

INSPECTION REPORT

ULCOMBE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ulcombe, Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118631

Headteacher: Mr Christopher Dodge

Lead inspector: David Collard

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 5th February 2004

Inspection number: 258254

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 65

School address: The Street
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Maidstone
Kent
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr T Shortland

Date of previous inspection: 5th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School is situated in a small rural village near Maidstone, Kent. Numbers at the school have been falling slightly since 1999 and there are now 65 pupils on roll. Boys outnumber the girls by two to one. The number in each year group varies considerably from three to fifteen. This has meant that 3 of the 4 classes contain mixed age groups and this varies year on year. Some Pupils come from mixed housing within the village, but a significant number travel from outside the catchment area. A fifth of the pupils are traveller children and live on a static site nearby. Three quarters of the pupils who start at Ulcombe are still present by the end of Year 6. The number of pupils who obtain free school meals (18.1 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs (37.5 per cent) is well above the national average. The overwhelming majority of pupils with special educational needs are experiencing moderate learning difficulty. The number of statements of special educational need (2.8 per cent) is above the national average. These are also for learning difficulties. In the last five terms there have been five acting headteachers but a new permanent appointment was made in January 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides an **acceptable standard** of education. Standards have fluctuated over the last three years although they are now at average levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Until this term, the school had been without a permanent headteacher for five terms and long-term development of the school had faltered. The high levels of outside support have improved the school, teaching is satisfactory and the progress of pupils sound. However, some serious weaknesses remain, mainly in the achievement, over the longer term, of pupils with special educational needs and for those with higher ability. As a result, the school presently provides unsatisfactory value for money but with the recent appointment of a permanent headteacher has the capacity to improve quickly.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good standards in science but widely fluctuating standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Unsatisfactory achievement by higher and lower attaining pupils; although those of average ability progress suitably.
- Good educational and social inclusion provision is made for the significant number of traveller children.
- Sound teaching by teachers wanting to improve their own skills and expectations.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of pupils and their willingness to participate in all activities.
- The curriculum is broad but not balanced because, until recently, there had been insufficient strategic leadership.
- The good support of parents and the good links with the community.

The school has not improved enough since the last inspection. The use of time by teachers and the gathering of information to use for assessment have improved. However, issues concerning the quality of teaching, the effective use of time, a strong development plan and the role of governors all took too long to implement. Since the intervention of the local education authority, this has been reversed. Over the last two terms there has been substantial development and the building blocks for improvement are now in place, but there is still much to be done.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	E	D	D	D
mathematics	B	B	D	E
science	E	D	B	B

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

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

Achievement through the school is **unsatisfactory**. Children enter the school with average levels of attainment and make a sound start in the Foundation Stage. The majority reach the nationally expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 to 6, pupils with average ability make sound progress. Those capable of doing better are not sufficiently challenged and the support for those with special educational needs is not strong enough and pupils are not sufficiently challenged. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are achieving average standards in reading, writing and mathematics although in last year's national tests, the small cohort of pupils (9) did not do as well. By the end of Year 6, standards are also at average levels but from an analysis of assessment information, it is clear there are a significant number of pupils able to achieve higher than this. This was why, in the 2003 national tests, the results were below average in English and, because there were less pupils achieving the higher Level 5, well below average standards in mathematics. This

contrasts with science where the consistently good teaching over a period of time has meant that standards have improved to above average in national tests. Standards in information and communication technology have fallen because the subject did not have a high enough profile but provision has improved through better training and better hardware. Swift progress is being made now. Pupils are progressing suitably in other subjects, but again higher attaining pupils could do better. There is adequate coverage of subject areas but, until recently, the curriculum was not rich enough to inspire and motivate pupils. Work has been started to improve the opportunities for those with special educational needs. Until now, their needs have not been fully recognised and they have not always been supported well enough. Revised individual education plans have addressed this issue and the training of assistants is being undertaken, which is ensuring that pupils make better progress.

Pupils have good attitudes to school and behave well. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils are very positive about their school and make every effort to do their best. They are willing to take on responsibilities and are now being given the chance to do so, such as through the newly formed school council. Attendance is close to the national average and new procedures have been implemented to reduce the level of absence. The high number of traveller children are integrated well within the school and their cultural traditions are valued.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school is providing a **sound** education because, after high levels of monitoring and support, the quality of teaching has improved and is **satisfactory**. With the improved data from assessments, planning is more sharply focussed and work is tailored to pupils' individual needs. This is helping to raise achievement. However, the processes are taking time to become embedded and so there are still some pupils with lower and higher ability who are not being challenged sufficiently. Over the last year, the curriculum has been completely reorganised and now follows the national guidelines and ensures that pupils receive a balance of subjects. Relationships are good and pupils are looked after carefully. Parents are highly supportive of the school and want to see it succeed. There are very good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The provision for leadership and management is **satisfactory**. There have been five headteachers in the last five terms. The appointment of a permanent headteacher at the beginning of this term, with a sense of purpose and vision, has meant that the school can move forward rapidly. The governance of the school is also now satisfactory. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Good support has been provided by other agencies, including the local education authority, to support the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school and have been prepared to support it through a difficult period. They can see that things are now improving and likely to be more stable. Pupils are equally supportive and proud of their school. They are happily providing new ideas to enhance the school environment.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the head and governors should do to improve are:

- Stabilise the fluctuating standards in English and mathematics by continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly for higher and lower attaining pupils.
- Raise standards in information and communication technology, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Ensure the curriculum provides the widest opportunities in all subjects.

- Continue to develop the roles of the co-ordinators so that they can take active responsibility for their subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Most pupils are gaining **average** standards. Achievement is **unsatisfactory**. Pupils of average ability make sound progress. Those with higher or lower ability, including those with special educational needs, are not sufficiently challenged by the work they are given and could do better.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- For pupils in Year 2, the national test results are too low in reading, writing and mathematics, even though the majority of these pupils came into the school with average levels of ability.
- The good standards achieved in the national tests in science in Year 6; although the standards in English and mathematics were not high enough because too few pupils achieved above the average level.
- The underachievement by higher and lower attaining pupils particularly in English, mathematics and information and communication technology through the school.
- The good integration of the traveller children within the school.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory except in the Reception class.

Commentary

1. On entry to the school at four years of age, the majority of children are attaining at levels that might be expected nationally and a significant number exceed these expectations in literacy and numeracy. Through the Reception class, children achieve satisfactorily although the teaching is sometimes too heavily focussed on the Year 1 pupils who are also in the class. This results in some work that does not extend the requirements of the Early Learning Goals for children in the Reception year. Despite this, the majority make sound progress in all the expected areas of learning and are suitably prepared for work on the National Curriculum when they reach six years of age.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.1 (26.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.7 (28.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.6 (28.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Standards in English for those in Year 2 and Year 6 are average, although the most recent test results were below average; a deterioration from the last inspection. The local education authority review in 2002 gave clear indications that standards had fallen because a significant number of pupils, particularly those with higher ability, did not do as well as they should and there was significant underachievement. Since then, with the concentrated assistance from consultants and advisors, better systems for assessment and planning, combined with more challenging work, are beginning to have an effect and standards are rising. Speaking and listening are well developed however, and most pupils use an increasingly wide vocabulary. The reading skills of pupils in the infants have been aimed at raising the standard to the average but, with the support of a literacy consultant, there is now more structure to the development and this has been linked to writing in an effort to improve both areas. Through the juniors, teachers use well-chosen texts that enrich vocabulary and influence the descriptive

nature of more extended writing. The success of the high levels of support provided by consultants can be seen in the better achievement that pupils are making this year, and the targets set for the subject suggests there will be an improvement in this year's national tests.

