

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS MORE RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Walderslade

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118769

Headteacher: Mrs S Williams

Reporting inspector: Martin Creasey
2451

Dates of inspection: 6th – 9th May 2003

Inspection number: 247961

Full 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 aided
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bleakwood Road Walderslade Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr C Keen
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2451	Martin Creasey	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils? What the school should do to improve further
9569	Jan Leaning	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21094	John Brennan	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
18346	Rod Bristow	Team inspector	English Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?
17826	June Punnett	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Art and design Design and technology	
18466	Kevin Hodge	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Geography History	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More School is a Roman Catholic, voluntary-aided primary school. There are 370 pupils on roll, 181 boys and 189 girls. The school is situated in an area of mixed owner-occupied and rented housing in Walderslade, but the catchment of the school is much wider, taking Catholic pupils from the Southwark Diocese in the surrounding Medway local authority and from further afield in Kent. St Thomas More School is a larger than the average primary school, with a figure for free school meals matching the national average. There are very few pupils whose first language is not English. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and statements (SEN) is about the same as the national average. There is a lower than average turnover of pupils. However, since the last inspection there have been significant changes to staffing, including a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. There are 13 new members of staff out of a total of 15 appointed in the past two years. The pupils entering school in Reception have generally below the expected levels of attainment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a well led, effective school providing a good quality of education and good value for money. The headteacher has established clear aims and values which promote teaching that is at times very good and even excellent. Pupils make good progress, including those with SEN and attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of the school. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy has meant that attainment in other subjects is satisfactory. Pupils clearly enjoy school; their behaviour and attitudes are very good and their attendance is good. Parents overwhelmingly support the school and there are busy times at the beginning and end of the day where they like to chat to teachers and the headteacher about the school and its activities. The school is supported by an effective governing body.

What the school does well

- The attainment of pupils in mathematics and science in the tests in 2002 at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school develops positive attitudes and values in pupils which are reflected in their very high standards of behaviour.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher with a clear vision shared with staff, governors and parents that emphasises the importance of high achievement within a caring Christian ethos.
- The provision and support for pupils with SEN are very good.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils is very good.
- The school supports and cares for pupils very well and has very good systems for measuring their attainment and progress.
- The parents have very positive views of the school.

What could be improved

- The school needs to ensure that all the teaching reflects the highest quality observed by developing consistency in marking work, developing more independence in learning and preparing work to meet the needs of all abilities.
- The provision of appropriate outdoor learning facilities for the reception pupils that meet the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Maintain the standards observed in reading so that they show improvement in the end of Key Stage 1 tests when compared to similar schools.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in November 1997. Improvement has been good since then, with all key issues addressed. Standards in design and technology have been raised to a satisfactory level; the full National Curriculum has been implemented; there are clear management roles and responsibilities. Subject co-ordination is in place providing written guidance on planning and teaching, which means that there is now at least satisfactory progression in pupils' learning in all subjects. Spiritual and cultural education is now very good. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is also very good. Professional

development has been given a high priority and all staff have attended training, particularly that funded by the government for improving the teaching of ICT. Accommodation has improved and further building is imminent to add to the quality of provision.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	B	C	C
mathematics	B	A	A	A
science	B	B	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Children enter the school in Reception with attainment in line with the local average but below that expected nationally. They make good progress and most enter Year 1 having successfully completed the Foundation Stage Early Learning Goals.¹

In Key Stage 1 pupils make steady progress, and in the national tests in 2002 they attained in line with the national average in reading and writing and above in mathematics. When compared to those in similar schools, those with the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals between eight per cent and 20 per cent, standards were well above average in mathematics, average in writing and below in reading. The teacher assessment in science showed standards to be above the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was above average in mathematics, average in reading and below average in writing.²

The 2002 test results in mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 show standards to be well above both the national average and that for similar schools. This is a steady improvement since 2000. In English the results are in line with the national average when compared to both national averages and similar schools. This is a decline since 2000. However, there were a significant number of pupils with SEN in the last Year 6. These pupils were allowed to have an adult read the questions to them in mathematics and science tests but not in English and this affected overall attainment. Last year the school achieved the targets set for mathematics and science and narrowly missed the challenging English target. The percentages of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 were well above the national average in mathematics and science and about average in English. The school's overall trend of Key Stage 2 results is in line with the national trend.³

The observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show standards in Year 6 to be above average in English and mathematics and about average in science. The mathematics observed in Key Stage 1 showed standards to be good. In all other subjects pupils make satisfactory progress and attain expected levels in

¹ QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals' for children in this stage of education. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of six. There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development.

² It is the national expectation that pupils should achieve Level 2 and above in the Year 2 National Curriculum assessments. Level 2 is divided into 2c, 2b and 2a, with 2a being the higher level.

³ It is the national expectation that pupils should achieve Level 4 or higher in the National Curriculum assessments for pupils in Year 6.

both key stages. Pupils with SEN attain in line with their capabilities and often above. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. The very few pupils with a first language other than English also attain in line with their capabilities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy the school and are proud to share their work and other activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There were no instances of poor behaviour and the school has a calm, friendly atmosphere, an improvement on the previous inspection findings.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The older pupils help and support the younger ones particularly at lunchtime. All pupils respect each other's feelings.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average and there are few unauthorised absences.

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are strengths of the school, as is the quality of the relationships.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching throughout the school is good, with a high percentage of good and very good lessons observed. Teaching is strongest in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, where some excellent teaching was seen. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are well taught in the school and a high proportion of this teaching is good or better. Consequently pupils progress well and are attaining standards that are above average in Year 6 in these subjects. The best teaching is exemplified by teachers who plan for all abilities in the class and develop pupils' skills in solving problems, encouraging them to work independently and evaluate what they do well and what requires improvement. Not all teaching reaches these high standards. Teachers do not maintain consistency in some planning and marking, particularly in Key Stage 1 where most marking is thorough, but not all teachers make clear to pupils what they must do to achieve higher standards in their work. Pupils with SEN are well taught and make good progress in line with expectations or better. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this supports the teaching and learning. The learning-support assistants make a good contribution to the teaching and learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is priority for English and mathematics within a broad and balanced curriculum, an improvement since the previous inspection. There are good extra-curricular activities that enhance learning across the school. For Key Stage 2 pupils only there are many after school clubs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The pupils with SEN are included in all aspects of the curriculum with carefully planned work set out in individual education plans (IEP)
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)	There are very few pupils with EAL, but their needs are met and they are included in the school's curriculum planning.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The curriculum is enriched by the very good provision for these aspects both in the lessons and across the school.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school takes very good care of the pupils, providing a safe, secure environment and ensuring that academic progress is carefully monitored.
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The school works well with parents and provides opportunities to meet both formally at arranged parents' evenings and informally before and after school when teachers and senior staff are available. The Foundation Stage curriculum is in place but restricted by the lack of a fully enclosed external area which is due to be constructed in this financial year.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The very good leadership of the headteacher provides a clear focus for the school within a set of established values. The main aim for the senior management team is to improve standards in teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors are committed to raising standards within a strong Christian ethos, which values relationships and the personal and academic needs of all pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher analyses the details of individual pupils' attainment and progress. The headteacher and colleagues are involved in observing the work of the school and use all this information to plan and implement school improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school has sufficient resources and uses them well to meet the learning needs of pupils.

There is a full staffing complement, but there has been a high turnover of staff in recent years. This has been extremely well managed by the headteacher and governors and all teachers are well supported in their roles. The recent urgent priority to build and resource the ICT suite has meant that other subjects now require resources to be replaced and improved. Governors have a very good understanding of the principles of best value and apply them well to the priorities in the improvement plan, most recently the ICT suite.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like school and make good progress. The behaviour of pupils is good and they develop mature, responsible attitudes. Parents feel that the teaching is good and that teachers have high expectations of pupils and set the right amount of homework. The school is well managed and led. The staff are comfortable with parents' questions or problems and deal with them well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More activities outside of lessons. Some parents feel that they would like more information about their children's progress.

The inspection findings support the positive views parents have of the school. There are many after school activities, as most parents recognise, but they are not available to Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils. Parents of these children would like some consideration given to activities for them. Most parents feel they have many opportunities to discuss their children's progress. However, the school has changed the timings of the formal meetings this year and parents are concerned about this. The school will review the situation at the end of the school year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school assesses the attainment of children when they enter the Reception classes, using a nationally-based test prepared for all schools in the Medway area. This shows that on entry children are at levels that are about average for Medway schools, but when judged against the national expectations most children have below average levels of attainment. A few are identified as having the potential for high attainment. Children are making good progress in their learning. A good proportion are likely to reach the goals set nationally for the end of the Reception Year in their communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development.
2. In the 2002 national end-of-key-stage tests, attainment in reading and writing in Year 2 and in English in Year 6 was considered to be in line with that of all pupils nationally. When compared with the situation in similar schools the reading at Key Stage 1 was below average and the writing was average. Standards in English at Key Stage 2 were in line with those in similar schools. The headteacher has analysed the results and in order to address the lower standards in reading in the infants, especially when compared with those in similar schools, a new reading programme and a change in strategies have been introduced together with improved booster groups in Key Stage 2. Standards observed during the inspection show these to be having an effect, as reading is judged to be average in Key Stage 1 and English above average at the end of Key Stage 2. In 2002 the school was very close to meeting the targets set for pupils achieving the typical Level 4 by the age of 11 and is expected to achieve its targets this year. There is a recognition that more emphasis should be given to encouraging pupils to perform at the higher Level 5 if standards are to improve to above national levels and those in similar schools.
3. In mathematics standards are above what would normally be expected for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6. The tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show attainment to be above the national average and well above that found in similar schools. The attainment in the 2002 Key Stage 2 tests showed pupils to be well above average in both measures. Teachers are good at teaching basic mathematical skills, so that pupils' computational skills are particularly strong. However, their ability to solve problems is not as good. The emphasis on number work helps pupils reach high standards in the National Curriculum tests. In the work observed at the end of the key stages pupils achieved above average standards overall, but did not attain such high standards in using and applying mathematics. However, the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well and the recent concentration on teaching problem solving is beginning to pay dividends. The Year 6 pupils attained the targets set in the 2002 tests and the current group are on course to reach the increased targets this year. Standards in mathematics have improved since the previous inspection at the end of both key stages.
4. In science the 2002 teacher assessments for pupils aged seven showed their attainment compared well with the national average, but the proportion reaching the higher than expected level was below the national average. The work seen suggests that, by the time the pupils are seven, they reach the standards expected nationally. The results of last year's national testing for pupils aged 11 shows attainment to be above both the national average and that of similar schools. The proportion attaining higher levels also compared well in both measures. In the last inspection the pupils were judged to have reached standards above those expected and these high standards were maintained in last year's test results. The standard of the pupils' work seen during this inspection is not as high, but they reach the nationally expected levels.
5. The standards observed in all other subjects are in line with those expected nationally by the end of both key stages. Since the last inspection PE has shown a small decline from the above average standards described previously. Design and technology (DT) has improved from being below national expectations and in all other subjects standards have been maintained.
6. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. The very few pupils who have a language other than English as a first language attain levels in line with their capabilities.

7. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and often achieve good standards for their age and abilities. Their individual education plans are clearly focused and plan for progress day-by-day and week-by-week. Pupils are provided with a full range of opportunities and their self-esteem is high. They work well together, are well behaved and proud of their achievements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes, values and relationships are very good indeed. These are strengths of the school and an improvement on the good standards found during the previous inspection. They are founded on the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to have thoughtful and positive attitudes, which they do. The school has appropriate aims supported by a clear mission statement. The Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the needs of others, to develop lively, enquiring minds and to care for those less fortunate. The school is a happy place where children's individual progress and development are recognised and valued. Pupils enjoy school, work hard, concentrate well and are polite, courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. This makes a positive contribution to the high standards in the school.
9. Behaviour in the school is very good. The behaviour policy is used effectively and there are clear strategies for dealing with bullying, which is not an issue in the school. Pupils settle quickly to work, listen carefully and concentrate on their tasks. Rewards and sanctions are fairly and consistently applied, pupils understand the very high expectations and parents are involved at an early stage to support any action that might be required to improve behaviour. No bullying was seen during the inspection and pupils know that it is unacceptable. They told inspectors *'It (bullying) is not allowed'*. There have been no exclusions.
10. At play and at lunchtimes, pupils are supervised by a sufficient number of adults, there is playground marking for games and equipment such as skipping ropes and balls and, when the weather is good, a large open field. Although play is lively, no inappropriate behaviour was seen and pupils organise their own activities well. Pupils from all backgrounds and cultures are seamlessly integrated, both in lessons and at play. All Year 6 pupils are prefects and have a central role at lunchtimes in caring for the younger children, which they do very well. Pupils understand the rules and know the difference between right and wrong. In conversation they said that without rules *'people would be hurt and nasty to each other'* and *'nobody would learn anything'*. They are appreciative of the house points and merit marks. Each week there is a celebration assembly, when good work and other efforts are recognised. There is no evidence of litter or graffiti. This very good provision enhances learning opportunities.
11. Relationships in the school are very good indeed; adults are good role models and know the children and their families very well. Respect for each individual, children and adults, is encouraged. Pupils take registers to the office, put out equipment and look after the younger children. There is a house system and all pupils in Year 6 vote for house captains. Pupils have raised substantial funds for those less fortunate, both locally and nationally, including charities such as CAFOD, the National Heart Foundation and Water Aid; individual pupils have organised fund raising to support the Blue Peter Appeal.
12. Social, personal education and citizenship are taught across the school in lessons, through time provided to reflect on life in school and personal development and in assemblies. There are many visitors. Each year has at least one visit and there is a residential visit to the Isle of Wight for pupils in Year 6. Pupils work well in groups and in most classes independent learning is encouraged. Each pupil's personal and academic progress is monitored, targets are agreed with the pupils and these are regularly tracked.
13. These very good values and standards ensure that pupils can achieve their best in lessons and around the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good and is a significant factor in helping pupils achieve well. The school has maintained a good standard of teaching since the last inspection and, in some important aspects, added further to the teachers' range of skills. Key skills in English and mathematics are taught well, particularly in the juniors and improvements in the teaching of ICT are increasingly helping all pupils achieve their potential.
15. The quality of teaching and learning for children in the Reception classes is good. Children were particularly well motivated to learn through challenging, well-paced, imaginative and lively activities such as number games and the visit to the animal centre. The main strength lies in teachers' and teaching assistants' secure understanding of the active way that young children learn and the need to provide a wide range of practical and relevant activities. Planning is good and the teaching areas are well organised. There are gaps in the creative area of learning where children have no ready access to musical instruments and there is too much adult intervention in children's artwork.
16. The provision for the outdoor play area is unsatisfactory. There are comprehensive plans by the school to improve this with the funds recently released by the LEA. The teaching of physical development occasionally lacks challenge for the more co-ordinated children but is satisfactory. Tasks are suitably challenging and expectations of children's behaviour are high. Through careful observation, teachers and teaching assistants know the children well and use this knowledge to plan the next steps in learning. Assessment is satisfactory and record keeping is good. Teachers have recently received training on the new national assessment profiles that will be trialled later this year. Teamwork is good and the teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Daily opportunities to talk with teachers and the use of a home-school contact book further promote harmonious links between home and school.
17. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good and planning identifies challenging activities that are well matched to their needs. Teachers make very good use of individual learning programmes in English and mathematics to teach basic skills. Pupils are fully involved in all learning activities and their self-esteem is high, especially when their contributions are highly valued. Effective partnerships are established between teachers and teaching assistants, ensuring that all are aware of the learning needs of each pupil. They contribute significantly to the quality of learning and the good progress made, whether during class lessons or in targeted support groups.
18. Since the last inspection the school has successfully introduced the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. Daily lessons in English and mathematics are a part of the work of each class and attainment in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy has risen accordingly. Throughout the school, teachers achieve a good balance of whole class and group work, matching methods recommended by each of the strategies. This represents an improvement in the school's teaching arrangements.
19. Many teachers, including those who have joined the school more recently, have a good knowledge of successful teaching methods. Some teachers, especially in the juniors, provide pupils with opportunities to work independently on tasks that require them to make decisions about how to proceed. In an English lesson in Year 4, for example, pupils worked in pairs using words, music and computers to evoke the atmosphere of the seaside. In a mathematics lesson in Year 6, the teacher led pupils to work systematically and in an investigational manner, as they searched for solutions to complex problems. The use of such methods is not consistent and teaching in some lessons reflects a lack of confidence, borne of uncertainty, to give pupils scope for their own thoughts and invention. This leads to an over-direction of pupils and the provision of uninspiring tasks. In these circumstances learning is only satisfactory.
20. In some classes an over-reliance on commercially-produced worksheets restricts opportunities for pupils to record their work in their own way and to practise skills they have learnt in literacy and numeracy. In some instances the same work is given to all pupils irrespective of their ability and the progress of more-able pupils is slow. For example, for most of a Year 2 mathematics lesson the most able pupils were required to complete the same worksheet as other pupils, despite having abilities beyond its scope. They were then given work that matched their level of understanding, but saw this as an occupying activity and its potential to move learning significantly was lost.

21. Most teachers have a secure knowledge of subjects in the National Curriculum which is reflected in good planning. In most instances plans identify what pupils are to learn and, in the best examples, these objectives are modified to cater for groups of pupils with different abilities. Plans for lessons are frequently linked to earlier work and lessons often start with useful discussion about the objective for the day and reminders about what has been covered previously. Teachers' explanations are clear and questioning is often used well to increase pupils' understanding. Some teachers are beginning to give more thought to the conclusion of lessons, and in the most successful lessons draw pupils into reflecting on what they have learnt. For example, at the end of an excellent PE lesson in Year 4 the teacher went beyond asking pupils to think about what they had learnt, requiring them to provide her with proof. One pupil remarked, *'The game was better because we improved our team work'*.
22. Teachers invariably manage pupils well, creating a good climate for learning. In many lessons teachers can confidently assume that pupils will work hard even when not directly watched over. Some teachers make the most of this by working with a particular group of pupils for a short, intensive period. This enables them to probe understanding and deepen learning. However, a lack of confidence, evident in some teachers, misses this opportunity and an unnecessary amount of time is spent patrolling the whole class, checking on an individual basis that pupils know what to do.
23. An increasing number of teachers use computers and other forms of technology to show pupils what is expected of them. This reflects a rising level of confidence in the use of technology. However, although there are some good examples of teachers using computers to aid study in other subjects, practice is patchy and heavily dependent on individual expertise. Teachers work hard to ensure that work is always marked, offering encouragement and letting pupils know when they have met the learning objective. Comparatively little marking makes clear what pupils need to do to improve.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

24. The quality and range of opportunities provided by the school are good. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection so that all subjects are planned and taught appropriately. All the aspects of the curriculum required by law are met. There is guidance provided for teachers on the content, planning and timing of each subject and this means that pupils make steady progress in their learning throughout the school, another improvement since the last inspection.
25. Provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Since September 2000, reception children follow the nationally recommended Foundation Stage curriculum, which covers six areas of learning. These are personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development.
26. The school addresses all these areas in planning and teaching, using both national and the school's own curriculum guidance. Only in the area of 'physical development' for children in the Reception class does the school not meet the entire recommended curriculum. The outside activity area is inadequate, not securely fenced and poorly resourced for large play equipment. Although teachers do take children outside for some activities, they are not able fully to develop their independence and explore all aspects of physical development. There is no appropriate space for them to make choices across the full range of large climbing apparatus, wheeled toys or natural materials. There are plans to begin constructing and resourcing this area in the current financial year.
27. The nationally required literacy and numeracy programmes are fully in place in the school's curriculum and contribute significantly to the good teaching and learning observed in both key stages. There are good examples of teachers including the skills learnt in these subjects in other curriculum planning. The opportunity for pupils to measure and calculate each others' shadows in science in Year 3, extended writing in history in Year 6, and the use of speaking and listening to evaluate their work in PE in Year 4, are some examples of this development.
28. There is equality of opportunity for all pupils in all aspects of provision. There are effective policies to ensure that all groups of pupils are included appropriately. The school has good provision for ensuring that sex education is taught to the older pupils through a planned programme approved by governors.

