

INSPECTION REPORT

LOWER HALSTOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lower Halstow, nr Sittingbourne

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118341

Headteacher: Mrs J Portnoi

Lead inspector: Ms S Billington

Dates of inspection: 20 – 22 September 2004

Inspection number: 267250

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	134.5 (full time equivalent)
School address:	School Lane Lower Halstow Sittingbourne Kent
Postcode:	ME9 7ES
Telephone number:	01795 842344
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P G Marshall
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a small rural primary school with five classes, each with children from two year groups. The proportion of children that is eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of children with special educational needs is broadly average; two have statements of special educational needs. Most of these children have learning difficulties, some have specific physical difficulties. There are very few children from minority ethnic groups and all children speak English as their first language. The majority of children have pre-school experience before starting school. Their levels of attainment on entry are wide-ranging but overall are broadly average.

The school gained Investors in People (IIP) status in May 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4343	Ms S Billington	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music
13874	Mrs J Chesterfield	Lay inspector	
16492	Mr R Lever	Team inspector	English Science Geography History Physical education Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides an acceptable standard of education but it does have some **serious weaknesses**. Overall pupils are not achieving as well as they should. While there have been some successful initiatives to raise standards in reading and science, not enough has been done to tackle declining standards in mathematics and writing. Because pupils are underachieving, the school **does not provide value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils do not achieve as much as they should in mathematics, writing and information and communication technology (ICT)
- Standards in speaking and listening are good, particularly for the older pupils
- There are weaknesses in aspects of leadership and management
- Teaching of pupils in years 4, 5 and 6 is generally good
- Good support is provided for children with special educational needs
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well
- Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good and relationships are very good throughout the school

The school has not improved enough since the last inspection. Standards have declined. Although the downward trend has been halted in reading and science, standards in these areas are now average rather than above average as they were in the last inspection. Some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been successfully tackled. There is now better provision for pupils to develop investigative skills in science. Individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs are clearer and more specific. There is still not enough opportunity for curriculum co-ordinators to check on the quality of work in the areas for which they are responsible.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall pupils' achievement is **unsatisfactory**. Whilst results of national tests have to be treated with some caution, because of the small number of pupils in each year group, assessments of pupils' progress shows that they are not doing as well as they should in aspects of English and mathematics. Results of tests taken at the end of year 6 are declining in comparison with schools nationally. In mathematics, pupils' performance in 2003 was in the lowest five per cent of schools in the country. Girls generally perform better than boys in tests at the end of year 2 and year 6. The inspection found that, while standards in science and in reading are broadly average, standards in mathematics and writing are too low. Standards in ICT are also below those usually found, but this is because resources and accommodation are inadequate; the school is doing what it can within severe constraints.

Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress as a result of well-targeted support.

Pupils' personal development is **good**, particularly their social and moral development. However, not enough is done to prepare them for life in a culturally diverse society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** but there is variation in different parts of the school and in different subjects. There are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and writing. Teaching for pupils in years 4, 5 and 6 is generally good and this is helping pupils to make up some lost ground. Last year, year 6 pupils did better than might have been expected in national tests given what they had achieved in year 2.

The curriculum is satisfactory and enriched well by a range of visits and visitors.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are **unsatisfactory**. While the school has recognised the need to raise standards and identified some of the reasons for underachievement, there is a lack of rigour in the way that these have been tackled. Co-ordinators take their responsibilities seriously but lack time and information that would help them to be more effective. The most recent school development plan recognises the need for improvements in this area and also has action planned to raise standards but it is not possible to judge the potential success of the initiatives planned.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally confident about coming into the school and find it friendly and open. They would like to be better informed about what their children are going to learn. The inspection found that there is scope to improve the information that they get so that they can offer more help to their children.

