social development and maturity is enhanced further through a residential visit.
- 8 There are good links with a school in Ghana for which the pupils have collected money. This contributes significantly to the pupils' understanding of other cultures and to their social and general personal development, as they think of those more needy than themselves. A member of its staff has made visits to the school and there is now correspondence through e-mail. The school enables the pupils to appreciate and understand that they live in a multicultural society through events it organises and through visitors from other cultures who periodically visit the school. Members of staff provide good examples to the pupils and encourage them to understand and practise the philosophy of the school and their Christian beliefs. Assemblies and times of worship are regular features of the school and foster the good ethos of care and promote very strongly pupils' moral development.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	5.1
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Chinese
No ethnic group recorded

No of pupils on roll
211
4
13
14
1
3
9
6
1
1
8
2
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

**Exclusions** *There have not been any exclusions.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an **effective** education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is **good** overall and engages the pupils' interest so that they are well motivated and learn **well**. The foundation stage is a particular strength in the school. The staff take very good care of the pupils. Links with parents and the community are **good**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning in the foundation stage are good.
- Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and manage them well.
- Pupils respond well in lessons and try hard.
- Conclusions to lessons are not sharp enough in consolidating and assessing pupils' learning and moving it on.
- Assessment does not lead to individual pupils knowing well enough what they need to do to improve their work.

### Commentary

- 9 The presentation of lessons is finely balanced between satisfactory and good but is judged good overall because of the slightly better proportion of good quality teaching in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is good in the foundation stage. Learning is good throughout the school. Pupils respond well in lessons, are well behaved, try hard and are keen to contribute answers. They show much interest in their work because of the interesting content and the good relationships between teachers and pupils and they want to please. They accomplish a good amount of work when they undertake their activities.
- 10 The foundation stage teachers are skilled practitioners and the quality of their teaching is good with many strengths. The quality of teaching in the foundation stage is very much improved since the last inspection. Planning and preparation are thorough. The reception teachers liaise well with the teaching assistants. They are alert to notice the progress that the children make and they keep thorough records of the children's progress, noting down remarks that the children make that show the level of their understanding. They use this information well to further the children's progress. The teachers provide a good range of experiences for the reception children and they are very skilled at generating a sense of enjoyment. The classrooms are set out with interesting activities and the outside environment is used purposefully to develop the children's physical development and as an extension to the other aspects of their learning. The reception children enjoy being at school and make good progress in their learning as a result.
- 11 The general quality of teaching throughout the school is also much improved since the last inspection. Lessons begin promptly and the teachers quickly settle the pupils down as they enter the class and they get on with the work quickly. Teachers establish a good work ethos and the pupils respond to this and get on without fuss. A significant feature of lessons is the way in which large sections of the class offer to answer questions because they know their efforts will be valued, whether their answers are right or wrong. They are praised for trying. However, teachers tend not to ask pupils who are more reluctant to answer and a small proportion of each class remains passive during the introduction to lessons and during class discussion. The teachers share the learning intentions with the pupils but these are sometimes discussed in more adult language and this aspect then becomes a routine rather than an important setting of the learning scene. The conclusion is a weaker aspect of lessons. They are not thought about enough to build on what has been taught during the

lesson, to move learning on or to consolidate and assess pupils' understanding. The explanation of tasks is usually good and this enables the pupils to get on with their work without fuss.

- 12 Teachers research the content of their lessons well and this allows them to deal with pupils' questions as they arise. Teachers show good subject knowledge. In a Year 2 music lesson, the teacher ensured that the pupils used the correct beaters to play instruments correctly and this helped the pupils to produce a better quality of sound. Lessons are soundly planned but sometimes text book references in weekly planning replace the actual concepts that it is intended the pupils should learn. There is some overuse of textbooks and mechanical exercises in some classes, particularly in English. Execution of lessons is often good and sometimes assisted by good use of well prepared overhead transparencies, which help to add pace to the opening of lessons. The balance of time that is given to lessons is often thoughtfully considered but some lessons were seen in which there was not enough time to finish the work by the end of the lesson. The change of break-time from day to day was sometimes partly responsible for this and the teachers overlooked it. Resources for lessons are usually prepared well and facilitate a good flow to the lesson. Very occasionally a lack of foresight, such as not giving out pupils' individual whiteboards beforehand, interrupts the quiet and calm atmosphere that has just been created.
- 13 A very good feature of teaching is the way teachers set out expectations for the pupils' conduct and pupils respond well to this, applying themselves well to their work. The pupils show a good desire to learn new things and take a good level of pride in their own efforts. The teachers have naturally good relationships with their pupils and use this to further their expectations in the handling of equipment. In a Year 2 music lesson, the pupils were reminded to respect the instruments they were using and the pupils responded very well with care and consideration. In physical education lessons, pupils move the equipment correctly with due consideration to health and safety. The pupils look after their books and take good care of their own work files.
- 14 Teachers make good use of vocabulary that is specific to particular subjects. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the pupils understood and used the word 'statement' well in reference to placing mathematical symbols for 'more than' and 'less than' when comparing the value of two numbers. They are taught the correct names for instruments in music lessons and correct musical terminology such as 'pitch' and 'melody' and in physical education they are introduced to words such as 'sequence' when combining movements together.
- 15 The teaching for pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory. They are usually given more simple work in mathematics and English so that they can make progress but the introduction to lessons does not always ensure that they understand what is being taught. They sometimes struggle in activities during the follow up to the introduction, particularly when the pupils are working on their whole-class target for improvement. The challenge for able pupils is usually good in English and mathematics and they are given more demanding work. Occasionally they do the same work as other pupils, as in a data handling lesson observed in the juniors. At other times, they begin with the same work and are then given extended work rather than being given more challenging work in the first place. Teachers treat the pupils from ethnic minorities with respect and equality and this enables them to make the same rates as progress as other pupils. Good arrangements are made for pupils who show talent in music and sport and skilled extra tuition is brought in to cater for their individual needs. Pupils develop a good level of keenness as a result and obtain much success.
- 16 Assessment is satisfactory with some good features. The tracking of pupils' progress is good and assessments of pupils' work are regular so that teachers have a good understanding of individual pupils' capabilities and needs through good analysis of pupils' attainment in tests. The records of pupils' progress are good in English, mathematics and science but the tracking of key skills in other subjects remains to be developed. The

individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are mostly written with clear targets for improvement and reviewed regularly with parents. These contribute to the satisfactory progress that the pupils make. However, they lack reference to exciting resource materials to help with improvements. A weakness in assessment is pupils' lack of awareness of how individually they can best improve their work. Marking is satisfactory and up to date but not always sufficiently developmental. The group targets given to pupils are often too broad, such as 'the need to improve punctuation' and, as a result, pupils are not sufficiently aware of precise steps in learning to which they need to give attention. The class termly targets arise from careful analysis of the pupils' work during the term but they do not meet the individual needs of all pupils. Good attention is given to analysis of test results and focusing on aspects of work, in which the pupils have not done as well as expected.