3. Standards in mathematics have returned to average levels after a drop in national test results last year. They were below the national average for both seven and eleven year olds and well below average when compared to similar schools for Year 6 pupils. Achievement is sound for those with average ability but unsatisfactory for those with higher and lower ability because the level of challenge has only just started to have an effect. As in English, the planning and teaching of the subject has been reviewed and altered in light of the poor results. Whilst this strategy has taken too long to implement, it is now beginning to improve attainment. Teachers have a much clearer picture about what pupils can achieve and whether they are making sufficient progress. There is not enough challenge for pupils with higher ability to enable them to use the knowledge they have to build up a better understanding in the use of number, problem solving and the use of data.
4. Standards in science are better and at least at average levels for the majority of pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6. Achievement is good. In the national tests in 2003, Year 6 pupils gained well above average standards, which was a result of the good teaching that took place. Those in the present Year 2 and Year 6 are on line to gain above average results if the present rate of progress continues. Improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) has been good over the last year and pupils are achieving standards close to the nationally expected level, although this is still lower than that at the last inspection. The upgraded hardware, focused training of teachers and better links with other areas of the curriculum have all helped to develop the skills and knowledge needed to use ICT as a tool for learning.
5. Other subjects of the National Curriculum, including French in Year 6, fulfil statutory requirements. For some time, only a minimum time has been given to physical education and so development in this subject has been unsatisfactory. The school development plan gives a high priority to readjusting the balance and making use of integrated literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to build up the standards in all subjects. A good example of some early success can be seen in religious education where pupils are now achieving satisfactorily due to the support provided by the diocese in combining both the nationally agreed guidelines and the locally agreed syllabus.
6. The large number of traveller children are supported well and have been for a number of years. As a result, the systems in place are well developed with the traveller support service and pupils make sound progress. In contrast, pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory achievement throughout the school, with the exception of children in the Reception class who benefit from the structure and organisation of their learning environment. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) do not have well focussed targets that identify and address the specific learning needs of these pupils. Reception children are keen to engage in activities that encourage them to make independent choices from the equipment and resources readily available and as a result they achieve as well as they can.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attendance of most pupils is satisfactory and has improved recently with the advent of new procedures. Pupils are keen and eager to attend school and have good attitudes towards their work. Behaviour in and around the school is good. Personal development is fostered **adequately**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good levels of interest in what the school offers and the pupils' pride in their school.
- Good behaviour in lessons and the very good trusting relationships between adults and children.
- The good systems that have been introduced to foster better attendance.

- The good community spirit that tries to involve all pupils from whatever background.

Commentary

7. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and, particularly with the older pupils, there is often a very mature approach to learning. Pupils know what to expect and what is expected of them. The recent introduction of a school council has been welcomed with enthusiasm. A suggestion board for ideas has been filled with innovative and well-conceived proposals about improving the playground and school environment. The pupils are keen to take on responsibility for their own community and their learning, although until recently this was not promoted as well as it could have been. Parents point out that pupils are particularly keen to attend any school visits and outings and other people often comment on the good behaviour of the children.
8. There have been no instances of bullying or harassment in the recent past. Pupils understand the procedures to follow should this happen. They trust adults to deal with any situations with tolerance and understanding, and parents express no concerns. The majority of pupils are confident. They willingly communicate both with their friends and with adults and are secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	2.4
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

9. There were no exclusions in the previous reporting year. A great deal of work has been done to improve recent poor attendance figures and reduce the amount of unauthorised absence. New procedures for monitoring absences have been introduced and most parents now co-operate in telling the school when children cannot come to school. However, there are a few families who have difficulty in getting their children to school regularly, or keeping the school informed and this means that, overall, attendance still remains below the national average. The educational welfare officer works closely with the school to follow up any issues.
10. Spiritual awareness is fostered through collective worship, which meets statutory requirements, religious education lessons and formal discussion periods during the week. Pupils show tolerance for other's points of view and for their beliefs. Older pupils can talk about their own and other religions and understand the differences between cultures and traditions; such as the large group of well integrated traveller children present at the school. Their social skills are well developed. Pupils show consideration for their peers when they are talking and listen carefully to each other. They know the differences between right and wrong and the classroom rules demonstrate how these are put into practice. Some work is formally planned for cultural awareness, such as through the study in history of ancient cultures and in art and design through studying different artists. This area is to become part of the drive within the school improvement plan to make the curriculum stimulating and exciting.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **sound** quality of education. **Teaching and learning are satisfactory** as a result of the high levels of support that have been provided over the last year by two experienced acting headteachers, and the support of the local education authority. The staff have demonstrated their capacity for this improvement to continue since the appointment of a permanent headteacher. The headteacher has a clear vision about what needs to be done in order to raise achievement. The curriculum is better balanced and assessment has greatly improved. The care, welfare and support for pupils are satisfactory and the support of parents is good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory**, a finding similar to that of the last inspection but had deteriorated in the interim. A local education authority review in 2002, highlighted some significant deficiencies and action was taken to provide high levels of support and training. As a result of improved teaching, the majority of pupils are now making progress in their learning in individual lessons although there has not been enough impact yet on their overall achievement through the school. The procedures for assessment are satisfactory and they are now being used to address the fluctuating levels of achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- More stringent assessment procedures that have been used to develop the planning, methods and organisation of lessons.
- The school's focus on improving the planning and assessment across all subjects.
- The good systems to promote positive behaviour that ensure pupils are not distracted from learning.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is not focussed well enough to their needs.
- The good encouragement given to older pupils to help them become more independent.
- The good development of homework through the school.
- The good integration of traveller children.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	2	8	8	1	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

11. Professional development had faltered until the weaknesses had been identified and so improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. It has significantly improved over the last year with more stringent monitoring and assessment procedures introduced by the acting headteachers, the assessment co-ordinator and the local education authority. The better use of assessment has meant that targets, displayed in books, are used more widely and are understood by the pupils themselves. They are able to talk about the reasons for these targets and how they have improved. In the best cases, this is also combined with lesson objectives being used as titles for pieces of work and constant reference being made to them.
12. Teachers have sufficient subject knowledge to teach all subjects and it is good in science. It has improved in information and communication technology due to the implementation of a concentrated training programme. Weaknesses, identified in this area at the time of the last report, have been rectified. There is still more to be done to address the needs of children in the mixed Foundation Stage and Year 1 class but this is also starting to improve after intervention by the local education authority.
13. Recently, much work has been done to readjust the balance and ensure that lessons are more inspiring and interesting. Shorter term planning combines both work in English and mathematics with subjects such as history and science, thus enabling pupils to see the relevance of what they are learning and to raise their achievement. Interaction between all staff and the pupils is good. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere and evident enjoyment. This is exemplified in the good quality marking in Years 5 and 6. In one example, the teacher correctly pointed out a deterioration in the presentation of work and pleasantly asked for improvement,

which occurred soon afterwards. In other classes, marking is satisfactory but not to the same high degree. There is now an understanding amongst staff about the importance of assessment and how this will speed up the rate of improvement of individuals. Attention is urgently being given to addressing the weaknesses.