Pupils are very positive about the school. They feel that other children are friendly and that they have an adult to turn to if they have any concerns. The older pupils are particularly positive about opportunities to get involved in decisions about the running of the school through the school council.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in mathematics and writing
- Improve provision for ICT so that pupils achieve as well as they should
- Improve systems for monitoring and evaluating to ensure that weaknesses are identified and tackled rigorously

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the race equality policy is monitored and outcomes reported to parents
- Ensure that the special educational needs co-ordinator has sufficient time to carry out her role.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

There is too much variation in standards achieved in different subjects and in different parts of the school. At the end of year 2, most pupils attain broadly average standards in reading but few attain higher levels. Standards in writing are below average. Standards in mathematics are well below average at the end of year 2. There is some improvement in years 3 to 6, but not enough to bring standards up to average levels. Standards in science are broadly average. Girls do better than boys in national tests.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests have declined in the last three years
- Standards in reading have improved recently but pupils do not achieve as well as they should in writing and standards are too low
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics
- Standards in science have improved and are back to average levels
- Standards in ICT are below expectations

Commentary

1. In the reception year, children make satisfactory gains in most areas of learning¹. Most attain expected levels at the end of the year but few do better than this and some potentially higher attaining children could achieve more, particularly in the early stages of literacy.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.1 (13.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.1 (12.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.5 (16.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Results of national tests have to be treated with some caution because the number of pupils in each year group is small and there can be quite wide variation in performance from one year to the next. However, results in reading and writing tests at the end of year 2 were well below average in 2002 and 2003. While the most recent results (2004) in reading show good improvement in the proportion of pupils working at average levels, too few attained higher levels in the tests and, because of this, overall results are likely to be well below average². Writing results show a slight improvement but are likely to be still well below the national average. Results of tests in mathematics were below average in 2002 and 2003. The most recent results show a further decline and are likely to be well below average.

¹ These relate to the early learning goals in physical, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

² There is no national data for 2004 for comparative purposes. Predictions of how school's performance is likely to relate to the national picture are based on 2003 data.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.3 (27.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	22.8 (26.3)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.4 (29.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 18 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. There has also been a decline in results of tests taken in year 6, but this is less marked in English than in mathematics. In 2002, results were in line with the national average, in 2003 they were below average and they are likely to be at the same level in 2004. However, the performance of these pupils was in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally at the end of year 2 and the results in year 6 indicate good gains in their learning. Results in mathematics declined from being below average in 2002 to well below average in 2003 and there has been no significant improvement in 2004. Overall, girls made better gains than boys. Results in science dipped from average levels in 2002 to well below average in 2003 but improved again in 2004 and are likely to be above average levels.
4. The inspection found considerable variation in standards and achievement in English. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening develop well and standards are above average. Standards in reading are broadly average throughout the school. Writing is the weak area. From the reception year to year 2, pupils do not achieve as they should in terms of writing independently. For older pupils, the standard of written work improves and some year 6 pupils produce well-organised and imaginative pieces. However, in years 3 to 6, not enough use is made of pupils' skills in other subjects and recorded work is often on worksheets or involves putting a missing word in a sentence to describe a picture. Standards in mathematics are too low; there are some weaknesses in teaching and there has not been a rigorous exploration of the reasons for the low standards. In science, standards are broadly average. Standards in ICT are below average because of the poor provision for this subject. No judgements were made on standards in other subjects.
5. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory gains against the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs).

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, and so are their attendance and punctuality. Provision for their personal development is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships amongst pupils are very good
- Opportunities for pupils' social and moral development are good but not enough is done to prepare them for life in a culturally diverse society
- Attendance is above the national average

Commentary

6. Pupils are very thoughtful and supportive in the way they behave towards one another. They are very sensitive of others' feelings. In a year 5 and 6 class assembly, for example, the audience were fully behind their classmates who were performing, willing them to do well. At the other end of the school meanwhile, year 1 pupils were delighted to be asked to help reception children on the computer and played 'teacher' very conscientiously. Positive relationships are also evident in

the relaxed atmosphere and considerate behaviour on the playing field at break and lunchtime. The school successfully encourages pupils to empathise with people who face particular difficulties or challenges. For instance, in a history lesson older pupils considered the plight of evacuees and reflected maturely on feelings of isolation and loss.