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0 %)	1 (2 %)	22 (54%)	18 (44%)	0 (0 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

### **The curriculum**

The **good** curriculum provides pupils with a full range of experiences across each subject, with **good** opportunities for enrichment through a range of visits, visitors, sporting and musical opportunities.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum in the foundation stage is very good with well matched teaching expertise to develop the children's skills. The curriculum is good for other pupils.
- Equality of access and opportunity is good for boys and girls and those from different backgrounds.
- The use of science and physical education gives good support to the programme of personal, social and health education for pupils.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to enhance pupils' learning and experiences. Attendance at out-of-hours clubs, such as football training, is high.
- The curriculum is enriched through a good range of visits by pupils into the community and a good number of visitors to the school.

### **Commentary**

- 17 The curriculum is well planned. Each subject is monitored by a designated group of teachers from across the school to ensure that long- and medium-term plans match the learning objectives of the programmes of study; build in a progressive development of skills matched to subject knowledge and provide assessment opportunities to check pupils' learning. In particular, a lot of hard work has gone into the improved curriculum for children in the foundation stage.
- 18 The national literacy and numeracy strategies are used well to improve pupils' English and mathematical skills. Neither area is allowed to dominate timetables. Teachers actively plan to use a range of skills from the strategies to support work in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used less effectively to support other areas.
- 19 The school has a clear policy and scheme for pupils' personal, social and health education. This work is reflected in the foundation stage as the children 'make' pretend toasted sandwiches out of cheese and fruit, rather than jam and sugar spreads.

- 20 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school does not have many teaching assistants but they are deployed to best effect. Individual education plans are mostly of good quality but pupils with special educational needs sometimes struggle because they do not understand sufficiently well what they have to do, especially when there is no extra adult help for them.
- 21 The curriculum is enriched by a good number of visits, as well as participation in arts and sports activities during and outside the school day. Pupils who have a musical ability have instrumental lessons. Events such as book weeks, history, art and design technology weeks contribute to the pupils' interest in the curriculum, which is enlivened further by visitors, such as theatre groups, who work with the pupils on science projects, and a Victorian toy exhibition. The local owl sanctuary has brought in birds and the fire and road safety teams support personal safety work across the curriculum. Older pupils have made residential visits to focus on their information and communication technology work and outdoor physical adventurous activities. Staff willingly share their interests and hobbies with pupils. The Christian ethos of the school is reinforced through their work to support different charities. Pupils and staff have raised funds to furnish a classroom for a school in Africa and pupils proudly enjoy looking at photographs of 'their' room, 'their' pupils and 'their' African teacher.
- 22 Much has been done over the past few years to modernise the accommodation, which is now good. Classrooms are spacious and the playground and field are large. The staffroom is spacious and well equipped. The three libraries provide a good range of book materials for pupils with a 'thumb print identification' computer system for withdrawal and return of books, which the pupils manage themselves. The ICT suite, with 15 workstations and paired bases incorporating a multi-media projector, is big improvement since the previous inspection, as are the three small group rooms. The extensive foundation stage area, with good outside provision at different levels, including an under cover area, provides very good provision for the youngest children. The spacious hall with its good wooden surface supports the quality of work in physical education and facilitates whole-school gatherings.
- 23 The school has a sufficient number of teaching staff, who are suitably qualified for the roles they fulfil, although its finances do not allow enough teaching assistants given the current above average percentage of pupils with special educational needs. It has good quality administrative support, which contributes to the efficient management of the school on a day-to-day basis. Good induction arrangements are made for newly qualified staff with well organised mentoring arrangements. Staff have good opportunities for in-service training and to keep abreast of curriculum change.

### Care, guidance and support

The school makes **very good** arrangements to assure the pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides satisfactory support advice and guidance based on monitoring of the pupils' work and values each pupil. Pupils have **good** opportunities to express their views on various school issues.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school takes very good care of the pupils and health and safety arrangements are well organised.
- Pupils are inducted well to the school and soon settle down and make friends.
- The pastoral arrangements are strong as a result of the very good relationships between staff and pupils.

### Commentary

- 24 Pupils are very well cared for. Staff value highly the pupils and their efforts and show a genuine concern for them and for their welfare. They take a natural interest in what they do in

and out of school and demonstrate a ready concern for their health and safety. The provision for health and safety has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. There are much better arrangements at lunchtime than at the time of the previous inspection through the provision of more midday supervisors and better lunchtime arrangements. The school is bright, clean and well looked after, providing a healthy environment, which ensures the pupils' well-being and contributes to their positive approach to learning. The grounds are inspected daily. The headteacher, the designated person for child protection, has had appropriate training and keeps himself regularly updated. All staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of child disclosures. The staff and pupils have been well supported within the school following the deaths of two children.