14. Planning is now satisfactory. Work in books shows progression in learning new skills and reinforcing those already known. Pupils of all abilities are making sound progress in their learning in individual lessons, using the knowledge they have gained to help them make choices when presented with unfamiliar situations. The one unsatisfactory lesson demonstrated that there is still more to be done to ensure that the correct experiences are given to all ages and abilities.
15. Teachers manage the pupils well. During the inspection, there were no instances of poor behaviour either within lessons or around the school. Pupils are willing participants and show high levels of interest and involvement in discussions, shared working and in what they are expected to complete. They can work well with each other and are equally able to work on their own, showing good levels of concentration. It is evident from a scrutiny of work that this has been the case for some time, even when the unsatisfactory timetabling at the beginning of the year meant that too much attention was being paid to literacy and numeracy at the expense of other subjects.
16. Homework is used well to reinforce other work throughout the school. It is valued by parents and rigorously followed up by teachers. Pupils understand what is required of them and in most cases work is completed thoroughly. Learning support assistants provide valuable additional help in the classes, particularly for those with special educational needs and within the Reception class. However, despite this, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is barely adequate because teachers do not plan sufficiently well for their specific needs within lessons and as a result, they are not achieving as well as they could. Targets are too broad and not specific enough to meet individual needs and there is no evidence of the effects of on-going monitoring in relation to pupils' progress. The school has recently introduced the 'Early Literacy Support' to focus on under-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2, and has plans to extend this to address older pupils' needs in Years 3 to 6 to improve pupils' achievement in English. The learning support assistants are currently adjusting to their new role in supporting pupils with special needs and have identified their own training requirements as part of an overall strategy for professional development.
17. The significant numbers of traveller children are integrated well within the school. Teachers have a good understanding of their needs. The traveller support team ensure that other pupils have become fully aware of the traveller lifestyle and culture. This activity has included the teaching of a specific topic on their background and culture, which is prominently displayed in one classroom.

The curriculum

Provision for the curriculum is now **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Too much time is allocated to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, it is not having enough impact on standards and because of this, other subjects are not providing a stimulating and interesting curriculum.
- Until this year, the curriculum development had not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.
- The match of staff to the curriculum is good although subject co-ordinators have not fully developed their roles.
- Planning has improved, particularly in the foundation subjects.
- Provision for special educational needs is unsatisfactory.

- The good provision for activities outside lessons and improved outdoor provision for children in the Reception class.

Commentary

18. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but there are weaknesses in the allocation of time to each subject. Too much emphasis is placed on the core subjects, in particular English, where there are additional lessons for guided reading, speaking and listening and extended reading and writing tasks. Despite this, results in national tests are not rising, indeed there are wide fluctuations between years. This is also adversely affecting the balance of the wider curriculum and the standards in subjects. The curriculum has suffered from unsettled leadership since the last inspection and the newly appointed headteacher is aware of the need to review the appropriateness of the time allocated to some subjects. Curriculum development has also suffered. The national strategies for literacy and mathematics are still in the very early stages of re-implementation and the staff are not fully secure in their teaching of these frameworks. Subject co-ordinators are currently developing their role and this is starting to impact upon development of each subject because there are now clear plans for improvement. In spite of these weaknesses, there are some strengths in curriculum provision. Science has improved because a good time is spent letting pupils work through their own experiments and investigations and some good work has been undertaken in geography and history linked to the local environment.
19. The school is in the process of refining its planning in order to cater for the mixed age classes. Teachers are starting to identify the different needs of pupils in their care but still, on occasions do not always address the specific learning requirements for the different ages and abilities. The impact of recent initiatives on lesson plans have begun to show improvement since the last inspection and the introduction of a curriculum map, based on national guidelines is beginning to ensure that pupils are able to build on their earlier learning as they mature.
20. Planning for children in the Reception class is still in need of development. Staff are finding it hard to combine the demands of the Foundation Stage with that of the National Curriculum in a split class of Reception and Year 1 pupils. At present the curricular provision for Reception children is satisfactory but some activities lack sufficient challenge. There are improved outdoor facilities for Reception children since the last inspection. They are easily accessible and well used to stimulate creative, physical and imaginative learning and so help children achieve better physical development.
21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory because there has been insufficient improvement in this area since the last inspection. Pupils' Individual Education Plans have been rewritten but are still not sufficiently well matched to all their individual needs. They follow the requirements of the national Code of Practice after a radical review. The impact of the changes has not yet had time to impact fully for all pupils on the register. Learning support assistants are developing their role in supporting pupils with special needs, both within the classroom and in withdrawal sessions for focussed literacy support and there is some evidence of success in the better support being given in lessons.
22. In addition to the taught curriculum, staff and parents work hard to provide a range of activities for pupils to attend during lunchtimes and after school. These are entered into enthusiastically by the pupils and provide extra stimuli. This range of activities contributes well to pupils' learning because they provide opportunities for competitive sport, for creative and imaginative development and for learning a foreign language. Pupils regularly attend church to celebrate religious festivals and benefit from visitors who enrich the curriculum and enhance their learning in areas such as dance, music and PE. For example, they learn how to play African drums and use this as a stimulus for dance. Older pupils learn games skills using the support of the local secondary school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the visits from the Traveller Support Unit, which allow for the inclusion of all pupils by raising awareness of the distinctive lifestyles and traditions of the different traveller communities.

23. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory and there are weekly opportunities for pupils to understand the feelings of themselves and others and to consider social and moral dilemmas. Older pupils learn about their role as citizens, within the context of the school and in the wider community, through class discussions and debates and more recently from the newly formulated school council. Provision for drug awareness is satisfactory and older pupils enjoy participating in initiatives such as 'Safety in Action.' The provision for sex education and relationships is satisfactory but the school wants to refine this and has identified it as an area for review.
24. There is a good number of staff, resulting in small class numbers. The school also benefits from a generous number of learning support assistants who ensure that all classes have some support throughout the day. They have clearly defined roles within the classroom and provide support for groups and individuals in their learning. They are developing their role to provide more support for pupils with special educational needs. The resources in the school satisfactorily meet the demands of the curriculum, with the exception of gymnastic equipment for the older pupils. The library has been re-structured and the range of fiction and non-fiction books adequately supports learning in all areas of the curriculum.
25. The accommodation is safe, attractive and in good condition and there have been good improvements to the outside area since the last inspection. This is enabling pupils to benefit from ample space to play on both paved and grassed areas and younger pupils have good opportunities to play in a more secluded and safe environment if they wish. The school offers a range of activities for younger pupils to engage in during playtimes and older pupils use equipment to support their play at lunchtimes and pupils remark on how they find breaktimes more interesting and that there is less boisterous play.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are cared for and supported **satisfactorily**. The school is small and children are known well as individuals. Support for academic and personal development is **satisfactory**. The school is beginning to involve pupils more in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The positive relationships between pupils and staff.
- The work of the Traveller Support and Educational Welfare services.
- The formal network of support is still developing and support for pupils with special needs improving.
- The way the school involves pupils in its work is still developing.

Commentary

26. The pupils' questionnaires overwhelmingly show that they have a trusting relationship with adults in the school. They say that they feel very happy to talk to adults if they have any concerns. Each child is known well by teachers and support staff. Changes of moods, emotions and attitudes can be seen quickly and staff can react accordingly. The good relationships and 'family-feel' to the school remain the firm foundation for care and support.
27. Children from the traveller community, who are a significant part of the school, are supported well by the Traveller Service. Children are helped to settle and there is good liaison between school and home. These pupils achieve well and are included fully in the school. Similarly, the Education Welfare service has been working closely with the school to improve attendance of some pupils. Family circumstances are understood well and good support is being given.
28. The school has taken steps recently to strengthen its welfare procedures within the school. All staff members have recently had training in child protection procedures and this is now more formally the responsibility of the new headteacher. Similarly, the governors are now involved in

health and safety arrangements through the Buildings Committee and inspections and improvements are in-hand. General matters of first aid and medicines are all satisfactorily managed. Wider issues of the personal and social curriculum and healthy living, are all in place.