7. The school is successful in allowing pupils to develop as members of a community. It fosters their talents and social skills, and their awareness of right and wrong. The children's summer fairs, the children's newspaper and the class assemblies, as well as the school council, give pupils the chance to do things for themselves, work in a team and make their own decisions. A good range of special events and activities, such as the work with the 'Life Education' bus, give pupils experiences which they will remember and which will help them develop as individuals. Parents are rightly pleased with how the school enables their children to grow and mature.
8. Pupils have some good opportunities to develop their awareness of culture and the arts through trips to the theatre and the cinema and participation in musical events. What the school does not do is prepare pupils adequately for life in the ethnically diverse society of modern Britain. Multicultural education focuses too much on people who live abroad rather than those who live in nearby towns and cities. As a result, pupils do not get a sense of knowing about cultures they may encounter later in life.
9. Attendance has improved over the last year so that it is now higher than the average for primary schools. Parents do not want their children to miss school and make sure that they attend regularly and on time.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.0
National data	5.4*	National data	0.4*

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

**National data relates to 2002-3 as 2003-4 figures are not yet available.*

10. There have been no recent exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is too much variation in different subjects and different parts of the school. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are good; staff have high expectations of behaviour and pupils are keen to learn
- Some lessons with the older pupils are challenging and imaginative
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and aspects of writing
- There are some good strategies for assessment, but there is variation in practice and use and the quality of marking is inconsistent
- Support staff provide good support to groups and individual pupils

Commentary

11. Good relationships and pupils' positive attitudes and good application mean that there is a good basis for teaching and learning. This is not always built on as well as it might be, leading to too much variation in how well pupils achieve. Expectations are not consistently high and the pace of learning is sometimes too slow, particularly at the lower end of the school. This contrasts with lessons in years 4, 5 and 6 where teaching is generally good and sometimes very good. Teachers use imaginative approaches to engage pupils and have high expectations of their capacity to achieve. This was evident in a history lesson with years 5 and 6 in which resources were used well to recap key facts about the Second World War and to encourage pupils to understand the impact of rationing and evacuation. Their mature and reflective responses demonstrated the effectiveness of the teaching methods and the pupils' level of commitment to the task.
12. Weaknesses in the teaching of aspects of mathematics and writing are leading to underachievement in these areas. Not enough is done to engage pupils in the starter sessions in numeracy lessons which often involve a limited number of pupils who give individual responses to questions. Teachers do not make effective use of strategies to involve all pupils in thinking about number or use explicit methods to explore and explain the relationship between numbers. In mathematics, and subjects such as religious education, over-use of workbooks and worksheets limit opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, for example, in open-ended problem-solving tasks in mathematics or by writing independently.
13. The quality of marking varies. In the best examples, comments are evaluative and clearly indicate the next steps in learning. At times, however, work is over-corrected and comments are superficial and do not give any guidance on how to improve. Some useful assessment information is gathered but this does not always inform expectations of pupils' capacity to achieve.
14. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are well deployed to support teaching and learning throughout the school. They give particularly good support to pupils with learning difficulties, enabling them to participate in lessons and to succeed at the tasks that they are given.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	8	10	1	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It provides sound opportunities for enrichment. The overall quality and quantity of accommodation and resources at the school are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced but there are weaknesses in provision for some subjects
- The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs
- The accommodation is poor overall and this has an impact on learning in some subjects
- The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors

Commentary

15. The curriculum is appropriately planned to take account of all subjects. Structured guidance is in place for all subjects to help teachers to plan lessons. Planning from the national numeracy and literacy strategies is used, but not enough use has been made of additional guidance material to improve teaching in mathematics and some aspects of English. The provision for ICT is unsatisfactory, and this affects pupils' rate of progress. At the previous inspection, the curriculum was judged to be good.
16. Overall the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Arrangements for using IEPs are more effective in ensuring learning needs are met whilst still enabling pupils to have access to all the opportunities that the school offers. The learning support assistants are experienced and receive training within and outside school. They make an effective contribution to the progress pupils make.
17. Although resources in terms of books and materials are adequate for most subjects, they are poor for ICT. The computer ratio is only half that found nationally. Accommodation is poor. Classrooms are cramped and restrict many activities. There is little space for computers and this restricts class teaching of ICT skills. The small hall constrains music and drama and severely restricts learning in PE. The building does not easily enable disabled access and there are no disabled toilet facilities. Money is available to remedy this and provision should be improved when new building work is completed. The new buildings in progress should significantly improve the facilities.
18. A good range of visits and visitors enhances learning in some subjects, but the range of clubs remains limited. Pupils make visits locally and further afield. Class visits have included a local zoo, Farming World, Lullington Roman Villa, The Canterbury Study Centre, The Marlowe Theatre and Chatham Dockyards. There are limited activities in religious education to support the understanding of other faiths and living in a multicultural society. Pupils have visited the church, but no other places of worship. There are opportunities for pupils to take part in a residential visit in years 4, 5 and 6. These visits add interest and make learning 'real'. The residential visit develops pupils' social skills as they live and learn together.

Care, guidance and support

The attention given to pupils' care and welfare is satisfactory. Support and guidance based on monitoring are also satisfactory. Involvement and consultation of pupils are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff care about pupils and their well-being
- Pupils are given good opportunities to have their say

Commentary

19. Staff have good relationships with the pupils in their care and treat them with consideration and respect. Pupils feel that there is always an adult they can trust and to whom they can turn if they need help. In addition, the school has some good back-up systems for making sure pupils feel well supported. Pupils know that if they write down their concerns and put them in the problem box, then they will be sorted out. They also know that they can turn to pupil counsellors, or 'agony aunts or uncles'. The youngest children in the reception class get off to a good start in the school as a result of a thorough and carefully planned induction programme.
20. The school council gives pupils throughout the school a good chance to make their voices heard. The representatives are enthusiastic and take their role seriously and are well guided by the headteacher. Although the council is relatively new, it has already made an impact in several

areas which help the school run more smoothly, such as lining up procedures and provision of litter bins.

21. Some aspects of health and safety are unsatisfactory and specific concerns have been reported to the governing body.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, other schools and the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between the school and its parents are good
- The school does not give parents enough help to support their children's learning

Commentary

22. The school has an 'open door' policy so parents find it easy to approach staff to talk about their children. Parents are supportive of the school and their children's education and are keen to work in partnership. Staff are friendly and accessible to parents and the headteacher takes seriously any concerns that they have. The school does not consult parents systematically, so their opinions cannot be taken into account as part of the development planning process.
23. The school prospectus has improved since the last inspection and now contains all the required information. However, the school does not provide parents with advance information about what their children will be studying each year. A curriculum coverage sheet is sent home with the child's end-of-year report but at that stage the work is finished. This severely limits the extent to which parents can support their children with both day-to-day basics and specific topics throughout the year. The homework policy is vague and results in an inconsistent approach across the school, so parents do not know what to expect or, again, how to help their children.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a lack of rigour in systems for checking on, and remedying, weaknesses
- Co-ordinators work hard to support the areas for which they are responsible, but lack opportunities for regularly checking on what is happening throughout the school
- The school improvement plan identifies the right areas for improvement and some appropriate actions to be taken
- Governors work hard on behalf of the school and are beginning to take a more active role in planning for improvements

Commentary

24. The school has recognised that standards are too low and taken some steps to explore the reasons for this. Analysis of pupils' performance in national tests in English at the end of year 6 highlighted the need to improve comprehension skills and there has been some success in tackling this area. However, overall there are weaknesses in establishing the possible root causes for pupils' underachievement. Data is not systematically analysed; for example, information showing that the majority of children have made limited progress from reception to the end of year 2 has been overlooked. The weaknesses in pupils' mathematical skills have been identified, but there has been no specific evaluation of the reasons for this.