- 25 Other professionals visit regularly for a variety of purposes and add to the good quality of care. Some support on issues of hygiene and personal development, through contributing to the school's provision for sex education and with other related health related themes. Education professionals support and offer useful advice when pupils show that they have learning or behavioural difficulties.
- 26 There is a good induction for pupils before they begin the foundation stage and this helps them to settle in quickly to the school's routines and to make friends quickly. Parents are well informed about school procedures in various matters and an 'open door' policy encourages parents to discuss their concerns or talk about the progress their children are making. These links contribute to the shared knowledge about the pupils and strengthen the care and oversight of the pupils' welfare.
- 27 Arrangements when pupils transfer to secondary school are effective. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 visit the main feeder secondary school to participate in a variety of activities before the end of the summer term to familiarise themselves with its systems and procedures and to become acquainted with the geography of the building.
- 28 There is satisfactory monitoring to enable pupils to be aware of the progress they are making. Behaviour is monitored and targets are set and agreed by pupils and parents to promote improved behaviour where there are concerns. Equal opportunities are acknowledged and practised satisfactorily in the school and there is a wide variety of activities, all of which, including football, are open to both boys and girls. There are facilities for disabled pupils. The inspectors observed no racial disharmony.
- 29 The very good relationships in the school give the pupils confidence to talk freely with the teachers and the headteacher about the school. They have good opportunities to express their views about the development of the school, both formally and informally, and their views are taken seriously. All pupils have some responsibility around the school, which promotes their personal development and enables them to understand more about how the school is organised and run.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY**

Links between the school and the parents, the community and other schools are **good**.  
Communication between the parents and the school is **effective**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have positive views of the school and relationships between school and parents are very harmonious.
- The quality of reports to parents about their children's progress is good.
- Parents of pupils with learning difficulties are kept regularly informed of their children's targets for improvement.
- The parent-teachers association works effectively to raise money for the school and is well supported.

## Commentary

- 30 The school maintains good links with parents and they think highly of the school. Parents are welcomed to assemblies when pupils' achievements are celebrated. Coffee mornings are arranged for parents when their children are first admitted to the reception class and these help to cement good relationships. Parents are very welcome in school and some help in classrooms with reading, cooking and computers. Parents feel comfortable in sharing concerns about their children with the staff. Teachers escort the pupils to the playground at the end of the afternoon and this enhances the opportunities for friendly contact between parents and the teachers. The regular newsletters are informative and keep parents well informed of school events. Parents appreciate the twice-yearly parents' evenings. However, some parents justifiably feel that an additional mid-year formal parents' evening would help improve their knowledge of their children's progress at a critical time during the academic year and strengthen the partnership that each plays in the learning process. They also feel that they would extend the very good relationships, which exist between parents and teachers in this very sensitive and caring school.
- 31 Parents are aware of the homework arrangements for their children. The majority of them feel that amounts are about right, although a minority feel that their children are given too much. The pupils themselves feel that requests to do homework are about right and the inspection team shares this view. The Parent Teachers Association has just become very active again and raises large amounts of money through such events as the well supported sports day/ summer barbecue and discos.
- 32 The induction for the children in the reception classes is planned carefully and close contact is maintained with parents. There are good links with other schools. Years 5 and 6 pupils visit the secondary school to participate in activities, which prepare them well for their eventual admission and contribute to smooth transfer arrangements. There are good links with other schools through sport, and with the other catholic schools through the headteachers' forum. There are good links with teacher training establishments and the school facilitates trainee teacher placements. Two students were in school during the inspection and were valuing the experience and gaining much from it. Mentors in the school offer effective support for newly qualified teachers. The school has good links with the community, especially with the church. There are active links with Active Business Creation (ABC), which has enabled the school to have jobs done with a reliability of quality and features of best value.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The management of the headteacher and the senior leadership team is **good**. Leadership of the headteacher and subject co-ordinators is **satisfactory** with some good features. Governance is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has established a very caring and supportive ethos throughout the school.
- Teamwork is given a high priority.
- Systems are well established to track the progress and standards of groups and classes in English, mathematics and science.
- Governors have not sufficiently developed the role of 'critical friend' by questioning and challenging the decisions of the headteacher and senior leadership.
- Governors have not consistently exercised their responsibility for the headteachers' performance management.

## Commentary

- 33 Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The management of the headteacher and senior staff are good and their leadership is satisfactory. These features help to create a good atmosphere in the school, which is conducive to pupils' learning and a good team spirit.
- 34 The headteacher, supported very well by all staff and governors, has established a caring and supportive ethos that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel secure. He places great emphasis on teamwork and delegates many responsibilities, although he still initiates many improvements himself and very carefully scrutinises those proposed by other members of staff. The senior leadership team is involved in all decisions relating to the leadership and management of the school and each member has clearly defined roles and responsibilities for which they are accountable. All staff and the majority of governors meet over two days in residential accommodation to review the school improvement plan and to establish objectives for the year ahead. This enables all to gain ownership of the school's short and longer-term goals. Systems are in place to monitor and track the progress of pupils, and information gained is acted upon by subject-leaders, hence the current focus on improving writing standards. Subject leaders monitor planning, teaching and pupils' work, but the criteria against which the quality of teaching is judged are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that monitoring leads to enhanced quality. The headteacher delegates more formally organised lesson observations, whilst his own observations are more incidental.
- 35 The work of subject co-ordinators is sound in the main with some good features. Overall, they manage their responsibilities effectively and some very well. Leadership of subject co-ordinators is mostly satisfactory. The core subject leaders track the pupils' progress in detail and there are well embedded procedures for assessing pupils regularly, but the pupils themselves are not yet sufficiently knowledgeable about how they can improve their own performance. Subject leaders have sound systems for knowing about standards and improving the quality of work in individual subjects. Leadership of the foundation stage is good.
- 36 Arrangements for the oversight of special educational needs are inconsistent and result in inadequate attention and oversight to the provision. The co-ordinator's high personal commitment to a key age-group in the school means that there is a shortage of time to help colleagues with reviews, advice and resources for pupils they teach who have special educational needs.
- 37 The good management of the school by the headteacher leads to a very caring ethos and is reflected in the good induction procedures for all newly appointed staff. They are supported well and given opportunities to reflect and discuss issues with senior members of staff. This ensures that they are quickly able to settle into school routines and procedures and well advised to help them focus on the quality of teaching and learning in their classes. Strategic planning is good with a long-term vision and a set of priorities that are appropriate for the school's stage of development and these are currently on schedule. Good use is made of test data to analyse any weaknesses in curriculum provision and this is used well to plug gaps or to give extra practice in the work that the pupils do. Performance management of staff is well organised and used well to develop -school issues, as well as to develop individual potential. Very good consideration is given to the workload of staff and the headteacher has provided well for a healthy work/ leisure balance by the provision of staffroom furnishing comforts and conveniences, which afford staff opportunities for relaxation and to help strike a happy balance of work and leisure.
- 38 Financial management is good both at a strategic level and on day-to-day basis. The bursar, who is also a governor, oversees these matters very well. She reports regularly to the governors' finance committee on the financial position and on other related issues. The falling roll is taken fully into consideration and contingencies carefully balanced to promote, as far as possible, a continuation of a good pupil:staff ratio. All spending decisions are related to

agreed priorities, and procedures ensure that good value for money is obtained. The recent local education authority auditors' report was most favourable about the school's financial systems.