29. The formal network of support is also still developing. The school maintains all necessary information about all pupils identified with special educational needs and each teacher has current documentation relating to the pupils in their class. The two pupils with statements of educational need have appropriate reviews and there are clear review dates to assess the progress made by all pupils against the targets in their Individual Education Plans. Pupils are made aware of their targets for future learning but there is no indication as to how pupils' ongoing progress is monitored and recorded against these targets to ensure that they are making continued progress. The school follows the Code of Practice guidance, but procedures for identifying pupils with special needs has only recently been developed using stringent assessment procedures.
30. Support for personal development is still based on informal understanding of each pupil's needs. As yet, there are no targets for personal development and this is a weakness. Pupils say that teachers value their opinions, listen to what they say and trust them. The older children do have some limited responsibilities, but there are insufficient opportunities given for personal responsibility, such as through shared learning targets. The introduction of the council is an important first step in giving pupils more say in their school and in improving the opportunities, for example the peers now elect their own members of the school council. Counsellors consider this to be an important job and there are a number of issues that have already been raised and are being considered.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **strong support** from parents. They are kept well informed, support the school events and help their children to learn. The school works well with groups in the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The way the school has retained the confidence and support of parents.
- The way parents are kept well informed.
- The contribution of parents to school life.
- The beneficial links with the local community.

Commentary

31. The questionnaires and the meeting with parents both confirm, that in spite of the difficulties during the last two years, there is still a positive relationship between the school and parents. Almost all parents are happy with most of what the school does, the ethos, the way their children are treated, supported and helped. Parents appreciate the way the school has remained approachable and has done its best to involve them.
32. Parents say they feel well informed. They are welcomed when their children join the school, with an information pack, which explains the daily routines, as well as curricular matters. Further information is sent each term to explain forthcoming themes and topics. All pupils have reading records and contact books and these too, form a connection between school and home. Both the school and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) have their own regular newsletters, both creating a clear picture of the life of the school. Each term there is a consultation meeting for parents and, at the end of the year, the pupils' annual report is of good quality. The report clearly shows what the pupil knows about or can do and what needs to be done next to maintain progress.
33. Because of these strong links, parents are happy to help the school in many ways. The PTA is very active, organising social and other events, all with a fund-raising theme. Their efforts are

well supported by parents and, as a result, pupils benefit from additional resources, outside visits and activities funded by the PTA. Most classes have at least one parent helper; others help to run school clubs; many help with school trips and support sports teams. Parents give their strong support to the school's homework policy and give practical help to their children to help them succeed. Parents play an important part in the life and work of the school. The school makes every effort to ensure that parents have an opportunity to be involved in the provision for the special educational needs of their children. Parents contribute to the review of their child's progress and in the setting of future targets.

34. There are good and regular contacts with the local church, which is visited by pupils at times of celebration. The ministry team take assemblies in the school every week and the local Family Trust also visit each term. The village history society visits regularly, as well as the emergency services, road safety, RSPCA and children from playgroups in the area. The school's work is represented well in local newspapers and journals. The new headteacher has already established plans to open the school more to the community, through open-days and wider use of the school field and facilities for local people.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The provision for leadership and management is **satisfactory**. The appointment of a permanent headteacher, with a sense of purpose and vision, means that the school can move forward rapidly. As a result, leadership is sound and management satisfactory. The governance of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improved leadership, provided previously by two experienced headteachers and now a permanent appointment.
- The strategic planning that has identified the weaknesses and the ways that these can be overcome.
- The lack of professional development for co-ordinators.
- Strategic involvement of governors through focused training, which is giving them a clear view about their roles and responsibilities.

Commentary

35. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has undergone some significant changes and a period of uncertainty. Following the illness of the permanent headteacher, a senior but inexperienced member of staff took over the role. This meant that long-term developments faltered. After a review by the local education authority an experienced but temporary headteacher was appointed, followed by a second temporary, appointment. This enabled some weaknesses to be addressed but inevitably many of the outcomes were short-term solutions rather than a clear way forward over the longer term. This was not helped by the way that many of the recommendations of the previous report had not been addressed until recently.
36. The appointment of a permanent headteacher has enabled a clarity of vision to be fostered and there is already a much stronger purpose to all the developments. The correct priorities have been incorporated into a coherent school improvement plan that deals with teaching, the role of co-ordinators and information for governors. This, combined with the work on assessment undertaken by the senior teacher and the previous headteacher, have meant that pupils are making much better progress across all areas of the curriculum. Nevertheless, there is still much more to be done to address the significant weaknesses that exist, particularly within the provision and quality of education for the different abilities of pupils.
37. The headteacher has high aspirations about what can be achieved and a determination to improve opportunities. His previous experience and training has enabled him, in a short time, to

identify what can be improved quickly and a realistic understanding about longer-term solutions. This is being shared with the staff and co-ordinators are now more aware of their part in raising standards. Whilst there is not yet a long-term strategic plan in place, the identification of key principles have been outlined to the governing body who feel they now have a better view of the school's progress since the last inspection and an understanding of the way forward.

38. The role of subject co-ordinators is still unsatisfactory. Many of the responsibilities are new to the managers and because most of the strategic lead was taken by the senior staff, there was little opportunity to develop. Since September, there has been a concerted drive to involve all staff in decision making and to provide them with the correct information to allow them to monitor, evaluate and develop their own subjects. Inevitably, this process is still at an early stage and has not fully impacted on the standards being achieved by pupils.
39. The role of special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) is currently a shared responsibility between the head teacher and a member of the teaching staff. This is a new arrangement and allows for the headteacher to support the developing SENCo role. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes but indications are that a good start has been made. There is an appropriate development plan for improving the provision for special needs throughout the school, demonstrating an understanding of what is needed to improve the current situation. The training of key staff and improved procedures for the identification and on going monitoring of pupils with special needs will allow for their improved achievement. The governor identified with specific responsibility for special needs, has recently been allocated and is currently undertaking training to learn more about this role.
40. Since April 2003, the school has been working on collating the information needed to provide a comprehensive self-evaluation. This has principally involved bringing together the assessment information, undertaking an analysis of national test questions to see where there were deficiencies and tracking individual pupils. The absence of this information has been a contributory factor in the widely fluctuating test results over a number of years. This process is now complete and specific individual needs are starting to be addressed. New individual education plans are being formulated and small groups are being targeted for literacy and numeracy support. In addition, teachers and governors are being given the opportunity to see 'best practice' in other schools that will help raise aspirations. Teachers are enthusiastic about what needs to be done and have the capability to achieve it. Good targets are being set as part of the performance management process, which will link closely to the overall school plan. All the building blocks are now in place for sustained improvement. Unfortunately, some groups of pupils have suffered as a result of the delays and their achievement has suffered.
41. In the past, the governors have not had the information to help them support and challenge the leadership of the school. They were not aware of the nature of the weaknesses and so were unable to ask the right questions. The acting headteacher worked hard to provide them with the necessary detail, provided opportunities to attend other governing body meetings and explained the relevance of different data provided by the local education authority. In addition, a number of new but valuable members have been appointed and this has sharpened the work that takes place in the various committees. Minutes from these meetings show there is an urgency in its approach. The governance of the school is now sound and all statutory requirements are fully met.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	298,023	Balance from previous year	37,809
Total expenditure	236,459	Balance carried forward to the next	36,696
Expenditure per pupil	3,637		

42. Throughout the uncertainties of the recent past, the day-to-day management has remained stable and secure. This is evidenced by the high level of support and trust from parents and from the sound financial state of the budget. The internal administrator has undergone financial training and provides a friendly first contact with the school for visitors. Additional help is provided by the local education authority that provides on-going financial data to the governors. This is well managed and saves valuable time. The governors, armed with this information, are careful to ensure that they take account of best value when making spending decisions. However, the school improvement plan, until recently, has not been sufficiently robust to allow them to take the same care with decisions about the curriculum or to the development of staff as part of an overall strategy to raise standards.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory** overall.