25. All co-ordinators take their responsibilities seriously and work to improve provision in the subjects for which they are responsible. However, they generally lack a secure view of what is happening throughout the school because they have limited opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Further training is planned on their roles during this year. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has limited non-contact time for management and administration; this is not affecting the quality of provision for individual children but it does mean that she cannot systematically check on their progress and advise the support staff working with them.
26. The most recent school improvement plan focuses on the need to improve standards in aspects of English, mathematics and ICT. The need for further training for co-ordinators is also recognised. The plan sets a clear direction and includes some specific targets for measuring success. However, it is not possible to judge the potential impact of the initiatives planned.
27. Governors are supportive of the school. They recognise the need to raise standards and to ensure that all children are achieving as well as they should. For a lengthy period they have been very involved in trying to improve accommodation and have now achieved some success with the building of the new hall. Most of their key statutory responsibilities are met but they do not monitor and report on the outcomes of the race equality policy and do not ensure that the SENCO has regular non-contact time in line with the code of practice for special educational needs.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	460,118	Balance from previous year	98,583
Total expenditure	392,716	Balance carried forward to the next	106,185
Expenditure per pupil	2,636		

28. Most of the 'carry-forward' funding is capital funding to cover building costs. Around £9,000 is also designated for equipment for the new sports hall and to fund the accessibility plan. The actual funding to be carried forward will be around £23,000, around five per cent of the total budget.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**.

At the time of the inspection, reception children had been in school for just over two weeks on a part-time basis. Judgements are therefore based on scrutiny of work and records kept on children who have just moved to year 1 as well as observations of those who have just started. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The teacher and LSA work well as a team and the LSA plays a valuable role in supporting individual and groups of children in practical activities as well as assessing their understanding. Reception children are in a class with a small group of year 1 pupils; the teacher works hard to plan and manage this situation but there are some difficulties. For example, reception children undertake a range of practical activities while the teacher leads a literacy lesson with year 1; this means that there is some noise while the lesson goes on and she cannot become involved and extend the reception activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in their personal and social skills
- Children experience a good range of practical experiences but limited accommodation restricts access to some important areas
- Children's progress is assessed regularly and thoroughly but the information is not used as effectively as it could be
- Most children achieve expected levels in all areas of learning but some could do better, particularly in writing

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

29. Children settle readily into school and respond well to the clear routines and expectations that the staff establish. Most are interested and excited by the activities on offer and quickly learn to make choices about what they are going to do. Some talk about their activities with adults and peers and initiate their own ideas, for example, in making up stories as they play in the sand. Children are encouraged to consider the needs of others; even at this early stage of the year some share equipment amicably.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

30. Children's speaking and listening skills develop well. Most are attentive and show by their actions that they have understood instructions. The majority successfully use talk to organise and explain their ideas. A carefully planned programme for teaching letter sounds is successful and most children learn to identify the sounds with which the names of objects begin. However, there is a heavy emphasis on skills practice, for example, in forming letters, and not enough opportunity for independent written work. As a result, children who start school already writing their names and some letter shapes make limited progress. While they reach the levels expected at the end of reception, they do not go beyond this. Most children make a start at reading simple books, but only a minority knows all the commonly used words that are introduced in the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

31. Children make steady progress in their knowledge of mathematics. By the end of the reception year, most know and order numbers to 10 and have an understanding of practical addition and subtraction. Some higher attaining children work to 20. Children recognise and copy patterns and know the names of common shapes.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