- 39 The governing body is very aware of its legal responsibilities and currently ensures that all statutory requirements are fulfilled. It has established an efficient committee structure with clear and appropriate terms of reference. It is proud of the caring ethos that exists within the school. It does not, however, hold the headteacher and staff sufficiently to account by monitoring either the progress toward achieving targets detailed in the school improvement plan throughout the year or in challenging the school to raise standards further. By not engaging in such focused discussions and not receiving explanations, it does not have a detailed enough view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Performance management procedures relating to the work of the headteacher are now in place. However, this has not always been the case.
- 40 The school's good attention to accommodation improvements and arrangements for self-help have overcome barriers to the pupils' achievement which were inherent in the building design and have created a good learning environment. The governors find the expansive amount of paperwork that emanates from the DfES burdensome and too detailed to manage efficiently. In this respect, it values the support of the Local Education Authority in précising some of this material and in selecting out the more important matters for the governing body to debate and discuss.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	550,873
Total expenditure	560,513
Expenditure per pupil	2,123

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	57,359
Balance carried forward to the next	47,719

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

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

The provision for children in the foundation stage is **very good**.

### **Commentary**

- 41 All children begin their education in the September of the school year in which they will become five. The children are taught in two classes, depending upon their age on entry. At the time of the previous inspection, the foundation stage was identified as needing urgent attention. There were major weaknesses in teaching, the curriculum and resources. The school has made very good improvements in these since. Good, well-skilled staff have been appointed, who have systematically transformed the provision. A high quality curriculum focused on Early Learning Goals<sup>1</sup> has been put into place. Staff have devised a thorough assessment strategy to check what children know, understand, can do and need to do next to develop further as learners. Resources for learning are now good. The school has developed well the outside environment to extend learning opportunities for children in both reception classes.
- 42 As a result of the very good leadership and management of provision, combined with good teaching in all areas of learning, children achieve well in all aspects of their work. Children enter the foundation stage with a wide range of skills but generally average abilities. The majority of children leave reaching the goals expected by the end of the reception year. About one-fifth are starting on the National Curriculum. About one-seventh have still to complete the Early Learning Goals. With their communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development underpinning all the work in both reception classes, children are making good progress.
- 43 The key to children's success is the good quality of teaching in all areas of learning by all staff working together as a supportive team. Staff plan a range of challenging activities very effectively and have high expectations of what the children can learn. They make the children's experiences enjoyable. They monitor their responses and achievements and build on these.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning is very good.
- Very clear routines are well known to children and these give them confidence and security.
- Adults actively encourage children to work together in different groups on a range of activities.
- There are clear and high expectations about behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> Early learning goals – these are the standards that children are expected to reach by the end of their reception year. They refer in particular to achievements children make in connection with communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning, for instance, in language and literacy children should be able to write their own name and be beginning to write simple sentences.

## Commentary

- 44 This area of learning has a high profile in the foundation stage. Teachers have thought very carefully about what they want children to learn and how they expect them to behave. The very carefully planned activities help children to learn successfully the difference between right and wrong. Children know and trust their teachers and supporting adults and will ask them for help to learn. As a result of adults carefully establishing very good routines, children are developing the confidence and ability to take turns, share resources and equipment, helping them to understand clearly how to behave and work well together. There is a good balance between adult-initiated and child-selected activities. Children have good opportunities to talk with an adult about how they can contribute to the settlement of disputes, including discussions about what they expect others to do and what they need to do themselves. As a result, children are eager to come to school and join in all activities with enjoyment, interest and enthusiasm. They interact well socially, playing with, in the majority of cases, rather than alongside each other. When sharing equipment they take turns. In the 'café' they gather in the kitchen for a comfortable chat.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is very good and based on an accurate assessment of children's skills and what is needed to help children achieve further.
- Teachers develop children's speaking and listening skills very well and children listen carefully and talk confidently.
- Staff encourage the children to have a love of books.
- Adults provide children with a language-rich environment – labels, diagrams and books fill the classrooms.
- Each room is well equipped with pencils, crayons, markers and paper to encourage the development of children's writing skills.

## Commentary

- 45 In all activities there are very good opportunities for children to develop their language skills. Children make good progress in the reception classes and achieve well. They are encouraged to develop a wide vocabulary because there is a range of good activities planned to enable children to communicate with each other, as well as with the supporting adults. The frequent opportunities for role-play develop children's vocabulary, as when children chat over a 'cup of coffee and a toasted sandwich' in the café. Those who have a special educational need for the development of their communication skills are fully included in all activities.
- 46 Adults harness children's natural fascination with words well, using stories, poems, songs and discussions both formally and informally throughout the day. Children enjoy looking at books and are becoming confident when talking about what they have read. They follow stories read by their teachers and other staff with understanding and are developing well the skill of identifying letters and matching these to the sounds. Each room has an area where children can share a book and these are well used by children. Good opportunities are provided during the day for children to record their ideas and feelings. Writing areas are well equipped with writing utensils. Labels, diagrams and books, both story and factual, fill the classrooms with examples to stimulate imagination and for children to copy, thus developing well their use of written symbols.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for the development of children's mathematical skills is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good teaching and monitoring of children's responses systematically develop children's counting and number recognition skills.
- Adults harness children's enjoyment of mathematics with very good and carefully planned free-play opportunities.

### **Commentary**

47 The environment provided for the children's learning is mathematically rich and enables the pupils to learn mathematical skills through formal and informal activities. Many enjoyable opportunities are planned for children to sing, learn about capacity and volume in free-play activities, such as through sand and water play. They gain a good grasp of early mathematical concepts as a result. By the time children leave reception, they count accurately and recognise numbers to at least 10. Many are able to count and identify higher numbers. This is as a result of the very good quality of teachers' planning to develop children's full mathematical potential and continual monitoring of progress. Teachers make good use of stories involving a number of characters to further their understanding of number. When they are engaged in group activities, the children are limited to a specific number of participants and they check that they do not exceed the limit. Thus the development of their mathematical skills is supported well by children's developing social skills as they accept responsibility for ensuring that the safe number is not exceeded. In lessons teachers plan well for children to count and manipulate number. The whole class counted potatoes accurately, grouping them into sets by size and adding two sets together. In small groups, with the careful guidance of the teacher, children extended their learning by matching potatoes to given numbers. Many children are now composing number stories and beginning to use formal recording strategies.