Other family issues are covered with younger pupils through the work they do in personal, social and health education.

29. The curriculum provision for pupils with SEN is good. They are fully included in all school activities and given full access to the National Curriculum activities, which are extended by activities outside the normal school day for Key Stage 2 pupils. Their needs are recognised early and put into their individual education plans (IEP) as challenging but achievable targets. Pupils are only withdrawn from class activities when receiving carefully-planned, structured teaching which occurs either during literacy lessons or at times which are modified to avoid pupils always missing the same class activities.
30. Parents appreciate the amount of homework given and are eager to support their children's learning.
31. The provision of out of school clubs is very good in Key Stage 2, with opportunities for pupils to participate in sport, music and other activities such as gardening.
32. Pupils in each year group also have access to a good range of educational visits. The oldest pupils visit centres for outdoor and adventurous activities, which contribute positively to their social and physical development. All year groups visit museums, art galleries and local areas of geographical interest and education centres, which provide them with experiences that contribute to the standards they attain in a range of subjects. During the inspection the reception pupils visited a farm, extending the work they do in knowledge and understanding of the world. These represent good provision in line with that found in many similar schools.
33. The provision made for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. There is a structured programme that is taught each week to pupils throughout the school that does much to meet their needs and help them to address some of the challenges they face. This programme includes drugs awareness education for Year 6 pupils, involving their parents at key points during the course.
34. The quality of links with the community and with other schools and partner institutions is good. Pupils visit the schools to which they transfer in the term before they leave St Thomas More. There are good links with the local playgroup which occupies a bus located in the church car park beside the school. Children make visits before beginning school and teachers liaise well with playgroup workers, thus easing the transition from one part of the Foundation Stage to the next.
35. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. This means the good standards achieved in the last inspection have been improved.
36. The provision made for pupils' moral education is very good. They know and observe the difference between right and wrong. Their understanding of this is enhanced greatly when discussions during personal development time allow them to focus on behaviour and its impact. Assemblies also provide clear moral messages for pupils. There were no incidents of poor behaviour during the inspection and pupils showed a highly developed understanding of their responsibilities towards each other and adults.
37. The provision made for social education is very good. Throughout the school pupils work well together, caring for and supporting each other. The older pupils show a great sense of caring for their school and younger or less able colleagues. The Year 6 pupils help the younger pupils during lunchtimes and participate in the smooth running of these sessions.
38. The opportunities and provision for spiritual education are very good. In a Year 3 lesson pupils were amazed at how their shadows were changing as they measured them at different times of the day; pupils in Year 3 clapped spontaneously, demonstrating their delight when a teacher played a violin solo for them. There were many other occasions when pupils demonstrated awe and wonder and reflected on their feelings and emotions.
39. Provision for pupils' cultural education is very good. Their understanding of their own and other cultures is developed well, as is their understanding of the values and beliefs of other faiths. The display on Islam in one classroom helped pupils understand another faith and culture, a carefully

chosen focus, given the situation prevailing in Iraq at the time of the inspection. Pupils' art in the hall also demonstrated the way pupils are helped to appreciate other cultures, as did the collection of artefacts from Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Jamaica seen in classrooms.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school provides good care for its pupils within a firm, consistent atmosphere where all children are valued and respected and can feel happy and secure. Teachers and learning-support assistants know the children and their families very well. Children are encouraged to become independent learners, to do their best, to develop good relationships and to take a pride in their work, which they do. Pupils are supervised by a sufficient number of adults at play and at lunchtimes. Outside agencies, for example, the education welfare officer and the school nurse, give good support to the school which helps children to achieve high standards in their work.
41. The child-protection policy is good with clear guidelines; it follows the local education authority's guidance and meets statutory requirements. The school liaises with the area child-protection committee if necessary. There is a named contact person and the headteacher has an overview. Staff have had training and are aware of procedures.
42. The school promotes very good behaviour through a shared and successfully implemented behaviour policy, which contains a clear set of aims. There are many rewards, which include praise, stickers and merits. There is a celebration assembly each week, at which good behaviour and outside achievements are recognised. During the inspection this was a very pleasant occasion. There are very few sanctions, but they are appropriate and parents are involved if necessary. Procedures to prevent bullying are in place and respect and tolerance towards others, their beliefs and cultures are promoted. The pupils play and work together very well and nobody is left out.
43. The policy for health and safety is good and clearly set out and has comprehensive information. The headteacher is the named person, there is a health-and-safety governor and a risk assessment is carried out and recorded, as are any incidents. Substances are stored safely. There is a strong sense of the importance of the health and safety of all in the school community. There is no evidence of litter or graffiti and pupils' work is carefully prepared for the very good displays around the school. Members of the gardening club help maintain the 'litter-free' environment.
44. There are members of staff qualified in first aid and there is first-aid equipment around the school. There is no medical room and space is at a premium, but children are carefully looked after and parents called in if their children are unwell. An accident book is kept and parents are notified in case of head injury. Random fire drills take place each half term. Fire, physical education and electrical equipment is checked regularly to ensure pupils' safety.
45. Personal social and health education, including citizenship, is an integral part of the school's ethos; it is delivered across the curriculum in discrete time, in science and in assemblies.
46. There is a drugs awareness document and a good sex education policy that provides for teaching in Years 5 and 6 and includes children's questions being answered openly and honestly as they arise. Visitors, for example, the school nurse and the community policeman, are invited into school to support this provision. There are good opportunities for pupils in Years 3 - 6 to develop their team and social skills in lunchtime and after-school activities. Records of achievements contain pupils' best work both in and out of school and records of their personal progress and development are kept.
47. The school has good arrangements for measuring and recording pupils' attainment and progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. This is set out in a good policy for assessment. The yearly English and mathematics test results are recorded and stored for every pupil, including the national test scores at the end of Years 2 and 6. The school also uses a range of other standardised tests in order to assess formally the attainment and progress of pupils. The teachers mark these tests and the basic information is passed to the headteacher, who carries out analysis and provides feedback to teachers on a regular basis. The headteacher has been the co-ordinator for this work and has established good systems that are clear and easy for teachers

to use. Improvements this year in the way reading is taught in Key Stage 1 have been developed following the analysis of pupils' work and results in tests.

48. In all subjects teachers judge pupils' achievement against the nationally expected levels for each age group and formally record the assessments. This information forms the basis for the annual teachers' assessment of pupils. The relevant subject co-ordinator uses the information to inform the planning of priorities for improvement.
49. Teachers use this information about pupils' attainment and progress well. They group pupils according to their levels of attainment and set work that best meets their learning needs. The previous assessment of pupils forms the basis for challenging tasks and individual learning targets. This information is also used to set up the groups of pupils who receive additional literacy and numeracy work in order to improve their attainment. Last year the school was successful in increasing the numbers of pupils attaining both the nationally expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics National Curriculum tests.
50. The headteacher reports to governors regularly on the progress pupils are making and the standards achieved. The governors are also briefed on the predicted end-of-Key-Stage-2 targets for each age group from Year 2 to Year 5, thus facilitating the governors' statutory role in target setting each autumn term for the next year's Year 6.
51. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and all statutory requirements are met. Individual needs, whether learning, emotional or behavioural, are identified early and teaching and support are managed and organised effectively and fairly. Targets for improvement are shared with parents and carers and gains in skills, knowledge and understanding are well recorded. Learning-support assistants maintain very good records and share progress with class teachers. Targets are discussed and shared with pupils and their achievements are celebrated and shared with others. Outside agencies are used very well and there are good links with secondary schools to provide a smooth transition.
52. The policy for attendance is good and clear. Parents understand the expectations, which are also outlined in the school prospectus. Registers are kept according to requirements and are regularly monitored. Pupils receive certificates for regular attendance. There are few problems with attendance. Most pupils arrive at school and lessons punctually and any lateness is monitored very carefully and followed up if persistent.
53. Pupils move on to several different secondary schools and links with these include 'taster days', pupil visits and the passing on of records. There are especially good links with the two schools to which most pupils move. Many children enter school from the on-site playgroup, with which links are very good. There are visits and meetings and children are invited into school for special occasions. Children also enter school from other types of pre-school provision.
54. The standards of care are good and have a very positive effect on pupils' attainment. This is the same as the judgement of the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The school's partnership with parents is very good; it is a strength of the school. There is a strong belief that this partnership is the key to pupils fulfilling their potential. The school works hard to ensure that parents feel welcome in school and a number of them respond well to the opportunities provided to become actively involved in their children's learning. This has a significant effect on the standards children achieve. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
56. A number of parents work in school on a regular basis and are a valuable asset to teachers and pupils in lessons because they are clearly told what their tasks will be and provide good help where needed. Many more parents help on visits and support the very successful parents'-and-friends' association. The group raises substantial funds which make a valuable contribution to the opportunities for activities. They have provided a store for physical education equipment in the

playground, computer equipment, playground equipment including benches and also help so that all pupils can go on school visits.