32. Very little work was seen in these areas. Planning for knowledge and understanding of the world shows a good range of experiences based on themes such as ourselves, buildings and weather. These should support exploration of the past and present, how things change and features of the environment. Creative skills are developed as children learn to represent their ideas in paintings and drawings. However, limited space inhibits some aspects of creative development. The role play area is too small for imaginative work and there is limited scope for children to explore and experiment with ideas on a large scale.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

33. There was limited opportunity to see work in this area. Children using the outside area showed reasonable control and awareness of others as they rode on wheeled toys. In a physical education lesson, most children were able to move in a variety of ways and to change movement in response to the teacher's signal. However, the amount of activity in the lesson was restricted by the limited space in the hall – putting out mats after the warm-up session took a lengthy time because of the need to move groups of children from place to place for safety reasons.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are good but they do not achieve as well as they should in writing
- Marking is not consistent across all classes.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good for the oldest pupils.

Commentary

34. There is variation in standards and achievement in different aspects of English. Pupils generally achieve well and standards are good in terms of speaking and listening. In reading, the majority of pupils attain average levels at the end of year 2, but too few read at the higher levels. By year 6, standards in reading are broadly average overall with a good proportion of pupils attaining higher levels. Writing is the weakest element of English and overall standards are too low.

35. Pupils listen well and are confident speakers in a range of settings across all subjects. Teachers use a variety of strategies and give good opportunities to promote skills in speaking. Paired discussion is encouraged in all classes. In a very successful lesson with years 5 and 6, pupils were perceptive and came up with interesting observations as they discussed a range of photographs to elicit moods.

36. Reading standards are broadly average. A good proportion of pupils in the current year 6 are attaining above average levels, indicating that these more able readers are being suitably stretched. There are regular group reading sessions and all pupils are expected to read at home. Regular practice leads to steady progress and sound achievement. Reading records show pupils change their books regularly and their success is conscientiously annotated. Throughout years 3-6 teachers make good use of well-chosen books to find information and add real interest to topics studied. For example, pupils in the year 4 and 5 class learned about narrative plot and

features of Egyptian life from 'The Great Pyramid Robbery' by Katherine Roberts. In years 5 and 6, the teacher established good links between history and religious education as pupils studied 'The Diary of Anne Frank'.

37. Standards in writing are too low. In years 1 and 2, work is not always well matched to pupils' needs and there are too few opportunities for independent writing. There are signs of improvement by year 6, although standards in writing are still lower than those in reading. In all subjects teachers are aware of the need to extend subject specific vocabulary and encourage pupils to use it in both their speaking and writing. However, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' skills in writing in subjects other than English. In some classes there is an over-reliance on worksheets which restrict real opportunities for writing.
38. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good. It is satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses in teaching aspects of writing. Teachers manage lessons well and insist on good behaviour. Children are attentive and concentrate well on their tasks. They enjoy their work and behave well. Marking of work is not consistent. At its best, it encourages children and tells them what they need to do to improve and relates well to the clear learning objectives. However, in some classes work is 'over marked', particularly for some pupils experiencing difficulties, and does little to improve their work. LSAs provide effective support, which helps pupils with special educational needs to achieve in line with their peers in learning basic skills. The best teaching is in the year 5 and 6 class. Here the teacher has extremely high expectations and inspires pupils to work hard and do nothing but their best. As a result, achievement is good and progress is rapid.
39. The subject is soundly managed by an experienced co-ordinator. She monitors planning and pupils' work but has limited opportunity to watch lessons and give feedback to teachers. She is a very good role model but the school does not fully exploit her skills. She is not always aware of information on pupils' progress to give her a whole school view. The use of computers is limited and use of ICT is not yet an integral part of learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. There are good opportunities to develop literacy across the curriculum in terms of speaking, listening and reading, but chances are missed to extend pupils' skills in writing. In some subjects there is an over-reliance on worksheets and tasks sometimes demand little more than matching pictures and captions to re-tell a story.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' skills in using and manipulating number are limited
- There are limited opportunities for problem-solving
- Although the school has identified some of the reasons for underachievement, not enough has been done to tackle these