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

Provision for children's knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are good opportunities to use computers.
- Staff plan and provide a good range of activities to develop children's general knowledge of the world around them.

### **Commentary**

48 Teaching and learning are good and good quality planning helps to ensure that all children achieve well. Children have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills of observing and commenting on the world around them. Visitors and high quality resources strongly support this area of learning and help many children to reach the early learning goals by the end of their reception year. The good use of computer programmes lets them extend their knowledge of language and mathematics while learning how to use the equipment. Using a computer painting program, they develop their eye/hand co-ordination through the careful control of the mouse. They identify icons and tools, which they can use in other programmes. Music and stories from different countries help children understand that not everyone comes from this country but that stories are similar the world over. The imaginative play area likewise supports children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The café serves 'food' from different cultures, especially pizza and pasta, whilst the social skills of restaurant eating are shared and practised. Teachers make good use of simple scientific

enquiry skills to encourage children to develop their senses to investigate. They link this also to their creative skills, making cabbage prints for instance, after looking at the patterns made by the leaves and veins. By the time they leave reception, they know a lot about the natural world, about animals and other creatures, where they live, the foods they eat and how to look after them. Likewise they know a lot about themselves and their families as well as the geography of the school and the local area.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Children's physical development is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and provides children with many opportunities to develop their physical skills.
- Careful planning of the use of a very good range of construction equipment enables children to develop fine manipulative skills and control.
- The opportunity to use pencils, brushes and other markers helps hand control and eye/hand co-ordination is good.
- There are well planned opportunities for the development of physical skills in the outdoor area, the playground and hall.

### **Commentary**

49 Children are on course to attain the early learning goals in this area of learning and are achieving well. Their skills in handling pencils, scissors, brushes and other tools are at expected levels because of the high focus on developing them. Teachers' planning for the children's development of physical skills in formal physical education sessions is well linked to the more investigative development of child-selected activities. Thus they develop children's abilities well in lessons on sport activities, such as throwing and catching, skipping and ball skills and give them the opportunity to ride and climb outdoors. Pupils are encouraged to think about movement and space within the classroom and modify their behaviour to ensure that all can work safely together. All children have planned opportunities to use a very good range of tools and equipment. They develop fine control skills, as well as their eye/hand co-ordination through the use of the computer key board and mouse, whilst also practising their writing to develop their manipulative skills, using a range of pencils and markers. As a result, children are able to use a wide range of resources with dexterity ready for the next stage of their education.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective teaching of skills is combined with good opportunities for children to learn through play.
- Children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop a range of skills and enrich learning.

### **Commentary**

50 The development of physical and creative skills goes hand in hand. Staff plan a wide range of stimulating activities and, with good teaching and good levels of support, the children achieve well, attaining the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Teachers plan for children to develop specific skills under the direction of an adult, but also provide children with the opportunity to investigate and play together. With teacher support, children

look at patterns in the natural world as the teacher cuts fruits and vegetables and they use these to make prints. They also enjoy the feel, smell and taste of cabbage, kiwi and oranges and make close observational drawings, discussing the colour and texture. The children have very good opportunities to use paint and a range of modelling materials freely and this develops their imagination, as does the opportunity to play together in large and small spaces. Role-play is used well to help children understand others' points of view. They make up their own stories and have free access to a good range of resources to enhance their work.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Achievement in reading is good throughout the school and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average.
- Pupils achieve well in writing in Years 1 and 2.
- The good teaching helps pupils make good progress in lessons.
- More able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, especially in writing and speaking and listening activities.

#### **Commentary**

- 51 Standards in English are broadly similar to those at the previous inspection. Standards in writing are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily, but standards are improving because teachers have made it a priority throughout the school. Last year's focus on reading was reflected in a positive outcome in the most recent national tests with standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 above the national average. They remain above average in reading and pupils throughout the school achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in reading in Years 1 and 2 because of the extra attention and support they receive and soundly in writing. However, teachers do not plan carefully enough for pupils with special educational needs in Years 3 to 6 and they often receive less support. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve soundly.
- 52 By the end of Year 6, standards in speaking and listening are average and achievement satisfactory. Pupils speak confidently and clearly and compete to be given the opportunity to either read or speak to the class. Pupils' responses are highly valued. Some teachers are very skilled at asking questions that encourage the pupils to reflect, explain and justify their answers. However, several English lessons observed gave pupils too few opportunities to share ideas in focused conversations so that they could agree a shared response or the resolution of a problem.
- 53 Reading is given a high profile throughout the school and is one of the factors in the above average standards. Younger pupils are heard to read individually. Another factor is the good support of parents who listen to their children read regularly at home. As a result, Year 2 pupils enjoy reading and have developed a good range of strategies to help them read unknown words, either sounding them out or using picture clues to guess their meaning. Year 6 pupils discuss their favourite authors with enthusiasm and with little encouragement. Pupils locate information very quickly in the school reference library and are skilled in the use of the 'thumb print' computer loan system in the fiction library, from where they regularly borrow books.
- 54 The weekly writing session for Year 2 pupils in ability groups has begun to improve attitudes and progress of the average and below average pupils, particularly in choice of words. A

significant number of these pupils are now attaining average standards. Teachers demonstrate how to write sections of prose, but do not always ensure that pupils, especially the more able, are given time to discuss their work critically with each other. Much of the writing in Years 3 to 6 is teacher-directed and dominated by exercises with too few opportunities for pupils to write independently. More able pupils spend too much time practising skills rather than being challenged to use these skills through writing for a purpose and for a variety of audiences. These are the main reasons for the different rates of achievement between Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6.

- 55 Teaching and learning are good overall. Successful lessons are characterised by:
- Pupils working at a brisk pace with a sense of purpose.
  - Clear learning objectives shared with and understood by the pupils.
  - Sufficient time allowed for pupils to apply the skills they are taught.
  - An opportunity at the end of the lesson for the teacher to assess what the pupils have learned.
  - Pupils display very positive attitudes to learning in most classes and work hard.
- 56 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader has recently been appointed to her role and has made a good start by monitoring teaching and establishing strategies to raise standards further by, for example, teaching pupils in ability groups for writing once a week in Year 2. She is ensuring, through discussion and monitoring, that an effective focus on continuing improvement in writing is improving standards.