57. There is good information in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, but these have some omissions and do not meet statutory requirements.
58. The school has considered implementing a home-school agreement, but is not convinced of its usefulness in this school. Parents who are governors are well informed and have a good understanding of their role; they support the work of the school well.
59. Parents benefit from good levels of information about the topics their children will cover over the next term and see teachers formally at two parents' meetings each year. New parents can stay with their children to ensure a smooth transition. There are newsletters each week. Nearly all parents agree that teachers set appropriate levels of homework and they support their children well at home to ensure that these tasks are completed on time.
60. Annual reports on pupils' progress at the end of the year are detailed and of high quality, they show clearly how even the best pupils can improve and parents are appreciative of the helpful comments on their children's development. Parents are invited to respond.
61. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are very well informed. Individual education plans are reviewed termly and shared with pupils and parents. Details of gains in skills, knowledge and understanding are often shared on a more regular basis, with concerns discussed as necessary.
62. The school operates an open-door policy; parents think that teachers are approachable and that they will always be welcome. These important links lead to most parents feeling very happy with what the school offers and their involvement significantly enhances pupils' learning opportunities.
63. There has been good improvement since the previous report. In discussions and at the meeting most parents were very satisfied with the school's efforts. Their children love coming to school. A few parents expressed concern at the loss of a February meeting; they think that it is too long between the meetings. The school will examine this in the light of these concerns. One parent said, *'I would be pleased to recommend the school to anyone'* and others echoed this view.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The leadership and management of the school are very good. Since the last inspection, under the very good leadership of the headteacher, the school improved well. Governors and teaching and support staff have a shared vision and commitment to raising standards whilst maintaining the caring ethos of the school.
65. The school has developed a clear statement of aims, which gives priority to providing pupils with equal access to a full range of personal and social experiences as well as developing their intellectual needs.
66. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators have clear job descriptions. They work together to plan for improvement and agree priorities for the School Development Plan, which is amended as priorities are met and identified. This has contributed to the raising of standards; for example, in information and communication technology since the last inspection.
67. The headteacher with the assistance of her senior management team has capably managed the many changes in teaching staff in the last two years. A detailed monitoring programme has been implemented which includes an analysis of test data, an analysis of pupils' books, a scrutiny of teachers' planning and lesson observations. Priority has been given to English, mathematics and science. In these subjects the headteacher and co-ordinators have contributed to raising standards by monitoring teaching and learning and then sharing the best principles. This has contributed to raising the standard of teaching in Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. Due to the pressure of time, not all co-ordinators have the opportunity to observe teaching and learning in their areas. The

introduction of individual and group targets in order to provide more-challenging activities, especially for the more able pupils, are at an early stage of development.

68. The contribution made by governors is good. The governing body, which includes a good proportion of parents, comprises active, committed and very-well-informed governors. It is organised into an effective committee structure to consider and then take action, on matters to do with staffing, curriculum, finance and premises. Governors are most aware of the need not only to raise standards but also to maintain a strong Christian ethos, which values relationships and the balance between the social, personal and academic needs of all pupils. The governing body complies fully with statutory requirements. For example, the school has a very good policy for personal, social and health education that includes sections for older pupils on sex education and the misuse of drugs. Governors have implemented the required processes for performance management and annual performance targets have been set for the headteacher and teaching staff. These are now being extended to the support staff. The governing body is aware of the minor omissions in the governors' annual report to parents.
69. Governors are involved with teaching staff to identify priorities in the School Development Plan. This is regarded as a working document and is amended according to the changing needs of the school. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school are good. Yearly subject action plans are shared with governors, who consequently are well informed. There are links with governors who monitor the curriculum as well as special educational needs, health and safety, premises and security.
70. The management and provision for special educational needs are very good and funding has been used effectively. Although the special-needs co-ordinator is only employed for one day each week, her management skills have enabled her to develop a multi-talented team of learning-support assistants who contribute significantly to the good progress made by pupils targeted as being in need.
71. Other specific grants have been used effectively, particularly those relating to staff professional development: national funding for improving teachers' computer skills; and the implementation of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy.
72. Systems for the day-to-day administration of the school's financial affairs are effective. The office manager has access to a good range of technology to support her work. She has the benefit of a finance program which has been modified by a member of the school community and tailored to her needs. The decision to employ a finance consultant to support the office manager has been most effective. They respond actively to the recommendations of the local education authority's audit reports and have developed exemplary procedures which are shared with the governors' finance committee. The ordering of supplies is carried out according to regulations, financial responsibilities are delegated and voluntary funds are audited annually. This committee meets at least termly and maintains a thorough overview of the school's financial situation. They are extremely well informed and manage the budget effectively, especially when planning for future priorities such as staffing needs and building improvement.
73. The staff in the school office also provide an excellent service for parents and visitors. They are welcoming, efficient and friendly, ensuring that the school creates a good 'first impression' for visitors.
74. There are good procedures for applying the principles of best value. Analysis of national testing has been undertaken by the headteacher and a comparison made with schools both locally and nationally, leading to strategies to improve standards. Governors monitor and evaluate the influence of their decisions and consider alternatives, such as when investing in additional support staff, making changes to the teaching staff, planning improvements to the buildings or developing the ICT suite.
75. Staff are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. They are committed, hard working and generous with their time. They have good access to professional development opportunities, which include the sharing of talents and strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are good support procedures for teachers who have recently joined the school or who are new to the

profession. This has been particularly important in maintaining the quality of teaching at a time of high turnover of staff and the employment of teachers from overseas.

76. The school is accommodated in a well-maintained building due to careful forward planning. This has improved since the last inspection, but limitations remain and a further building programme is planned this financial year. Shared areas are used effectively, although the library is of limited use due to its location and size, which restricts the numbers able to use it at any one time. The site includes adequate hard play areas which have been furnished with an attractive quiet area and other popular eating areas. There are spacious grassed areas.
77. Pupils' work is displayed attractively and helps to create a colourful and interesting learning environment. Classrooms, which vary considerably in size, are well furnished and all provide at least adequate space for teaching and learning. During the week of the inspection the site manager and cleaning staff kept the building very clean and free from litter. The governors' premises committee has been successful in ensuring that the building is secure and well maintained. Plans for improvement have been accepted and improvements are imminent which include the building of a new classroom and an outdoor play area for the Foundation Stage. This essential facility for the youngest children has been a priority since the last inspection. It has been accepted that the mobile classrooms will be replaced in the subsequent agreed building phase. Governors have arranged for appropriate health-and-safety risk assessments to be undertaken.
78. There are satisfactory resources for learning across the curriculum. Books in the school library have been well used and many are now ready for replacement, as are the books for promoting improvements in the quality of reading both in school and at home. The recently introduced computer suite large enough to teach skills to a whole class, together with the computers in the classroom, provide ideal resources to support learning across the curriculum and raise standards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the quality of education offered to the pupils the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (i) Improve the consistency of all teaching to reach the highest quality observed in the inspection by:
- developing teachers' marking so that pupils have a clear view of what they need to do to improve their work;
 - providing opportunities for pupils to develop their independence in learning by reducing the dependence on worksheets in Key Stage 1;
 - providing more problem-solving activities;
 - raising expectations of the pupils' presentation and writing so that skills learned in practice sessions are used effectively in the work they do in all subjects;
 - further improving reading in Key Stage 1 so that standards are raised when compared to similar schools; and
 - preparing work to meet the needs of all abilities.
- (Paragraphs: 2; 19; 20; 22; 87; 92; 95; 100; 102; 109 and 113)*
- ii. Provide appropriate outdoor learning facilities for the reception pupils that meet the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum so that they have the opportunities to:
- choose large apparatus to ride or climb under and over;
 - see things from different perspectives such as the top of a climbing frame or in tunnels or under apparatus; and
 - develop the social and language skills required for playing together in a large, well-equipped space.

(Paragraphs: 16; 26 and 86)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Adjust resourcing priorities so that those areas with resources requiring replacement and improvement that were delayed by the development of the ICT suite are now addressed.

(Paragraph: 78)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

62

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	6	27	25	2	0	0
Percentage	3	10	44	40	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	368
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	40

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	62

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	23	27	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	22
	Girls	23	24	26
	Total	44	45	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (88)	90 (95)	96 (98)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (910)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	22	22
	Girls	24	26	26
	Total	45	48	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (93)	96 (96)	96 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	30	30	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	22	27
	Girls	28	27	28
	Total	46	49	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (81)	82 (88)	92 (85)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	22	27
	Girls	28	27	28
	Total	46	49	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (75)	82 (79)	87 (75)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
288	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	349

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
	£
Total income	846,662
Total expenditure	851,880
Expenditure per pupil	2,314
Balance brought forward from previous year	119,379
Balance carried forward to next year	114,161

NB. Carry forward includes amount paid into budget by Medway Council as payment for new building work. Although phase 1 is complete, it has not yet been invoiced for payment and so remains in the school's account.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	368
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	27	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	25	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	38	0	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	42	5	0	2
The teaching is good.	60	35	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	60	11	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	31	0	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	38	5	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	56	4	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	42	0	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	31	2	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	51	11	2	9

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE ⁴

79. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. There was a similar judgement at the time of the last inspection. However, the introduction of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the provision of good planning and teaching guidance documentation have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. All staff in the Foundation Stage give the children a good start to their life in school.