43. The small cohort of eight Reception children is taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. They start school with attainment that is at least average in all areas of learning and a substantial number of children are already exceeding the expectations for children of this age in literacy and mathematical development. All children achieve soundly in relation to their previous learning because of the favourable adult support. In addition, children benefit from the regular support of a learning support assistant and from parent helpers, who keep them focussed and enhance their learning.
44. The school is currently the focus for change after a period of unsettled leadership and some aspects of the literacy and numeracy strategies have only recently been introduced. This is having an impact on the provision for Reception children in a mixed age class, tasks are sometimes too geared towards the needs of the older pupils and there is a lack of structure and appropriate challenge in those presented to younger children. As a result, higher achieving children are not sufficiently well challenged in some lessons.
45. Staff are aware of the need to improve their planning and together with consultancy support, they are in the process of modifying their planning and teaching to address these issues and to introduce a more flexible grouping arrangement to support learning, particularly that of higher achieving children. At present, the arrangement for teaching Reception children is shared and this brings with it a difference in teaching style and ability, which ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. The school improvement plan identifies the need to develop skills in teaching for this age group, but does not address the differences between teachers sufficiently well. This is one of the disadvantages of sharing the co-ordinators role; leadership would be more effective if allocated to one person with a specific agenda for improvement.
46. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for Reception children since the last inspection. The new outdoor area is attractive and easily accessible and contributes well to pupils' physical development. The learning environment provides satisfactorily for the needs of these children and resources are adequate for meeting the demands of the curriculum. The Foundation Stage profiles have been introduced and teachers make good use of their on-going observations and sampling of children's work to update these profiles throughout the year.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children choose their own tasks and show confidence in their surroundings.
- Children confidently select their own materials to fulfil a task.
- Children concentrate well when motivated.
- Children work co-operatively with a partner or in small groups.

Commentary

47. Children are familiar with the school routines and come to school happily because most have benefited from pre-school experiences and from the good induction arrangements in the term before they are admitted. Overall the teaching and learning is satisfactory in this area, but when teaching is good or better, the learning opportunities are improved. For example, in

creativity, children respond well to the challenge of making their own dragon because they are stimulated by the range of materials available and because appropriate questioning and teacher support allows them to find their own solutions. Children show good levels of concentration when motivated by good teaching or support because they are sufficiently interested and suitably challenged in their learning. When teaching is not as good, children are unable to sustain focus during class input and the lack of suitable direction in tasks results in children 'flitting' from one activity to the next.

48. Children generally co-operate well with one another, they share the task of making a dragon, play together in the water and help one another to operate simple programs on the computer. However, when grouped together, boys are often over excited and boisterous and this effects their concentration. Children use their school environment with confidence and access the outdoor area with good levels of independence.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Diverse teaching does not sustain the good achievement made by children in this area.
- Undirected tasks lack challenge for higher attaining children.
- Children benefit from adult focus.
- Insufficient attention to the Foundation Stage curriculum in some lessons.

Commentary

49. Teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good and depicts the different teaching approaches of the two staff. When teaching is very good, the teacher makes clear her expectations and children respond well to this. They benefit from individual support and form challenging questions, '*Why is your house the way it is?*' and respond enthusiastically to their task. When teaching is not as good, children are left for too long on 'child initiated' tasks, which do not adequately bring about new learning, particularly for higher attaining children.
50. In their reading, children are making good progress and benefit from sharing their books at home. The school has recently introduced 'guided reading', which requires developing to ensure that teachers make best use of this time. All children demonstrate good independence when reading because they recognise familiar words and use their knowledge of letter sounds to decode unknown words. They understand the conventions of books and show an understanding of what they have read.
51. Speaking and listening skills are good and children speak clearly and confidently, joining in and contributing in class and group activities. Children listen attentively when teaching interests them, but have difficulty taking turns and listening to the contributions of others when they are less interested or when the teacher's expectations are not made sufficiently clear. This results in pupils becoming confused about what they are expected to do and to a lack of urgency in the learning.
52. Scrutiny of children's writing shows that all children are in line to meet the early learning goals for this area and higher attaining children are already exceeding these goals. This is because children have a range of opportunity to write for different purposes and teachers plan for different tasks, making their expectations clear. There are opportunities for children to explore and attempt their own writing throughout the day and this is well used.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All strands of mathematical development are being taught.
- Differentiated tasks allow for the different needs of children.

Commentary

53. Children achieve well in mathematical development and by the end of their Reception year are on target to meet the expectations for children of this age. Higher attaining children exceed these expectations because work is generally well matched to meet their needs. Scrutiny of their work shows that teachers plan for the different abilities within the class but this is not always evident in class work where higher attaining children would sometimes benefit from working with older pupils in Year 1.
54. Children undertake a range of mathematical learning, which allows them to explore shape, colour, pattern and size, and there are appropriate opportunities for less able children to practise and consolidate their understanding through more practical activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory** overall. There is insufficient evidence to judge the provision in the natural world, and children's understanding about the past and their awareness of their own cultures and those of others.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some elements of good provision in investigating and exploring materials and in ICT.
- Good teaching allows for activities that encourage problem solving and discussion.
- Good skills in ICT.
- Insufficient information to judge standards in all aspects of this area.

Commentary

55. It was not possible to observe all provision in this area of learning, but standards of work seen, show children to be meeting the standards expected for their age and there are some aspects of good teaching. Children learn how to join and attach materials, from their own explorations, using recycled materials and experiment with tools to help them. Their learning is enhanced because there is a wide range of equipment and tools from which to explore and because there is regular on-going support that helps children to persevere and to find their own solutions.
56. As part of the Year 1 topic on electricity, Reception children learn how to light a bulb and activate a buzzer by watching how circuits are made and by exploring for themselves. They are fascinated by the outcome, but this task is not sufficiently well matched to the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
57. Children do not sustain focus when building with wooden bricks because there is insufficient structure to bring about new learning. Too much emphasis is placed on 'child initiated play', which does not stimulate children's imagination. As a result, children do not recognise the appropriateness of this task and lose interest.

58. All children benefit from regular use of the computers and make good progress in this area. They manipulate the mouse to complete simple programs by clicking, highlighting and dragging icons and have used the keyboard for emergent writing.

Physical development

Provision in outdoor physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved provision for outdoor play.
- Improved resources.

Commentary

59. There were no lessons observed in this area during the inspection, therefore no judgement can be made about provision, teaching or about the standards achieved when using a range of small and large equipment or when engaged in imaginative activities.
60. The newly created outdoor learning environment provides a range of opportunities for children to develop their physical ability. They manipulate tricycles and scooters, climb and follow pathways and explore the properties of sand and water. This area is well used by children as a 'safe area' during playtimes and as part of their on-going learning. Observation of children using this area, shows that they have good levels of independence and confidence when using equipment and that they are developing an awareness of space, of themselves and others.

Creative development

Provision for creative development is **satisfactory** overall in the areas observed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Insufficient opportunities for children to engage in imaginative play.

Commentary

61. It was not possible to make a judgement about teaching and learning in all aspects of this area, however, examples of work seen indicate good teaching and learning.
62. Children make printing blocks from clay and use tools appropriately to design their patterns. Children are well focussed because they understand the purpose of their task, 'to design curtains', and are well supported by well-prepared and knowledgeable teaching.
63. There were no opportunities to observe children playing imaginatively, outdoor provision requires additional challenge to direct their play and further develop their imagination. Indoor provision was not available during the inspection. Children were not observed participating in music.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

English

The provision for English is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Underachievement by higher attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs.
- Standards in speaking and listening are good.
- Marking is inconsistently used to support and extend pupils' learning.
- Pupils attitudes and behaviour are very good in lessons.
- Developing role of the co-ordinator.