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

- 57 The focus on writing has brought about a better range of quality in written work in other subjects. In Years 3 to 6, pupils write reports in science, formulate letters and describe events in history. They word-process in information technology, but insufficiently, and take notes and undertake descriptive work in geography. Pupils research information for their studies successfully on the Internet and in non-fiction texts.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The management of the subject is good and there are some good aspects to its leadership.
  - The tracking of pupils' progress in the subject is good.
  - The quality of mental arithmetic at the start of lessons is insufficiently varied.
  - Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- 58 Pupils' attainment meets expectations for their age in Years 2 and 6 and they achieve soundly throughout the school. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, despite a fall in the level of attainment on entry since that time. Pupils enjoy mathematics and most show positive attitudes to their work and a keenness to get on. They make good progress in their understanding of number. In one lesson seen, Year 2 pupils showed that they were gaining a good understanding of two-figure number values and most readily identified the larger of two numbers. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils were learning to apply mathematical symbols for 'greater than' and 'less than' to make number statements and many made good progress in this technique. They have a good understanding of odd and even numbers. They are, however, a little more hesitant when trying to apply their knowledge to every day situations. Year 2 pupils were slow to suggest an every-day situation when they might add three sets of numbers together.

- 59 Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of four- and five-figure place value but currently significant numbers of pupils are less confident and accurate when converting metric measures containing decimals, such as the conversion of kilograms to grams. They show good understanding of negative number as they plot co-ordinates on a graph.
- 60 The curriculum is planned well for number acquisition, though there is a heavy reliance on text books in some classes. There is less evidence of a range of data handling and ICT is not yet used well enough in mathematics. Some good practice is evident in the application of mathematics to every day situations in Year 6 but this is not yet sufficiently widespread in the school. In a Year 6 lesson, the pupils were given a budget and, with the use of catalogues, they had to purchase sports equipment for a school. This work offered a good challenge because the pupils had to consider various criteria, such as the needs of both infants and juniors, purchase both indoor and outdoor equipment and consider a range of sports. They then had to calculate the VAT element. The pupils enjoyed this challenge and found the work meaningful and purposeful and they did well in calculating. Mathematics investigations were evident in a small number of other classes but this is not yet a regular enough feature of the work in the subject, neither is pattern and logic in the investigation of number.
- 61 The overall quality of teaching is finely balanced between satisfactory and good throughout the school but is good overall because a slight majority of lessons were good in each key stage. Teachers make good use of whiteboards so that all pupils can think of an answer, but in general class discussion work, there is a tendency for teachers only to ask pupils who have raised their hand to answer a question. Some pupils retain a passive mode for much of the whole-class work as a result. The quality of mental starters is satisfactory, although in general lack a good variety of techniques. Teachers make good use of mathematical language. The pupils acquire this language well and then use it in their own responses. Lessons are well prepared and resources used effectively to help the pupils' understanding. In many lessons work is well matched to the pupils' capabilities so that they are challenged effectively and acquire a good understanding. In others, able pupils are not challenged enough to push them on. Occasionally good use was seen of the use of overhead projectors, as in a good Year 4 lesson, when pupils were learning to subtract three-figure numbers. This good use helped the flow of the lesson introduction.
- 62 Teachers manage the classes well and there is an expectation that the pupils will behave well. The pupils respond well to this expectation because of the mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Pupils answer politely and others listen to their responses. Many volunteer answers willingly and this is due to the good atmosphere the teachers create.
- 63 Learning is good. Pupils quickly settle to their work and try hard and they retain a good focus on their activities enabling them to get through a good amount of work in lessons. Occasionally teachers mismanage the time element or try to do too much in the lesson and this reduces the amount of time for pupils to practise the skill that has just been taught.
- 64 The management of the subject is good. Leadership is satisfactory but with some good features. The subject leader has worked hard to improve the provision in mathematics and the resources for mathematics are better than the last inspection and now at a satisfactory level. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection in tracking pupils' mathematics progress throughout the school and good analysis is made of test results. This is beginning to feed into teachers' planning to tackle areas of difficulty. Monitoring of work across the school lacks sufficient rigour and whole-school analysis and this is partly due to the load of responsibilities that the co-ordinator has to carry. The subject leader has developed a thorough revision programme for the period before national tests and this, combined with booster groups, helps to ensure pupils who are at the borderline of expectations often manage to reach the expected level for their age.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

65 Satisfactory. It is used well in time lines in history to help pupils gain a sense of the order of time. In science, pupils time their experiments, measure and calculate an average as when Year 4 pupils investigated whether pupils with the longest feet jumped the furthest. It is not used enough in ICT.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**

### Main strengths

- Pupils' achievement is good in Years 2 and 6, assisted by a focus on developing the skills of investigation and experiment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, especially the planning of the curriculum to match pupils' learning needs.
- The curriculum is good, building up pupils' skills alongside their subject knowledge and understanding.
- Curriculum co-ordination is very effective and supports a drive for improvement.

### Commentary

66 The curriculum team for science has analysed data and monitoring information about the quality of teaching and learning effectively. It has used this information to improve the curriculum, the scheme of work and the quality of teaching and learning, which are now good. This good work has not only been able to maintain standards in the factual component of science at the expected level, as at the time of the previous inspection, but has facilitated good improvement in pupils' skills of investigation and experiment. Standards in using and applying scientific principles have improved from weak to satisfactory. Standards are now average in this regard. This improvement is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 2 and 6.

67 A slight majority of teaching observed in science was good. Whilst achievement in science is sound in the main, it is good in Years 2 and 6 as a result of good teaching. In these lessons, in particular, the teachers' planning and preparation are good with good attention paid to the range of pupils' different abilities within each class. This focus results in a positive impact on individuals' learning. Questions are well considered and targeted to pupils as individuals as well as to guide the class through the work planned. Resources and their use are well thought out and clear structures to investigate and experiment are drawn up to ensure that all in the class are challenged to think, rather than to just follow a set pattern or routine. The support of other adults to enable those with a specific learning need to make good progress is well planned. Challenge and extension are built into tasks to ensure that those capable of working at a higher level work hard throughout the lesson. These teachers make good use of end of unit assessments to plan the next study units and assessment of pupils' learning lesson by lesson, planning the next lesson from the previous. As a result, pupils' concentration skills are being well developed and their confidence, enjoyment and enthusiasm firmly established. Pupils' learning is good. They enjoy science and are making good progress. They are highly motivated in lessons and work hard, showing particular interest during investigative activity.