Personal, social and emotional development

80. Teaching in this area of learning is good, enabling children to settle happily and become familiar with new routines away from home. Many children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals; they make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are very caring and deal with the children in a friendly, warm and sympathetic way, valuing their comments and contributions. As a result, children approach staff with ease. They are confident enough to choose their own activities and to move about the teaching areas. They enjoy the activities on offer and are keen to participate, sometimes staying for lengthy periods at one task. Through the staff's imaginative strategies many children take turns and are learning to share; for example, when using the computer. Children make good attempts at managing coats and washing hands. They carefully wipe their white boards and put them away correctly. Children's involvement in assemblies, play and lunch with the older pupils is making a significant contribution in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

81. With good teaching, a good proportion of children are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals in communication and language and a fifth of them will exceed the goals in reading and writing. Children, including those with special needs, are making good progress from below expected starting points. They make good progress in this area of learning. Teachers place a high priority on talk through skilful questioning and sensitive encouragement. Children are keen to talk, offering generally relevant comments about outings; for example, following the day visit to the rare-breeds centre many children talked animatedly about the chicks and sheep. When talking to each other in their role-play, children devise imaginative situations such as when the 'dads' bring new jumpers for the baby: '*He's been sick all over that one, so here's a new one*'. Teachers and teaching assistants speak clearly and work hard to extend the children's vocabulary, introducing such words as '*carding*', '*spinning*' and '*weaving*'. Children 'write' freely in their play and in the office area. Through regular and focused writing activities and good access to writing materials, many children are beginning to make letter-like shapes in their writing. Many are starting to spell out simple words, like '*I*', '*liked*' and '*the*'. They write letters to their friends carefully on white boards and on 'notepaper'. They know a good range of letter sounds, making good use of the staff's frequent reinforcement of sounds and letters. Most children make reasonable attempts to write their names. Many choose writing activities during child-initiated activity time.
82. Children handle books with care. They enjoy stories and listen attentively. Some four-year-olds know their reading book by heart, whilst older children are more competent readers. The younger children are becoming familiar with some letter names and sounds and are at the early stages of building up new words. With intensive additional support, children are beginning to recognise a good range of familiar words. Books are changed regularly and there are good links with parents and carers through the home/school contact books. This enhances provision. Well-kept reading records ensure that children's progress is carefully monitored.

⁴ Provision for early years learning at the Foundation Stage (Reception classes) covers six areas of learning. To prepare for work within the National Curriculum, children are expected to progress through three steps and achieve Early Learning Goals in each area of this learning by the end of the Reception Year. Guidance for this stage expects learning to be a balance between focused work in groups and structured play with a purpose.

Mathematical development

83. Teaching in this area is good and most children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals. Children make good progress in this area of learning. The best teaching challenges them effectively, as with the practical beginnings of adding numbers. It stimulates them well so that they continue their mathematical learning in their play. Many children count accurately to six and some to ten and beyond. The more able children have a sound understanding of subtraction but little idea of the correct mathematical term. They make reasonable attempts to record numbers. A few children confidently count backwards and record their calculations in their work-books accurately. They know the names of some simple geometric shapes and some can make a simple repeating pattern. Teachers promote mathematical learning effectively through daily focused activities. They use number rhymes to good effect to reinforce children's counting and simple computing skills. Children sing rhymes joyfully and tunefully. Teachers make good use of other activities to reinforce and extend children's mathematical thinking; for example, in the role-play area, counting the cost of flowers in the garden centre. Mathematical opportunities are also exploited during routines such as registration or snack time.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

84. Teaching in this area is good and the majority of children are on course to achieve most of the Early Learning Goals; they make good progress. In scientific aspects, teachers encourage children to be curious and to observe carefully, as when planting nasturtium and cress seeds. Teachers provide a suitable range of construction activities and children enjoy building, making things from interlocking bricks, cutting and sticking. Children play freely with sand, pouring, building and learning how mixing with water changes its consistency. Exploration activities with water are limited due to the lack of equipment and this limits children's opportunities and progress. In cooking activities children observe how ingredients change. They taste soup, make fruit salad and make and taste bread. They also make gingerbread men linked to the story. The teacher's ability to bring in other aspects of the curriculum in this area ensures that children see activities as relevant. Teachers make good use of visits. Through the topic of 'growing', which has included a visit to an animal centre, children are gaining a good awareness that milk comes from cows and wool comes from sheep. Through direct teaching and frequent access, children approach computers with confidence, and many manage simple games independently. The regular daily access to the computers enables children to exceed the expected standards in this area.

Creative development

85. Teaching in this area is satisfactory with a suitable range of creative activities on offer. Most children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals. Teachers encourage their musical development effectively through frequent songs and rhymes. The classes lack their own classroom instruments, which results in children having no opportunities for free experimentation. Consequently this aspect of children's education is underdeveloped. However, they make good attempts at tapping the rhythmic pattern of their names and teachers use many opportunities at the start of sessions to encourage them to clap repeated patterns. Children draw and paint boldly and enjoy making marks and applying colour, but some classroom displays reflect adults' rather than children's work and this is a weakness. Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning.

Physical development

86. Teaching in this area is satisfactory and most children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals. Teachers provide a wide range of activities to encourage strong hand and finger muscles. Children work effectively with small things such as interlocking bricks and pasta shapes. Most use scissors successfully and most are developing an effective grip with pencils and crayons. Teachers provide satisfactory access to the outside area where children can play with the water tray and large construction toys. The current outdoor play provision is unsatisfactory and in its present condition provides insufficient stimulation and challenge for children. In more-structured physical sessions in the school hall, children practise skills of throwing and catching beanbags and balls. There is

insufficient challenge for the better-co-ordinated children in these sessions. The children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning.

ENGLISH

87. Standards in English have been maintained since the last inspection in 1997 and pupils, at the end of Key Stage 1, attain average standards. There are examples of pupils, by the age of seven, performing at above expected standards but there are not enough reaching the higher level. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain above average standards. Although standards for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 dipped in 2002, they were observed to be improving during the inspection. This follows action by the school to improve standards by improving the range and scope of the booster groups and the teaching of basic literacy skills.
88. When pupils enter the school, their standards in speaking and listening are below what is expected nationally. By the time they are seven years old pupils listen attentively and speak with enthusiasm and confidence. Standards of speaking and listening are good, with pupils given frequent opportunities to contribute to class discussions. Pupils in Year 2 responded enthusiastically to the opportunities provided to become pirates and roar their commands expressively. Older pupils have the opportunity to attend the drama club which meets after school. Opportunities have been reintroduced for pupils to speak to different audiences in class assemblies or participating in school performances.
89. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are encouraged to speak and listen carefully. Pupils in Year 4 impressed with their choice of vocabulary when challenged to use words to paint 'Seaside' scenes. They produced phrases such as "glittering glistening sand melting through my fingers". Pupils in Years 5 still buzzed when relating their enthusiasm for writing play scripts inspired by a visiting writer and pupils in Years 6 speak with great confidence on a range of subjects. There are many opportunities for them to listen to the teacher and each other. Less able pupils are well supported by learning-support assistants and the good teaching strategies used enable them to make worthwhile contributions to class discussions. Pupils are encouraged to discuss and share opinions with partners, as in the Year 5 class when they clearly enjoyed describing the appearance and personalities of characters to be included in their adventure stories.
90. Reading is given a high priority within the school and this is reflected in the improving standards achieved by children who are seven years old and the good standard of reading evident in Year 6. There are opportunities for pupils to read a range of books for pleasure and for information on a daily basis. Younger pupils use a published reading scheme alongside good-quality children's books and all pupils are encouraged to practise reading and share their books at home. Often good progress is recorded in a home-school reading record book. Less able pupils are given very good support which has added to the overall improvement in standards. Standards of reading are now above average in Year 2. Less able pupils recognise words in simple texts and practise using sounds to make words in carefully planned lessons. By the time they are seven, pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills.
91. Reading in Key Stage 2 is good and often better. The majority of pupils read confidently and with expression, with higher-attaining pupils beginning to analyse their reading, making inferences and referring to the texts when answering questions. During the inspection, pupils in Key Stage 2 were observed doing individual reading within quiet reading times, with many of the older pupils choosing to bring their own books from home. Within the literacy hour, teachers use time for guided reading work, with groups of pupils sharing and analysing text together. Few examples were observed of pupils being encouraged to use reference skills by researching information via the Internet or the school library. Plans to resite the library are linked to the pending building project and are overdue. Present facilities severely limit the opportunities for more than small groups of pupils to seek information and the books, which have been well used, are beginning to look 'tired' and are ready for replacement.
92. Pupils punctuate well and the quality of spelling is generally good. Standards in writing are more variable. Although they are in line with expectations at the end of each key stage, there are

insufficient numbers of pupils in Years 2 and 6 performing consistently well at the higher levels. This outcome is linked to the overuse of worksheets in subjects other than English. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to improve and extend their writing in science, history or geography, particularly in Key Stage 1.