Commentary

64. The school has made insufficient progress since the last inspection, standards have fallen and the most recent test results show attainment to be below that expected for pupils aged seven and eleven. There is underachievement by higher attaining pupils, because of insufficient challenge, and by pupils with special educational needs because work is not appropriately well matched to meet their need. This deterioration has arisen from instability in the leadership of the school during recent years and as a consequence English, has suffered from a lack of innovation and development. The local education authority review in 2002, provided a clear list of actions that would bring about improvement. A start was made quickly, to provide expert help and assistance. Since September, the school has worked particularly hard to address these concerns and has implemented several changes to the planning and teaching of English throughout the school. As a result, standards of work seen during the inspection are starting to present a more satisfactory picture.
65. In speaking and listening, pupils are achieving well and this is a strength in English. Pupils develop a rich vocabulary because there are effective discussions about what words and phrases mean. For example, in Years 5 and 6 pupils share their ideas about Spike Milligan's nonsense poem 'On the Ning Nang Nong', and in Years 3 and 4, pupils consider the meaning of 'good' by suggesting alternatives, such as 'brave', 'strong', 'bold', to fit in with their story text. The very small class sizes throughout school, allows for all pupils to experience a range of opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with others and to respond to the contributions made by others.
66. Teachers have recently started to use fiction and poetry as a structure and focus for writing, but pupils are still not sufficiently secure in their knowledge of the work of different poets and have limited opportunities to plan and draft their work and to engage in imaginative writing. The school is aware of these issues and together with the support of a Literacy Consultant, has begun to improve the opportunities for writing across the school. The subject co-ordinator is working hard to analyse teachers' plans and pupils' work to monitor improvements in planning, teaching and learning. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that both infant and junior aged pupils are hampered in their writing because they do not have sufficient knowledge of spelling conventions to apply to their work. There is insufficient use of word banks and dictionaries to help pupils to spell unknown words and marking does not satisfactorily identify spelling errors to allow pupils to improve.
67. By Year 6 pupils enjoy reading, this stems from the use of well-chosen poems and fiction in lessons that appeal to their interests and from teaching that stimulates their imagination. For example, they are encouraged to stand when reading their class poem, to encourage them to be expressive and enthusiastic. More confident readers respond well to selecting their own reading books from the visiting library or from the school library and read with purpose during the school day. The school has recently introduced 'Guided Reading' but this is a very new initiative, which is not yet embedded throughout the school. In Year 2, pupils talk

enthusiastically about their 'favourite' author, Roald Dahl and read with confidence and independence because they have sufficient phonic awareness to decode unknown words.

68. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory across the school and this has affected their achievement in English. Systems for identifying, supporting and monitoring pupils with special needs have been identified by the school as key areas for improvement. Early Literacy Support has very recently been introduced and learning support assistants are currently providing more support for these pupils.
69. Throughout the school, there are elements of good and satisfactory teaching in lessons. The national literacy strategy is in the very early stages of implementation and as yet, staff are not secure in their teaching of this framework. In many lessons, too much time is spent on shared class work and plenary does not always allow for consolidating work covered, or for extending learning further. When teaching is good, pupils are made aware of the learning objectives for the lesson and are involved in assessing their own learning against these objectives at the end of the lesson. All teachers plan for the different ages and abilities within the class, but this is less effective for higher achieving pupils who are not sufficiently well challenged in their learning. During group work, teachers, particularly in Years 3 to 6, use their time well to circulate and support pupils in their learning and as a result of this individual attention, their learning is enhanced.
70. In Years 5 and 6, work is generally neat and well presented and scrutiny of pupils' books shows that they take pride in their work. However in younger classes, work is generally untidy, handwriting is poor and there are repeated errors. This is not addressed in marking, which is generally unsatisfactory because teachers do not make their expectations sufficiently clear to pupils and this is affecting their learning.
71. In all lessons, pupils have a positive attitude to their work; they are eager to contribute, well behaved and listen to the contributions of others. As they get older pupils readily take responsibility within the class, for example, they close the blinds,; move the board or adjust the overhead projector. Pupils' attitudes are good because teachers have worked hard to establish positive relationships with the pupils in their care. There is an air of mutual respect and staff welcome and value the contributions of all pupils.
72. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to analyse test results and to identify areas for further development. There are plans for the improvement of this area and these now need to be prioritised to allow sufficient time for their successful implementation. Current timetables show lessons to be too long, particularly for younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 and the additional time allocated for other aspects of English such as, guided reading, speaking and listening and extended reading and writing tasks, is not always used effectively.
73. There are improving links with English and other subjects in the curriculum particularly in ICT. For example, Year 2 pupils learn about alphabetical order through simple programs and older pupils use their word processing skills to reinforce and extend previous learning, to describe characters and to respond to poetry. Pupils have a range of opportunities for expressing their views and opinions and write for different purposes in other subjects. The school is aware of the benefits of extending these links and the impact it will have on improving pupils' standards in English.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **adequate**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good coverage of the four rules of number, although standards in other areas of the subject still need to be improved; pupils with higher and lower ability, including those with special educational needs, could achieve more.
- Improvements took too long to be implemented.
- Pupils are making better progress now because of the revised curriculum and greater attention that has been paid to improving teaching.
- A good range of assessment information which is now being used to identify where teaching and learning needs to improve.

Commentary

74. As at the time of the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average compared to those nationally. Teachers make sure that there is good coverage of number work but this is often at the expense of using mathematical skills to investigate problem solving. Over the last year, more attention has been given to applying mathematics in other subjects and to using data handling, both of which were issues in the last report. This has helped pupils develop their understanding. However, improvements took too long to happen and this is why the results in national tests have been below average. A rethinking of the subject curriculum is beginning to ensure that all areas are covered as pupils move through the school and so, progress has been more rapid. Despite this, achievement over the longer term has not been sufficient and so older pupils have not gained all the benefits that they could. There is still more work that needs to be done to ensure pupils with special educational needs are given the right type of work and those with higher ability are challenged to think about their mathematical knowledge.
75. Pupils with special educational needs have been given individual education plans that include small, measurable and achievable steps. However, these are not always relevant to the individual child and have only been in place relatively recently. As a result, there has been little impact yet from their implementation. Similarly, those with higher ability are not always challenged by the work they are given. This has meant that the results in national tests have not reflected the true potential of the groups and trends, albeit from small cohorts, have fluctuated over a number of years.
76. Teaching is satisfactory and so in individual lessons, progress is equally sound. In Years 1 and 2, pupils improve their number skills satisfactorily. There are many opportunities to try out mental calculations during lessons and to use the four rules. In Year 2, pupils can count in 5's and 10's and the teacher has encouraged them to become more adept by playing simple games. Ability ranges from those who can work out money problems, using both pounds and pence to those who have difficulty counting back from 26p. In their books, pupils have learnt about 2D shapes and about different types of measurement. Most of these skills are at the level expected for their age. Learning continues adequately through Years 3 to 6. The majority of pupils are working within the levels for their age but there are few examples of work above this, particularly in Years 3 and 4. There is more challenge in Years 5 and 6. In one lesson, the higher ability pupils were working on the nearest whole number to two decimal places whilst the lower ability pupils were learning about using whole numbers between 10 and 1000. The teacher had a clear idea about the range of ability and had set tasks and targets appropriate to the pupils' needs. As a consequence, older pupils are learning new facts. Work over the last term, however, is often directed closely by the teacher and has not allowed all pupils to work independently and thus use the knowledge they have gained, in new or unfamiliar situations.