68 Year 2 pupils did well when they investigated the effects of the opposite forces of push and pull on a range of materials. Pupils then used a range of literacy and numeracy skills to record their findings in charts. Year 6 pupils were challenged to investigate and explain the effects of the sun on life on earth – the seasons, day and night and the climate. They increased their understanding by using a torch and a stick and created shadows and

compared these in the controlled atmosphere of the classroom with those they had made in the playground in a previous session.

- 69 Leadership and management in science are good. The curriculum has improved well since the previous inspection and is now good. The progressive development of investigative skills, along with the acquisition of knowledge in the required areas of the National Curriculum, ensure that the subject is taught effectively in well related study units. The direct monitoring of teaching, learning and curriculum developments in class, along with the tracking of pupils' assessments by the curriculum team leader, is very good and has led to the increased achievement of pupils in science in Years 2 and 6.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The facilities in the recently installed ICT suite support pupils' learning well.
- Good tracking and monitoring procedures enable staff to build on what pupils know and can do.
- The subject encourages pupils to co-operate and work well with each other.
- Resources are inadequate to support learning across the curriculum.
- Pupils need more opportunities to apply the skills they are taught to support learning across the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

- 70 Standards have improved since the last inspection when they were below average and there were insufficient resources to meet National Curriculum requirements. All pupils have regular access to the recently installed ICT suite and training for teachers has ensured that pupils are taught an appropriate range of skills. All work is based on a national scheme, ensuring that a full range of experiences, including word-processing, graphics, data handling and the Internet, as well as monitoring, control and modelling are taught. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and ranged from good to satisfactory in lessons observed. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are average. Pupils achieve well because they are working from a low knowledge base because of previously inadequate provision. Gains in understanding are now rapid.
- 71 In a good Year 5 lesson observed, the teacher had prepared the ICT suite well and demonstrated a program designed to present information, ensuring that all pupils understood exactly what was expected. The lesson proceeded at a good pace, the teacher had high expectations and the confidence to allow the pupils to explore the program further. The result was that many produced presentations with good graphics and music and their self-esteem was boosted as they reviewed each other's results. Slower pace and lack of challenge for more able pupils characterised the other lessons observed.
- 72 Learning is good because the pupils are well motivated, confident to try things out and retain a good level of concentration, enabling them to make good progress in their computer skills in lessons. Conversations with pupils confirm that many have access to computers at home and many Year 6 pupils bring skills, such as logging onto the Internet and researching information to school. They all have very positive attitudes to ICT and talk with enthusiasm about the work they have done. Year 2 pupils understand that computers can help them with their schoolwork but do not appreciate their wider application in machines and equipment that they see around them.
- 73 Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader acknowledges that the range and quality of resources need to improve further and that the

school has not yet explored the learning opportunities to be created by the use of interactive whiteboards in the classrooms. However good systems of tracking and evaluating work are well established and a clear vision exists for future development.

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

- 74 The school is beginning to use ICT to support learning in subjects across the curriculum, for example by word-processing in English and history, creating pictures in art and drawing graphs in mathematics and science. However, there are not yet enough resources available to staff and they do not always ensure that planning fully explores opportunities to use ICT to support learning across the curriculum.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

#### **History**

- 75 There was not enough evidence to report on the provision in history. One lesson in Year 1 was sampled. This successful lesson gave pupils the opportunity to look at, and draw, toys belonging to their parents and grandparents. They listened well to the teacher's descriptions and planned questions they would ask of a visitor who was to bring in more old toys she was to share with them.
- 76 Discussions with pupils confirm that they have very positive attitudes to the subject. Year 2 pupils know about the work of Florence Nightingale and can indicate how schools have changed since Victorian times. Year 6 pupils know the difference between first-hand evidence and that obtained from other sources. They explore, to a satisfactory depth, issues surrounding the changes in society in Victorian times. Year 4 pupils have used ICT well to research early Anglo-Saxon life, importing text and graphics to support their writing.

#### **Geography**

Provision for geography is **satisfactory** overall

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

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, especially when developing pupils' geographical skills.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to geography.
- The quality of marking is good, especially for older pupils who are given suggestions of how they might improve their work.
- The curriculum combines a good balance of geographical skills and knowledge about different countries and environments.

#### **Commentary.**

- 77 Standards are in line with those expected for pupils' ages and abilities in Year 2 and have been maintained since the previous inspection. Standards of work seen for the oldest pupils in Year 6 during the inspection were good, with pupils achieving well. Overall there has been a good improvement since the previous inspection for older pupils where standards in the juniors were judged to be unsatisfactory.
- 78 Pupils' work across the school shows a good development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils in both Years 2 and 6 are aware of localities beyond their own. They understand that different environments and climates affect how people live. Year 6 pupils

select information from different sources and use maps and information sheets in their investigations. For instance, when investigating desert conditions, older pupils use video clips and climate maps in their researches, looking for patterns. Younger pupils, together with their teachers, refer to literature when contrasting their local area with that of an imaginary island community.

- 79 Teaching and learning are good. With the curriculum focused upon developing pupils' observational and investigative skills, teachers have adopted a practical approach to the lessons. As a result, pupils effectively begin to develop their mapping skills through making models of their local area with streets, parks, shops and houses, arranging them as accurately as possible. By making a model of an imaginary island, teachers ensure pupils have a visual guide to help them consider and identify contrasting features and this reinforces their learning. Teachers of older pupils further develop pupils' observational skills well, especially when pupils contrast the developed world in which they live with that of a village in India. Photographs, books, maps and film clips are used well to help refine questioning and research skills and to encourage pupils to transfer information onto their own maps using common symbols and keys. Teachers take time to develop geographical skills of enquiry and interrogation in addition to the provision of geographical facts. Pupils' work is carefully presented and pupils are obviously proud of what they have been able to find out. Their attitudes are good.
- 80 Leadership and management of geography are good. The team of teachers responsible for the subject ensures that the curriculum is seen as a progressive development of skills and knowledge. Teachers plan together drawing their lessons from the scheme of work, matched to the requirements of the National Curriculum. There are carefully planned links with other subjects, including to mathematics and literacy. A clear plan is laid out to develop the subject further and this is carefully linked to the school development plan.