93. Pupils are introduced to a good range of styles. In Year 2, higher-attaining pupils demonstrate an exciting use of vocabulary in their poetry; for example, 'there are scavenging seagulls looking for food'. They write letters and in their 'Pirate' theme they are beginning to write more complex sentences by using connectives such as 'because'. Less able pupils receive very good support which helps them to contribute to the class activities, saying, for example, 'I like the sound of birds tweeting in my ears', when highlighting the differences between their locality and the imaginary island of 'Struay'. Punctuation is good, as was observed when a pupil of average ability introduced "speech marks" and commas to separate lists. Most pupils in Year 2 write simple sentences, with many introducing correct use of capital letters and full stops and they are beginning to understand the use of bullet points to make notes.
94. Pupils in Key Stage 2 classes are able to develop arguments and express opinions; for example, in Year 6 after a discussion on capital punishment, or when comparing different versions of the same story. They write book reviews, produce play scripts and learn the function of stage directions when studying the plays of Shakespeare, or when writing their own plays in Year 5 after being stimulated by a visiting writer. Most pupils in Year 6 write in paragraphs and improve their work after writing in draft. Pupils know when to use past and present tenses and understand when to change between the two. They make good progress in using more adventurous vocabulary, such as pupils in Years 3 and 4 who were introducing similes into their writing, a practice later extended in Years 5 and 6 with the introduction of imagery and metaphors. Pupils of below average ability were using adjectives and adverbs to make their writing more exciting such as 'the ancient wooden door creaked as.....' There is evidence that standards are higher in Years 4 and 5 and that more pupils are performing at the higher levels. When writing poetry in Year 4 pupils used technical language correctly, such as "verb", "adjectives" and "nouns" and used alliteration to describe their scenes - 'squawking seagulls searching', with the lowest-attaining pupils excited to use 'fresh fish flash'.
95. Standards of handwriting are disappointing. Pupils' presentation skills are not developed beyond the daily practice sessions. Some teachers do not have high expectations of presentation when pupils are writing in English lessons or other subjects. Although handwriting is taught regularly, too many of the oldest pupils do not join handwriting correctly or write in ink. This lowers the overall standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2.
96. Pupils' attitudes to learning were at least good and, together with good behaviour, contributed significantly to the quality of their learning. Pupils work well in groups and collaborate effectively to share their answers with their partners, as in the Year 5 lesson when they were building a profile of the characters in their adventure stories. No differences were observed between the responses of boys or girls within lessons and pupils with special educational needs have good self-esteem. Most pupils enjoy and are enthusiastic about their work.
97. The subject co-ordination is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. There is now a guidance document for teachers, helping them to plan and teach the subject and this is linked to national guidance on literacy and English. The co-ordinator has monitored reading in the past year as part of the programme outlined in the school's development plan and priorities for improvement have been fed back to teachers. This process led to changes in the way reading was taught in Key Stage 1 and to improving standards. This year's priority is writing.

MATHEMATICS

98. The good standards have been maintained since the last inspection and pupils throughout the school make good progress. By the time pupils are seven and 11 years of age they attain standards that are above the national average.
99. The quality of teaching is good and in Key Stage 2 some is very good. The keynote of very good teaching is challenge, with pupils being shown how to investigate problems before being set

- investigations of their own. In a very good lesson in Year 4, for example, the teacher used her mathematical expertise to show pupils how to sort numbers, using questions such as *'Is it a square number?'* before setting them the challenge of sorting a different set of numbers using questions of their own. This gave pupils the opportunity to draw upon and apply existing knowledge, so that the more able considered whether or not a given number was a prime number, while others considered whether or not a number was in the four-times table. There was a real 'buzz' in the classroom as pupils set about solving the problem. One girl, having categorised a number by using the four-times table, was not going to be satisfied by using this criterion again with other numbers and remarked, *'I'm going to find a different way of sorting the next number'*. Such a determined and individual approach characterised the work of many others.
100. In several other lessons, most notably in Key Stage 2, teachers also set pupils problems to solve. Pupils were animated and keen to rise to the challenge. However, while teaching was still good, it met with mixed success because of insecurities in teaching problem-solving. For example, in one lesson the teacher set pupils the thought-provoking task of searching for a division pattern in a set of numbers. Once identified, the rule could then be used to test other numbers. However, a lack of confidence in showing pupils how to approach the task meant that they worked out each sum individually rather than searching for a common rule. Such insecurities were common in other lessons and undermine genuine attempts to challenge pupils' thinking.
101. Apart from challenge, there are several other positive features of teaching throughout the school. Lessons are well planned and teachers are good at involving pupils in discussions about the learning objectives of the day. Some teachers take this a step further and refer back to the learning objective at the end of the lesson, going beyond asking pupils to think about what they have learnt by asking them to prove it. The beginnings of lessons are often good, with teachers using a variety of tasks to encourage pupils to calculate mentally. Lessons are generally well organised with a good balance of class teaching and group work and, together with comfortable relationships, mean that pupils work hard and complete a lot of work, attaining standards in line with and above those expected for their age group. Teachers use well-chosen resources, such as pictures and whiteboards, to illustrate mathematical concepts and this adds to the interest of lessons. Many teachers make good use of technology, such as overhead projectors, to show pupils how to do something new. They make good use of occasional moments to practise mathematics; these often act as brief talking points and reinforce computational skills. During registration in a Year 1 class, for example, the teacher asked *'If two children are away today, how many children are left in class?'*
102. A less productive feature of teaching occurs at times when insufficient attention is paid to the spread of ability within a class. There are times when all pupils, regardless of ability, complete the same work. Higher-attaining pupils may be given extension work, but before reaching this have to complete work that is too easy for them; for example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson higher-attaining pupils, along with all others, had to complete the same page of work about adding to ten, despite many of them being able to add on from 25 to 100. The extension work, when reached, was used to occupy pupils, so that they were randomly trying to solve problems and puzzles rather than being taught how to systematically go about such work. Too much of the work in some Key Stage 1 classes is made up of rather mundane worksheets and workbooks, which in particular do not meet the needs of the higher-attaining pupils. In addition, in several classes, when pupils go into groups to work, the teacher misses the opportunity to work more intensively with a chosen group. Instead there is a tendency for the teachers to visit all pupils, checking answers and misconceptions on an individual basis. Not only does this stop the teacher from working purposefully with one group, but also it means that pupils are not always given a chance to work independently.
103. Those pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. The help and encouragement they receive from teaching assistants, clearly-written individual educational plans and well-thought-out catch-up lessons, means that many of them go on to reach the nationally expected levels in the national test at the end of Year 6.
104. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects. In design and technology, for example, pupils in Year 6 used careful measuring skills when making slippers. Similarly there is growing confidence among teachers in the use of computers to help pupils study mathematics; for example, by reinforcing work on symmetry by designing symmetrical patterns on computers. This is a notable improvement since the last inspection.

105. The lead co-ordinator, increasingly helped by a second co-ordinator, leads mathematics well. Procedures for assessing what pupils know and can do have improved, providing valuable information that leads to adjustments in the curriculum. The co-ordinators are aware that the next step is extending this to more-specific targets for groups of pupils. At present marking is satisfactory and all work is marked regularly. There are few examples of teachers' marking informing pupils about what they ought to do to improve. A lot of time has been spent analysing the results of national tests; this has identified gaps in pupils' learning, including the need to improve their ability to solve problems. The school has already gone some way in addressing this, particularly in Key Stage 2. The co-ordinators have a shared commitment to succeed and have backed this with a clear plan of action which puts the school in a good position to keep moving forward.

SCIENCE

106. Standards have been maintained and improved in Key Stage 2 since the previous inspection. By the time pupils are seven and 11 years of age they attain standards that are in line with the national average.
107. There is a good guidance document to support teachers' planning and teaching based on national guidelines for science, another notable improvement.
108. By the time that they are seven, pupils effectively record the results of their observations and investigations through pictures, charts and their own brief written text. They begin to make predictions about expected outcomes; for example, when investigating the growth of seeds in Year 2. An investigation into altering the conditions of growth provided the pupils with opportunities to think about what might happen if they changed things. Past work indicates that they know how humans and mammals change as they grow and what makes a healthy diet for good growth. They also study physical processes and make simple observations about whether it is easier to push or pull an object. The pupils also study different materials and know their properties, such as being hard, soft or pliable, or how they can change. The pupils' investigative skills are developed appropriately. They are curious to find out things and the higher-attaining pupils suggest simple ways of investigating the growth of seeds. A minority of pupils are less sure about how to set up a simple investigation and rely upon guidance from other pupils.
109. By the time that they are 11, the pupils record investigations in a consistent format and realise that they must be fair. They make informed predictions about results and then control them through the limited introduction of variables. The pupils have a wide knowledge of concepts and, in particular, their past work indicates they have secure understanding of materials, as well as of physical and life processes. For example, they have investigated mould growth and set up different conditions to monitor what happens, although evidence of more-independent investigations was limited. In lessons, the pupils investigated which materials absorbed water, how substances dissolve and the effects of friction. They realise that controlling variables are important. For example, when investigating dissolving, the pupils realised that having the same amount of water was important if they altered the temperature. In another group, the pupils gave good reasons why using the same training shoe to test friction was important. The pupils are familiar with simple apparatus, scientific terms and the need for accuracy while conducting their research.
110. The pupils' literacy skills are used well as they follow instructions and experience suitable opportunities to develop their writing skills in science notebooks. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to write their own accounts of their investigations, although the frequent use of worksheets for the pupils aged five to seven reduces the opportunity for them to develop their own recording abilities.
111. There is some evidence of pupils making use of their numeracy skills when constructing line graphs from numerical data and forming tables of information. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress and all are included in practical activities.
112. Pupils listen particularly well to their teachers and to the contributions of others. They demonstrate very good recall of scientific vocabulary and previous learning and they relate this well to topics under

discussion. Pupils enjoy their science lessons, work conscientiously at the practical activities and show good levels of co-operation. Their attitudes towards science activities are good and they demonstrate a good level of co-operation in carrying out their investigations. As a result, their collaborative and discussion skills are developed well throughout the school. The pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants within the classroom. This enables them to make good progress in science.

113. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching. The teachers manage the pupils well and develop good relationships with them. This helps to promote good learning. The activities planned are appropriate and give pupils good opportunities to have 'hands on' experiences when they carry out their investigations. In Year 6, for example, the class teachers organised a number of activities to encourage the pupils to investigate. This was also a feature of work on seed growth in Year 2. There were few opportunities for the pupils to dictate the nature and form of the investigations. The teachers use good questioning techniques to extend the pupils' thinking, particularly when introducing the activities. Their work is marked consistently, although there is limited comment about how the pupils can improve.
114. The subject is managed conscientiously. There has been some classroom observation to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the school, with a focus on investigations and this has led to some improvement in the opportunities for pupils to undertake investigations. The science curriculum is planned well throughout the school to a consistent format. Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. Resources are satisfactory in terms of quality and quantity and this enables the pupils to have sufficient practical work.

ART AND DESIGN

115. At the time of the last inspection standards in art and design were reported as exceeding expectations by the age of seven and meeting expectations by the age of 11. In this inspection along with the lessons seen the scrutiny of wall displays and pupils' work also informed the judgement on standards. Standards meet expectations by the ages of seven and 11, which is not as good as the judgement of the last inspection for seven-year-olds, but remains the same for 11-year-olds. Although this represents a slight decline in standards, the priorities of literacy and numeracy have reduced the attention paid to other subjects, particularly the creative aspects. The school has managed to maintain art on the timetable and develop some good work showing improving standards. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, take pleasure in their work and make good progress in art and design in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs do well against the individual targets set for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in art and design.
116. In Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching and learning and the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in art and design were satisfactory. However, there was some concern that in some instances teaching assistants took the lead in lessons without clear direction from teachers and this led to lower than expected standards in the subject.
117. The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is good overall in Years 3 to 6, where pupils learn to handle media such as paint, textiles and collage materials and are given well-planned opportunities to draw, paint, print, weave and construct images in a variety of ways. The best lessons have a brisk pace, good teacher subject knowledge and very good classroom management and organisation.
118. An analysis of pupils' work across year groups indicates that the teaching of a range of skills in art and design enables them to make satisfactory progress in their learning in Years 1 and 2 and good progress in Years 3 to 6. They achieve satisfactory standards in what they produce. Pupils from Years 3 to 6 keep sketchbooks, which are used in a variety of ways to keep records of observational drawings and details of designs. These are actively used in designing and planning their art assignments, particularly in a more structured and purposeful way by pupils in Years 4 and 6. A criticism in the last inspection referred to teachers' lack of understanding of the differences between art and design and design and technology. There has been some improvement, as these subjects are now taught separately, but in some year groups the two subjects are not yet separated at the planning stage.

119. Teachers provide pupils with well-planned opportunities to use a wide range of media and learn a variety of techniques in their work in order to create different effects. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have positive attitudes to the subject and their behaviour in lessons is good.
120. In Years 1 to 6, pupils developed an understanding of different cultures when they illustrated stories from Brazil, India, Africa, Jamaica and other parts of the world. In Year 2 a display of clay tiles formed a colourful seaside collage. Recent work in Year 5 includes pastel work in the style of Picasso and Van Gogh. Year 3 pupils created colourful pictures in the style of Lowry, carefully using background colour washes. In a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils began designs for multi-cultural masks and headdresses. The careful development of the design process, together with the skills imparted to the pupils by the teacher, meant that the designs achieved were of a good standard. Pupils' numeracy skills were used well in this lesson.
121. There is a satisfactory art and design guidance document for teachers to assist planning and teaching and provide an overview of different areas of art and guidance on the integration of studying the work of famous artists, craftspeople and designers alongside practical activities. A balance between two-dimensional and three-dimensional work is also specified. It does not yet include methods of integrating art and design with information and communication technology. However, there is evidence of teachers developing this in practice, especially in Year 4, where pupils were observed creating pictures using their technology skills. The planned assessment sheets for the subject are good and it is intended that they will be introduced at the beginning of the next academic year.
122. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. However, there are gaps, as the co-ordinator has yet to create a portfolio of work across the school to assist in the assessment of pupils' work. This term the co-ordinator has monitored lessons and fed back findings to staff and governors. The improved assessment procedures are an outcome of this process. Displays around the school are of good quality and enhance the communal areas of the school in an interesting and eye-catching way. Art and design makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. Resources are adequate for both the practical and the knowledge-based strands of the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. During the course of the inspection some lessons were observed and evidence was also gathered from an analysis of pupils' work, teachers' plans and discussions with the co-ordinator. These indicated that by the ages of seven and 11 pupils attain average standards. This is better than the judgement of the last inspection, when standards were below expectations and National Curriculum requirements were not being met. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in the designing and making process. The National Curriculum requirements are met.
124. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand that the making process begins with a plan. They use annotated pictures to communicate their designs. They use a variety of tools and techniques and learn to join different materials. They understand how to evaluate the finished product and how they could make improvements. There is little evidence to show that pupils are using ICT to support their learning.
125. Pupils reach a satisfactory standard by the end of Year 6. They are systematically building on the skills learned previously and pupils' designs and constructions show annotated plans that are translated into models. This is an improvement since the last inspection. For example, pupils used numeracy skills well to measure when designing slippers. They use a variety of equipment and are able to evaluate the finished product. Year 4 pupils designed and made a torch and evaluated the effectiveness of their design. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils were observed making structures. They devised supporting structures for a cube and wrote clear modifications on their plans. Pupils applied their numeracy skills well to help them solve the problem of improving the structural strength of a cube using 12-centimetre art straws and some glue. They worked satisfactorily. The teacher helpfully revised with the pupils some key points about joining techniques.

126. There were insufficient examples of previous work to make a secure judgement about the overall standards of teaching and learning in the subject. In the lessons seen the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory or better. In the previous inspection no judgement about teaching and learning was made. A small amount of work was observed on display, which included moving mechanisms that incorporated a cam system and 'pop-up' books using cutting and folding techniques. There is a useful portfolio containing photographs of examples of a range of work in the school. These showed pupils using joining skills to construct models of vehicles, investigating a packet and making a 'magic sandwich'.
127. Teachers follow national guidelines that have been introduced and a list of topics is allocated to each class. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is a satisfactory policy in place. Class teachers record the progress of individual pupils in their mark books, based on an assessment of their skills at the end of a unit of work. Resources are satisfactory, although lack of centralised space makes storage difficult. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology in the designing process.
128. The quality of co-ordination is satisfactory, although there have been no opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor lessons because of other subject priorities in the School Improvement Plan and this holds back the further raising of standards in this subject.

GEOGRAPHY

129. During the inspection only one lesson was seen in Year 6. This, together with scrutiny of the work, the range of work on display and discussions with pupils, indicates that the standards achieved are in line with the nationally expected levels throughout. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection.
130. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2, but pupils' past work indicates that they have a developing knowledge of those places around them and the features that make them special. In connection with their work in history, the pupils visited Whitstable and investigated its special geographic and historical features. Their work indicates that they appreciate and identify how it differs from where they live. For example they know how a seaside resort offers leisure opportunities that living in a built up area cannot provide. Pupils also have a developing sense of direction and location. Their work following a route around the school collecting clues, connected to their pirate project, was a helpful way of developing these skills in other areas of study.
131. By the time they are 11, the pupils reach the expected standards nationally, but some reach higher standards in their work. The oldest pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of how physical features such as rivers are formed. For example, they know the terms 'tributaries' and 'meander' and can describe how rivers are formed. They have also gathered information about rivers and researched information using the Internet and reference programmes. This has been used as the basis for a presentation about rivers such as the Thames. Previous work also indicates they know about the 'water cycle' and the factors influencing environmental change and global warming. The pupils in Year 4 are studying St Lucia in the Caribbean. Their work on display indicates that they have a good knowledge of its physical and human features such as climate and tourism. This knowledge is being enhanced and extended by the school having a 'St Lucia day' later this term. Other past work indicates the pupils have a secure knowledge of map-reading skills, grid references and lines of longitude and latitude.
132. The pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are used appropriately and there are good links with the other subjects of the curriculum such as information and communication technology and persuasive writing in English work. The pupils enjoy their work, which throughout the school is generally neat and well organised. The pupils work together well and co-operate willingly in their activities. They listen carefully, which helps them to learn effectively. The oldest pupils are aware of where they need to improve and their work refining river presentations was a good example of this.
133. In the lesson seen, the overall quality of teaching was good. The teacher outlined the activities well and used a good range of approaches to make the subject interesting to the pupils. This was followed up well in another lesson in the computer suite, when the pupils were highly motivated to

complete their activities. Work is generally marked appropriately, although comments about how to improve are limited.

134. The subject co-ordinator, who is responsible for history as well, manages the subject appropriately. The nationally-published guidance for the subject provides useful support for teachers and the resources for the subject, including maps, atlases and globes, are sufficient. The provision of appropriate resources supports their learning. The use of assessment in geography has been reviewed and the new process is appropriate in gathering information about pupils' progress.