77. The senior management team has worked hard over the last year to improve the opportunities for mathematics. This has included rethinking the timetable arrangements, identifying small groups that need support and encouraging teachers to use the widest possible resources and methods to inspire better learning. These are now beginning to have an impact and there are examples of good practice. In many lessons, pupils have targets set for them, they are shared at the beginning of lessons and recapped at the end. The range of assessment information has been gathered together, analysed and is now helping inform teachers about the correct level of challenge that is needed. In all the lessons seen, behaviour was good and often very good. Pupils enjoy their work and there were often lively discussions taking place. In discussions with pupils, a number say that this is their favourite subject.
78. There is now a much better understanding amongst teachers about the level of challenge that is needed and they have higher expectations about what pupils can achieve. This is reflected in the more challenging targets that have been set for the end of each key stage. All teachers are confident that these will be achieved and there will be a range of booster groups and other organised activities over the next few months.
79. The foundations for better learning have now been put in place. The curriculum is better organised, it provides a more consistent approach and teachers are not working in isolation from one another. Assessment has identified the weaknesses and where extra support is needed. There is an overall subject development plan that is aimed at quickly improving the attainment of pupils. With these improvements in place, there is already early signs of success and these are a capacity to improve further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. A number of good links have been made with other subjects such as information and communication technology, geography, history and design and technology. However, until recently, these were too dependent on individual teachers and there was no coherent plan. This is now in the process of being addressed, through the medium and longer term planning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good performance in national tests in Year 6.
- Good teaching that is enabling pupils, particularly those with average ability to learn well.
- Consistently better achievement over a number of years because of the teachers' confidence and good subject knowledge.
- Good marking that helps inform what should be learnt next and a developing awareness amongst all teachers of the need to assess the performance of individuals and to address weaknesses in the provision.

Commentary

81. Standards at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are average but a significant number of pupils in Year 5 and 6 are achieving standards above this. This is similar to the time of the last inspection. Unlike English and mathematics, pupils did well in science in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 6, where pupils performed above the average standard because all pupils gained either the average Level 4 or the higher Level 5. The reason for the better attainment and achievement is based around good teacher confidence in teaching the subject and a good balance between experimentation, investigation and learning new facts. Those with special educational needs are not given specific support but are often challenged by working with more able pupils. They do not benefit from work that is linked to their individual education plans, which would then help them improve literacy and numeracy skills more effectively.

82. Teaching is good and so pupils progress at least soundly in their learning and for those with average ability, they learn well. Pupils in Year 2 have been studying the contrasts between dark and light, linked to a real situation of making a dark cave. A number of the higher ability pupils can explain about sources of light and about how lighter materials reflect light better. They can explain how the colour and thickness of material also have an impact in the design. In this group, the majority are working within the nationally expected Level 2, although about a fifth of the year group are working above this.
83. Teachers ensure there is a good balance between learning knowledge and also practical experimentation and investigation. They encourage pupils to think about a secure prediction but also that this is not directed too closely. Because of this, pupils are able to make scientific choices. In Years 3 and 4, pupils are studying the effects caused by opaque and transparent materials. They use words such as 'blocking light' and are beginning to predict the results of their experiments from knowledge that they have already gained. In Year 5 and 6, pupils can explain the basic elements of evaporation and condensation and a lively discussion took place about the three states of matter. In all these lessons, there were good examples of teachers challenging the learning by asking pertinent and scientific questions. Pupils responded well to these and were inquisitive and eager to find out more.
84. Planning is discussed between teachers to build upon what has gone before. It links well to the units of study in the longer-term plan and through the nationally recognised schemes of work. Teachers have suitable expectations about what can be achieved and written work is presented neatly and correctly, using the normal conventions of the subject. Marking is undertaken conscientiously and, particularly in Years 5 and 6 is very informative, helping pupils to correct any mistakes and to further their own learning.
85. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and assessment is now being used to help define where there are weaknesses. A useful analysis of test results has raised issues about work in various strands of the subject and these are being given a higher profile within the secure subject development plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use made of ICT in other subjects and as a tool for learning.
- Good confidence levels of teachers, which are giving lessons a balance between learning new skills and reinforcing those already known; although more specific support needs to be given to those with special educational needs.
- A well developed improvement plan; although this has only recently been implemented.

Commentary

86. Standards in ICT are at the nationally expected level by the end of Year 2 but below the expected level by the end of Year 6. There has been an improvement in the provision for the subject since the last inspection but the developments have not fully impacted for the older pupils who have only recently had the opportunity to develop their skills at the correct level. Hardware provision has improved and teachers are now more confident in their ability to teach all the strands of the curriculum.
87. Teachers have received training in the use of ICT and this has brought a newfound confidence to the teaching. Lessons are planned to link other subjects. This has improved with specific reference made within the weekly plans as to how ICT will be developed. It has also helped to build up the confidence of those with special educational needs and for those who do not have

access to computers at home. No reference is made in the planning as to how the targets in individual education plans will be extended by the use of ICT in lessons or how support assistants will be used to extend the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

88. Teaching and learning are sound. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 are able to use keyboards for word processing and to draw pictures. They understand how computers help them in other subjects such as mathematics and humanities. They can look up information and use games and simulations to reinforce what they have been learning. In the junior years, there are some good examples of more extended use of word processing, the use of programmable toys and the use of spreadsheets. In a Year 5/6 class, for instance, the teacher enabled some pupils to use the computers to answer questions in their French lesson about café's. The pupils were enthusiastic and became excited trying to get 'seconds' by asking further questions in French.
89. There is a good balance between whole class sessions that explain a new skill and time for practising this during the week. As a result, pupils are able to build upon what they have already learnt. A sound lesson in Years 3 and 4 developed the use of ICT through a history topic on the Tudors. Interestingly, a number of pupils showed little previous understanding about word processing, although by the end of the lesson most were working at a level expected for their age. Good use was made of a digital projector to show the whole class different icons on the screen and how these could be used to enhance the work. The independent session was conducted well. Pupils concentrated hard and completed what was expected of them.
90. In discussion, pupils say that their work in ICT has improved over the last year and that before this they did not use the machines so often. Teachers have suitable expertise to teach all strands of the subject and to give sufficient challenge to those of higher ability. However, older pupils have not had these experiences for so long and have, therefore not achieved so well in the past. They are doing much better now.
91. Through the school and in pupils' own work, there are examples of most strands of the curriculum. The schemes of work are now secure and there is an improved understanding of linking work between and across different years. The number of computers is sufficient and in most of the lessons seen, the computers were used for some activities.
92. The co-ordinator has a good understanding about what needs improvement and there is a secure improvement plan. However, this is at an early stage of development and until recently, was not linked well to the whole school development plan. This meant that the co-ordinator was working to improve the subject but in isolation from whole school development. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection in the quality of hardware and in the provision for software and other peripherals.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. ICT is now used soundly through other areas of the curriculum, which has improved greatly since the last inspection. There are examples of computer work linked to most subjects and this is enabling pupils to reinforce their learning.

HUMANITIES

94. Only a limited number of lessons were seen in geography, history and religious education so no overall judgement can be made about the provision in humanities. However, from discussions with teachers and pupils, from a scrutiny of work and from displays around the school, it can be seen that National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled and a suitable range of opportunities are offered. Provision has remained at a similar level to that at the time of the last inspection.