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

### **Art and design, design and technology, physical education**

Two lessons were observed in physical education and none in design and technology or art and design as these were not a focus for the inspection.

### **Commentary**

- 81 Evidence from around the school of work on display in **art and design** and **design and technology** indicates that both receive a sufficient focus and they feature regularly on the curriculum so that pupils receive a good balance of academic and practical experiences. In a Year 1 class, the pupils were weaving a range of materials, such as foil, tissue and various forms of paper, with good levels of dexterity, to create pattern and came to a good understanding of the terms 'warp' and 'weft'. This was linked well with their study of materials in science. Pupils use paint satisfactorily to evoke scenes of their geographical work about St Lucia in Year 2. In the juniors, they work with different media to undertake observational drawings of a satisfactory quality and to work in the style of famous painters, such as Van Gogh and Monet. They sketch portraits of a satisfactory quality with good attention to proportion and detail. Some good work was observed of moving figures in Year 4 obtained by creating a template of the main parts of the body held together with brass paper fasteners and positioned to create a particular form of movement. Smudging techniques around the edges had created an eye-catching display of various sporting movements.
- 82 A satisfactory emphasis is given to **design and technology** and the work seen around the school was of an expected quality for the pupils' ages. Year 2 pupils were commencing work on puppets and a well executed display of various types of puppets, including a ventriloquist's doll and marionettes was stimulating their thinking as the pupils began to think about materials they could use themselves for different parts of their own creations. Samplers had

been thoughtfully created to help pupils with sewing techniques in preparation for their forthcoming work. A brief visit to a Year 3 lesson showed that the teacher had gone to much trouble to obtain different kinds of pop-up books as pupils considered the mechanisms of hinges, flaps and joints as a prelude to them designing their own books. They were being prepared well in this and were beginning to consider the age of their audience they were making their book for. Older pupils had created musical instruments of a satisfactory quality from a range of materials and, with reference to different cultures. These included a string guitar with the strings held by brass fasteners and tom-toms.

- 83 The two lessons observed in **physical education** were of satisfactory quality and pupils in these lessons reached expectations in the quality of their movements. In a Year 5/6 lesson, pupils showed sound skill in undertaking rolling movements. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils undertook sequences of movement by joining a series of movements together. There was suitable use of demonstration but the teacher often evaluated the movements and there was little opportunity for the pupils to do so. In the brief glimpses of other physical education lessons, pupils sometimes waited for turns when working on equipment and they were not kept fully active in this part of the lesson.
- 84 Physical education is an integral part of the curriculum and pupils have good opportunities to take part in a range of sports. Good attention is paid to equal opportunity. There is a good balance to the physical education curriculum, including swimming and a good range of extra-curricular activities. The good quality hall surface combined with its ample size, together with the large playing field offer good facilities for the subject. The school has been particularly successful in competitive sport and the pupils display much keenness in wanting to take part.

## Music

Provision for music **satisfactory** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, especially when developing pupils' performance skills.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to music.
- The school has a good range of music and instruments to ensure a full curriculum can be taught.

### Commentary

- 85 A very limited number of lessons were seen during the inspection, although pupils were heard singing during assembly, which was of satisfactory quality. No overall judgements can be made about standards in music, but learning observed was satisfactory. The quality of singing seen is in line with the expectations for pupils' ages. Pupils enjoy singing together. Older pupils, learning about music hall songs, enjoyed singing about 'Daisy Bell' as a result of good quality teaching. This work was well linked to their historical study of the Victorians. The teacher skilfully guided the discussion through the use of a good range of thoughtfully considered questions and pupils came to a good understanding of music halls and the story behind the song. Pupils had great fun watching a brave few 'act out' the story while the class sang the song. A range of simple props – hats, scarves, waistcoats and a bunch of artificial flowers – added 'authenticity' to the performance. Most sang in tune to the recorded accompaniment, listened carefully to the melody and showed a developing sense of rhythm, the need to modulate volume and exercise control when using simple percussion instruments to learn the chords to accompany their singing. Through the teacher's careful development of their skills, pupils controlled the volume of their singing well, taking care to provide a pleasing performance. Pupils do not always pitch their singing accurately when beginning a song, particularly when singing alongside a male teacher.

- 86 Younger pupils enjoyed the opportunity to learn about instruments and their sounds, especially investigating percussion instruments from Kenya given to the school by a visitor from Africa. As the teacher brought each instrument from the box pupils knelt up, creeping closer and closer to her, excitingly telling her what they were and how they were played. They were particularly interested in the gourd piano, the M'bira, asking many questions about the materials used in its construction.
- 87 Teachers' planning shows that good opportunities are made for the subject during the year to cover the full curriculum. Work samples reinforced this view, with evidence of pupils listening to and analysing works, such as Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony', recording their responses to the mood created and their reactions to what they have heard. A good range of resources is available for music, especially percussion instruments and recordings of a range of music from different periods and peoples. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory.

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

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school makes good use of external personnel to contribute their knowledge.
- The provision for a structured approach to personal, social and health education is at an early stage of development.

### **Commentary**

- 88 The curriculum for personal, social and health education is not planned with a clear structure but is given due importance in the school and it appears regularly on time-tables. The formalised teaching in some aspects, such as drugs awareness and sex education, are regular features for pupils at particular ages and contribute much to pupils' maturity and personal development.
- 89 Three lessons were observed during the inspection. These were all of sound quality and teaching and learning were satisfactory. Year 1 pupils gathered together in a circle and engaged in a discussion about keeping the school rules. They worked well in groups to discuss statements written on cards and decided whether they constituted good or bad aspects of behaviour. Year 4 pupils engaged maturely in work about future changes to Medway and how, as individuals, they could effect change. They learned about the role of councillors and how they are elected. The pupils had lot of ideas and were able to argue the reason for changes being needed, for example the need for improvements in leisure facilities for the young by the provision of a skateboard park. Pupils behaved well, showed much interest and worked well together. Year 4 pupils in another class discussed sensibly how the school could celebrate achievement but their ideas tended to centre around themselves rather than the whole school picture. Most pupils were well behaved, though some found difficulty in listening to the views of others. Pupils, on the whole, showed good levels of interest.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