Commentary

41. Standards are too low and pupils' skills do not develop as quickly as they should. At the end of year 2, even the work of the more able pupils is only at broadly average levels. Too much use of a commercial scheme and worksheets means that pupils spend too much time on the same aspect of mathematics. There is little opportunity to explore numbers beyond 100 or to apply their knowledge of number in open-ended activities. This improves at the top end of the school, where

pupils engage with some challenging activities and a minority works at a good level. For many pupils, however, the lack of competence in number operations shows in frequent careless errors and some confusions, for example, in their knowledge of place value.

42. Lessons seen during the inspection were broadly satisfactory but there are weaknesses. Insufficient use is made of the first part of the lesson to explore pattern and relationships in number and pupils make little gains in their learning. Resources are not always used effectively to support learning – a notable exception was seen with some year 5 and 6 pupils who rose to the challenge of multiplying random two and three digit numbers by using whiteboards for working out and calculators for checking their answers.
43. There are weaknesses in leadership and management of the subject. Analysis of tests has helped the school to identify where there are shortcomings in pupils' skills. This has not been followed up, however, by checks on the quality of teaching or pupils' work. A scheme that was implemented two years ago has not yet been evaluated to establish whether it is having any impact on standards or achievement. Setting was introduced last year to try to raise standards and the school feels that this was beneficial for lower attaining pupils; again, there has been no specific evaluation of the impact and results in 2004 tests showed only a slight improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

There are few examples of mathematics being used in subjects across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in years 3-6 has halted falling standards
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and this contributes to their progress
- The co-ordinator does not have sufficient information or time to fulfil her role effectively

Commentary

44. Standards in years 2 and 6 are broadly in line with expectations. Pupils are now making steady progress and achieving soundly.
45. No lessons were observed in years 1 and 2 but teaching and learning seen in years 3 to 6 was good. As a result, pupils made good gains in their skills and understanding. In a year 3 and 4 lesson the teacher organised a range of activities to learn about the structure of a tooth and investigate the causes of decay. The final activity with a disclosing tablet caused great excitement and showed clearly what pupils had been learning. In a year 4 and 5 lesson, pupils worked well in groups to consider properties of materials and their suitability for purpose. The teacher asked good questions to extend pupils' thinking and encouraged group discussion to come up with joint decisions. In both lessons, pupils extended their scientific vocabulary and used it appropriately. Pupils enjoy the subject and show good attitudes. They carry out investigations sensibly and work well in pairs and groups. No lessons were observed in the year 5 and 6 class. Work in books and discussion with children indicates that standards are broadly average by the end of year 6. Most aspects of science are covered well. Children use diagrams, tables and charts effectively to report their findings. Work is well marked and expectations are high.
46. Management of the subject is sound. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve and has put in place a new planning structure, so that all pupils cover all topics. She looks at planning but is not given time to watch lessons and advise colleagues on

their teaching. She is not always made aware of performance data that could give her a better picture of strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inadequate accommodation and resources restrict teaching and learning
- Use of ICT across the curriculum is very limited

Commentary

47. Pupils have limited experience of all aspects of the subject and standards are below expectations. A recent audit carried out by the school identified a significant variation in the skills of the oldest pupils. Most know how to locate information and a minority can use text, tables and sound to enhance presentation. Observation of some year 3 and 4 pupils who were creating posters showed that they are generally slow at finding their way around the keyboard and need a good deal of adult support to change the appearance of text and input pictures.