HISTORY

135. The standards pupils reach are in line with national expectations when they reach seven and 11. Observations, the work in pupils' books, the displays, teachers' planning and the school's curriculum planning guidance for history show that teaching and learning in this subject are secure across the school. This is a similar picture to that of the last inspection.
136. By the time they are seven the pupils study a suitable range of history topics and reach the expected levels. They have studied significant events in British history such as the Great Fire of London and identify differences between old and new street scenes, for example. They have also studied famous characters such as Samuel Pepys and the Queen Mother and were knowledgeable about Christopher Columbus in Year 2. The pupils realised that voyages were made to find new products as well as for exploration. This linked well with work in Year 2, where the pupils studied old maps of the period and could point out differences between them and modern maps.
137. By the age of 11, pupils know the key features of periods in history such as Tudor and Victorian times and Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. They carry out in-depth historical investigations using a range of resources and evidence. They have used interviews, factual books and fictional stories to research their work and produce work of good quality enhanced by illustrations and the use of information technology. In work in Year 6 pupils interviewed a former teacher who shared his recollections of the 60s. The pupils asked pertinent and perceptive questions and used their literacy skills to record their notes. Their speaking and listening skills were also developed well when they asked questions. Other past work indicates that they have a clear understanding of past events, people and changes. For example, Year 4 pupils have studied the times of Henry VIII and his influences. They have written imaginary letters in the role of Catherine of Aragon, for example, which indicate that they have a good understanding of the difficulties of her period in history. Overall, the pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding appropriately and their learning was good in the lessons seen.
138. Pupils throughout the school enjoy history and the oldest pupils particularly enjoyed interviewing their visitor. Pupils in Year 2 were fascinated by the old maps the class teacher presented, although the opportunity for them to look at these more closely was not fully exploited. The class teacher promoted good levels of respect for a visitor to the school and the pupils were well prepared and briefed for the visit. The range of work covered is appropriate throughout the school and the activities chosen for the pupils to follow are good. Where possible, the teachers link history with geography, such as in Year 2, where Whitstable was studied for its geographic and historical features.
139. The co-ordinator, who is also responsible for geography, leads the subject appropriately. Some monitoring of the pupils' work has been carried out and some assessment is carried out at the start and conclusion of topics. Resources are sufficient and of appropriate quality. These are often 'topic' boxes that are kept within classes to help teachers with the programme of work they are following. The school makes use of visitors to the school and has organised a parent to come into the school to talk about Grenada.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

140. In the last inspection the standards attained by pupils aged seven and 11 was satisfactory. The inspection findings indicate that standards have been maintained throughout the school and the recent completion of a high-quality computer suite is beginning to lead to higher standards. Evidence from past work, discussion with pupils and the observation of other classroom activities were taken into account.

141. Some of the younger pupils already have some experience of using computers when they move into Year 1. The pupils use the mouse and keyboard effectively and know how to use simple CD-ROM-based programs to supplement their lessons. Discussion with the pupils indicates that they learn simple ways of instructing a programmable floor robot called a 'Pixie' to move in different directions. By the time they are seven, the pupils use the computer to communicate and develop ideas. They complete simple word-processed tasks and worksheets. In Year 2 the pupils used the facilities of the new suite to design a wanted poster for fictional pirates. They use the program well, knowing how to change the style and size of the fonts as well as import and change clip art. Discussion with the pupils reveals that they know that some toys use technology to make them work, as do devices such as video recorders or traffic lights.
142. By the time they are 11, the pupils consolidate these skills and some supplement them by using computers at home. The new suite is promoting an improvement in the standards the pupils are reaching. They are confident and skilled in entering information and data into a spreadsheet program and in Year 4 the pupils develop ideas of simple programming by entering sequences of instructions to draw shapes. The older pupils are building upon skills gained before and are confident in using the computer to research and manipulate information. For example, in Year 6 the pupils used the computers well in connection with their geography work on rivers. They manipulate text and graphics confidently and know how to change the style and layout of a presentation program.
143. Their knowledge about how to improve and refine their work develops well. Many make relevant and valid alterations to their work in order to make it more appealing for the intended audience, for example. In discussion pupils show that they know how to send E-mails and the highest-attaining pupils are familiar with sending attachments and using the best search engines on the Internet. The control aspect of the programme of study is a weaker aspect of the subject, although the pupils could describe the principles of data logging over time. There are good examples of the computer suite being used to support other subjects. Examples of work in English were seen, such as in Year 5, when pupils developed their persuasive writing to provide information on a cruise holiday. In mathematics, spreadsheets are used to help the pupils to enter information. In other classes, word-processed scripts for a play and accounts written of visits, were of good quality.
144. The pupils enjoy their work and are particularly well motivated when using the facilities in the computer suite. They concentrate well and where necessary they share computers effectively. They listen carefully, particularly when the class teacher or technician demonstrate activities on the interactive whiteboard. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning due to the good levels of adult help, particularly in the computer suite.
145. The teaching is good and the teachers make good use of the new facilities. The additional help of the technician is good and makes a valuable contribution to the overall standards that pupils are reaching. The pupils are motivated by clear organisation and activities that are relevant to them. They learn well as the activities are clearly linked to existing work in progress and they can retrieve their work quickly, which means that little time is lost when starting activities.
146. The management of the subject is good. The school's policy, curriculum planning and teaching guidance are based upon national guidance modified to comply with the needs of the school. The staff are about to undertake nationally-provided training to improve their personal skills in the subject. The resources have improved considerably since the last inspection and the LCD projectors and interactive whiteboards are enabling high-quality work to be planned for. The arrangement of having computers in classrooms works appropriately and supports learning. The assessment arrangements have been reviewed to make assessing the pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels easier and teachers are making clearer assessments as a result. The school has established links with a company that have helped in the provision of some equipment for the computer suite.

MUSIC

147. It was only possible to see a small amount of music being taught and, while discussions with pupils and singing in assembly add to the picture of music, it is not possible to make an overall judgement

about the quality of teaching. However, standards are in line with those expected nationally for seven- and 11-year-olds, maintaining the picture seen in the previous inspection.

148. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has put in place a good guidance document on curriculum planning and teaching which ensures that pupils' experiences build upon each other. This contains a reasonable balance between listening and performing music and encompasses a range of musical traditions. For example, pupils in Year 2 learn to sing a traditional song in Gujarati. By the end of Year 6 pupils have a developing knowledge of different forms of music and musicians and the contribution music makes to pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.
149. Not all teachers are confident in teaching music and so to help them the school employs a visiting pianist who works alongside teachers to provide some playing expertise. In the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory with clear planning. Lessons gave pupils a chance to perform by singing or clapping. In Year 1 the teacher began the lesson with a well-thought-out opening activity. Pupils suggested actions to fit various sounds and, with the teacher acting as conductor, put these sounds and actions together in an 'orchestral' performance. The task captured pupils' interest so that they were keen, listened well and carefully followed the teacher's lead. The work linked well with follow-up work on identifying the 'pulse' of pieces of music. When performing their own clapping rhythms, pupils were given clear pointers for improvement and therefore successive performances got better.
150. This is not always the case and can be contrasted with singing in a Year 3 lesson, in which pupils ran through a repertoire of songs. Although they performed some several times, they were not given a clear enough indication of what to improve and singing therefore lacked precision and did not get better through practice. However, performance improved markedly in response to interesting tasks when, later in the lesson, the teacher used her own expertise well to play pupils a simple song on the violin. They were eager to sing along and as a result sang sweetly and in tune and progress was made.
151. The curriculum is enhanced by a music club and opportunities for both the infants and the juniors to join with other schools in occasional music days. The school provides a good range of instruments for pupils to receive extra lessons and a significant number benefit from these.
152. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management. Resources are well organised and, although centrally stored, easy to access. Monitoring, however, is in the early stages and plans for assessment are ambitious. She has a reasonable idea of how she wants to develop the subject further, although much of this is concerned with adding to resources rather than improvements to teaching and learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

153. At the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach standards expected nationally. Very good and excellent teaching was observed in some Year 4 and 5 classes, with teaching elsewhere mostly satisfactory. Standards are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection, being satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make steady progress through to Year 4, where in response to lively teaching it picks up.
154. The best teaching is marked by very good subject knowledge, which systematically introduces pupils to new skills and enables them to practise them in small groups, while the teacher works intensively with chosen groups. In an excellent lesson in Year 4, for example, the teacher skilfully used her expertise to set up a series of group activities incorporating fielding and striking skills needed for team games. The unobtrusive manner in which she taught differing groups meant that every second was well used and pupils' skills and ability to work as a team improved markedly, while high-quality teaching of similar skills in a Year 4 class, also based on good demonstration by the teacher, equipped pupils well with the necessary knowledge for follow-up group games. In both lessons, despite making marked improvements, throwing, fielding and striking skills were no better than average. An additional feature of high-quality teaching was the way in which, at the conclusion to the lesson, the teacher cleverly referred back to the learning objective, requiring pupils to prove what they had learnt. This gave pupils and the teacher a chance to assess success.

155. Elsewhere, while generally satisfactory or better, teaching does not reach the same heights. Most lessons are well planned and smoothly organised. Teachers have a good grasp of the need for pupils to warm up and use this to deepen pupils' understanding of the benefits of exercise and its effect on the body. However, some uncertainties about specific coaching points result in pupils not always being given pointers for improvement. For example, in a gymnastics lesson in Year 5 the impact of the teacher's well-conceived task of asking pupils to join movements into a flowing sequence was not what it should have been because the teacher did not insist on good movements or show pupils how to perform movements that would enhance their sequences. Consequently, although pupils succeeded in putting movements together, sequences lacked complexity and finesse.
156. Some teachers do not always make the best use of the high-quality performance of individuals to demonstrate to other, less confident pupils, what can be achieved, so that performance does not always improve through practice. Occasionally too little is expected of pupils and teachers display an over-anxiety about organisation which slows the pace of the lesson so that learning is reduced.
157. Unfortunately there has been some disruption to the swimming programme because of the temporary closure of the local pool. As a result, a number of pupils have yet to reach the standards set out in the National Curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced for pupils in the juniors by a good variety of extra-curricular activities and a residential visit in Year 6.
158. In the short time since her appointment, the well qualified and enthusiastic co-ordinator has put in place a detailed guidance document on curriculum, planning and teaching that achieves a good balance between gymnastics, games, dance, swimming and adventurous activities. As well as overseeing the implementation of this guidance, the co-ordinator has made important improvements to resources. However, assessment is underdeveloped and so teachers cannot be sure about where to pitch work; and the monitoring of teaching is in its early stages. Given the expertise of the co-ordinator and the many areas of high quality teaching, the school is in a good position to move forward.