95. In **geography**, pupils are provided with first hand experiences from visits and visitors. The local environment is studied in some detail, through a series of topics and themes. These have recently been redefined as the long-term planning was not sufficiently coherent and did not follow the national guidelines for schemes of work. This is beginning to ensure that pupils build upon the key elements, such as mapping and comparative geographical locations, through each year. A good example of this is the work that was undertaken with older juniors about building a high speed rail link. This involved written and oral discussions about the positive and negative aspects on the local environment. The teacher had carefully prepared the work and linked it well to literacy skill building. There is adequate coverage of all major strands.
96. One **history** lesson was seen in Year 2. The clear planning prompted a discussion about aspects of home life long ago. Various artefacts such as pottery hot water bottles and a cobbler's last, provided intrigue and interest. The pupils responded very positively and asked lots of questions. They were able to share ideas and there were obvious links back to previous history lessons. Personal development was fostered well. Previous work has included study about the Great Fire of London and Samuel Pepys. Older pupils have been given many opportunities to look at life during the Blitz and the Second World War. There is good evidence of brainstorming ideas and discussions that have taken place. The marking here is very thorough and informative and pupils are encouraged to write down what they have learnt in different lessons. As in geography, the new, long-term two year curriculum map is helping to provide more opportunity to learn about the key elements of chronology and important historical facts. The two subjects are prioritised for development within the school improvement plan as a way of making the curriculum more exciting and relevant.
97. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in **religious education** are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a suitable understanding about major Christian festivals and celebrations and can relate them to those of other religions. There is very little written evidence for those in Years 1 and 2 but in Years 3 and 4, pupils have studied the story of creation and the birth of Jesus. They have linked this to Judaism and through their study of journeys, have looked at their own important journeys and those of the shepherds. Work continues to develop in Years 5 and 6, where pupils have looked at different beliefs, precious objects and the importance of understanding emotion. They have been involved in role-play exercises and are willing to define their own feelings with little self-consciousness. There are good links to the local church, where a study was made about Christian symbols. The marking is sometimes very informative such, as when the teacher helped build upon what was already known by writing *'in fact the local church is not built in the shape of a cross even though many cathedrals are.'* Assemblies also form an important part of work within religious education. The local vicar is involved on a regular basis and there is a coherent list of themes that link worship and lessons. Other visitors are encouraged to add an extra dimension and resources are used to provide further interest. From the work in books, it can be seen that the overall curriculum still needs further work to ensure that the nationally agreed guidelines and the locally agreed syllabus are sufficiently well combined. Monitoring by the diocese has already established a list of priorities, which are to be worked on as part of the school improvement plan.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

98. Few lessons were observed in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. It is therefore not possible to make a firm judgement about standards or teaching and learning in these subjects. As at the last inspection, provision for each area is satisfactory because every class follows a planned series of lessons to ensure the National Curriculum is followed. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to teachers and subject co-ordinators about their work and to pupils about what they had learned and looked at examples of work.
99. One lesson was observed in **art and design**. Displays and sketchbooks in Years 1 to 6 provided limited evidence to show the quality of teaching of different skills. In Years 3 and 4,

sketchbooks indicate that pupils have explored different drawing techniques such as blending, use of shadow and the how to use a pencil for different effects and pupils in Years 5 and 6 have drawn portraits using pencil sketches. There is insufficient evidence in Years 3 to 6 of pupils' progress in art and design and therefore it is not possible to judge whether the school has improved its teaching of art and design skills for these year groups since the last inspection. In the one lesson sampled in Year 1, pupils achieve well because the teaching is good. Work is well planned and builds on from pupils' previous learning because they use their own printing block designs to make curtains for their homes. The teacher uses her knowledge of the subject to demonstrate skills and techniques and as a result, all pupils understand the task and are well focussed. Good support is provided by the learning support assistant who develops their understanding of repeated pattern and this enhances their learning. In Year 2, pupils have explored paint effects and colour mixing to paint their homes.

100. There are developing links with art and design and other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use their topic in design and technology as a focus for their work and in Years 5 and 6, pupils are making stylised drawings from an African text, 'The Dancer'.
101. The inspection found insufficient evidence to make judgements on pupils' achievement or on teaching and learning in **design and technology** in Years 1 to 4. One lesson was observed and few examples of finished work were seen. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use their knowledge of previous work to help them to design character biscuits linked to their work on the Jewish Festival 'Purim'. They know the basic ingredients required for biscuits and understand that if the biscuit is too thin it will burn. There are good opportunities for pupils to share their designs with others and to make modifications. *'I have chosen cinnamon because it's quite spicy and the character I have chosen is cruel.'* Teaching is good because the lesson is well planned and pacy; staff use their time effectively to question pupils about their work, which results in all pupils making good achievement. There are good links with ICT, as pupils use graphics to design their biscuits and to make a net for their gift box.
102. In Years 3 and 4, evidence of pupils work is limited and there is no indication as to whether pupils have evaluated similar products, explored different materials or methods of joining and combining parts. Pupils' evaluations of their own work are limited and work generally shows unsatisfactory development of the skills, knowledge and understanding in this area. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good links with design and technology and other subjects to support their home designs. They explore their local environment and take photographs of different types of houses and explore pattern in art.
103. In **music**, the curriculum is appropriately planned to ensure that the demands of the National Curriculum are being met. There is evidence of pupils progress in singing in the juniors, they sing 'rounds' in Year 3, learn about 'ostinato' in Year 4 and consider the overall effect when singing and using percussion instruments. In the one lesson observed in Years 3 and 4 pupils explore the ostinato patterns in the song Michael Finnigan, by clapping, chanting and using percussion instruments. Pupils demonstrate good understanding because they have explored these patterns in a range of different songs. Pupils have benefited from visiting musicians and have experienced performing alongside these musicians, this also allows pupils the opportunity to explore music and instruments from other cultures. Pupils listen to music in assembly and older pupils in Years 5 and 6 keep a 'music journal' to record their opinions about a range of music, including pupils' own selections. This contributes to pupils' interest in music by providing them with experiences of a range of musical styles.
104. All pupils perform at concerts and use instruments to accompany poetry and to identify rhyme. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 talk enthusiastically about singing in rounds and how they use instruments as an accompaniment.
105. The school allocates the minimum of time to **physical education** (PE) and this affects the breadth of work that can be covered. In the one lesson observed pupils in Years 3 and 4 use 'Starlight Express' as a stimulus for dance. They are enthusiastic because they know the

story and enjoy the music and as a result, they maintain good focus throughout the lesson. Teaching is generally unsatisfactory because the lesson lacks pace and pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable. Pupils' evaluations of their own work and that of others are in the early stages of development, focussing on likes and dislikes, but pupils enjoy performing in front of one another and benefit from teacher support to help them to improve the control in their movements. Pupils work well in small groups, they readily share ideas and as a result they achieve as well as the pace of lesson allows. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 participate in swimming. The provision for PE is enhanced through regular specialist teaching and from after school activities, which focus on team games.

106. There have been improvements in the leadership of these subjects since the last inspection. Co-ordinators are developing their role and have identified planned action for improvement in their areas. Resources are generally satisfactory, with the exception of gymnastic equipment for older junior pupils. The school now has a curriculum map, which clearly identifies areas to be taught in each subject and ensures that the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers are supported in their planning from QCA units of work and from regular monitoring by the co-ordinators.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

107. Lessons were only sampled in this area and so no overall judgement can be given about the provision in the subject. However, the informal arrangements, in conjunction with more formal policies, are ensuring that pupils are given appropriate opportunities. There are a number of discussion times used and in other subjects, pupils are encouraged to give their own personal views. The new headteacher is very committed to providing a much wider range of initiatives to help develop a sense of citizenship and responsibility for the community. A first step is the introduction of the school council. They have now met in a formal meeting and have drawn up various suggestions on which to work. The pupils have relished this extra responsibility and other pupils have been involved through brainstorming sessions.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	5
How inclusive the school is	5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	5

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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