48. No direct teaching was seen and present constraints make it almost impossible to teach skills in an efficient way. Space in classrooms is very limited. A very small area of the library has been set aside for laptops but there is no means by which teachers can demonstrate procedures because computers are not networked and there is no interactive whiteboard. Planning shows that, throughout the school, pupils are introduced to most aspects of the subject, but limitations in terms of 'hands on' experience slow their acquisition of skills. The situation is set to improve when new accommodation will free up space for an ICT suite. The school plans in the meantime to increase the number of laptops available and to establish wireless connection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

49. While there are some isolated examples of good use of ICT, it is not yet embedded as a tool for learning across the curriculum. In a history lesson, a teacher made good use of the British Museum website to support a lesson on the Egyptians. A few of the older pupils work together on the publication of a school newspaper. However, there are very few examples of the use of ICT in subjects such as mathematics and science.

HUMANITIES

50. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on provision and standards in **history, geography** or **religious education** as not enough lessons were observed. It is also not possible to judge the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects.

51. National guidelines are used to ensure all aspects of these subjects are planned and are adapted to meet the school's needs. Good use is made of visitors and visits to bring history to life and enable pupils to study the local area and go further afield to gain first-hand experiences. The school is developing relevant links across subjects. The work on the Second World War in the year 5 and 6 class successfully combined the history of the war and its geographical setting using a map of where the bombs fell in Kent. The plight of the Jewish people during this period was linked to the religious education topic on Judaism and there is a good link with the diary of Anne Frank. A good range of literature makes learning about the period lively and exciting.

52. In a successful year 4 and 5 history lesson, the teacher prepared pupils well for a planned trip to the British Museum to support their topic on the Ancient Egyptians. Good use of ICT to access

the museum's website illustrated facts vividly. Understanding of the process of mummification was greatly enhanced by the opportunity for pupils to 'mummify' oranges. In a year 5 and 6 lesson, the teacher made very good use of 'Anne Frank's Diary' and 'Carrie's War' to find facts and explore the impact of war. In both these lessons pupils achieved well as a result of good quality teaching and learning. They worked at expected levels for their ages.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

53. Very little teaching was seen in these areas and it is not possible to judge the quality of provision.
54. Planning for **art** shows that pupils have the opportunity to use a variety of materials and explore different techniques. Specific units of work are planned to develop pupils' skills in, for example, creating texture and pattern. In a lesson with years 1 and 2, the teacher made good use of pupils' experiences in previous lessons where they had explored colour and tone. She encouraged them to use techniques such as shading as they created self-portraits with some good results. A display of 'hopes and dreams' showed that older pupils had made good use of techniques such as colour wash and collage to create some bold images.
55. Very little work was seen in **design and technology (DT)**. Photographs and samples of work from last year show that pupils learn to make use of a range of techniques for joining and making. Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils included some good detail and imaginative ideas in collaborative work as they created 'theatres' based on the story of 'Where the wild things are'.
56. **Music** is planned using national guidance which indicates that all aspects of the subject are covered. Only one lesson was seen in which year 5 and 6 pupils enthusiastically explored dynamics as they listened to, and made, music. Older pupils have opportunities for instrumental tuition. Throughout the school, pupils participate in a range of performances. Younger pupils are involved in an annual Christmas production. In years 3 to 6, performances relate to a specific theme such as the Victorians or 'The Passion'.
57. Planning for **physical education (PE)** indicates that all aspects of the curriculum are covered but the poor indoor accommodation and resources restrict gymnastics and limit opportunities in games and dance. The new sports and media hall, funded by New Opportunities Funding and Sport England, will greatly improve the facilities available. Sports clubs are limited to football and netball. The netball club is run by a parent, as is a new football club for boys and girls. Gillingham Football Club provides opportunities for paid coaching on two evenings.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

58. Provision for PSHE and citizenship is satisfactory. It is enhanced by special events such as the visit from the Life Education bus which provides memorable experiences for the pupils related to healthy living and acting responsibly. Pupils learn about citizenship as they are encouraged to take responsibility around the school, for example, through leading assemblies, organising fairs or being a member of the school council.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

