

INSPECTION REPORT

MEREWORTH COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mereworth, Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118307

Headteacher: Mr R Crump

Lead inspector: Ms B Matusiak-Varley

Dates of inspection: 7th - 9th February 2005

Inspection number: 267310

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:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	211
School address:	The Street Mereworth Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	ME18 5ND
Telephone number:	(01622) 812569
Fax number:	(01622) 815537
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr A Jefford
Date of previous inspection:	7 th June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mereworth Community Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Maidstone, Kent. It is a one-form entry primary school with 211 pupils on roll. Eighty per cent of pupils who attend the school live out of the catchment area. Attainment on entry to the school in the Reception class is average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, 2.4 per cent, is below the national average. All pupils are of white British heritage and there are no pupils who have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, at 16.3 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need, 1.4 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The range and nature of pupils' special educational needs is largely related to moderate learning difficulties. The school achieved its Investors in People status in October 2003. Since the last inspection, the school has had new classrooms built and the accommodation has been significantly improved.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19938	B Matusiak-Varley	Lead inspector	Science Art and design History Religious education
32677	B Horley	Lay inspector	
27426	T Aldridge	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage
11642	C Parkinson	Team inspector	English Geography Music Provision for pupils with special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
1 - 4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 9
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9 - 15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15 - 16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	17 - 30
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school which provides a very good quality of education for its pupils due to the very good teaching and good curriculum planning. Standards are well above average by the time that pupils leave the school and the pupils achieve very well overall. Leadership, management and governance are very good and the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievement is very good overall.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good; the pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well.
- Teaching is very good in Years 1 to 6 and good in the Foundation Stage; overall pupils learn very well.
- Partnership with parents is very good and parents help out regularly in the school.
- Leadership, management and governance are very good and this is a contributory factor to the high standards that pupils attain.
- Making assessments and setting targets for pupils in the foundation subjects are not well developed; at times, the higher attainers make good progress rather than very good.
- The school provides a good range of learning opportunities but there is still some work to be done in developing the design and technology curriculum.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been good. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is now very good. Assessment has improved but there is still some work to be done in ensuring that individual targets for learning are set for all pupils, especially the higher attainers in the foundation subjects, to enable them to reach even higher standards.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The pupils achieve very well. Standards in the current Year 6 are considerably better than the last national test results because the 2004 cohort of pupils had a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs. In science, the school's focus on experimental and investigative work has also raised standards since the last tests. Attainment on entry to

Reception class is average and children make good progress and exceed the expected standards in all areas of learning on entry to Year 1. Throughout Year 1 to 6, pupils achieve very well, especially those with special educational needs and the average attainers. The achievement of higher attainers is variable, ranging from good to very good. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design and music. They are above average in information and communication technology (ICT). In history, standards are above average by the end of Year 2, and very high by the end of Year 6. In religious education, pupils exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in both Year 2 and Year 6. No judgements are made on standards in design and technology, geography and physical education as too few lessons were seen. However, standards in dance by the end of Year 6 are high. **Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good** and pupils have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and love coming to school. Attendance rates are very high.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The curriculum is broad and balanced, despite some gaps in design and technology, and meets pupils' needs and interest levels. Assessment procedures are good overall but are better in Years 1 to 6 than in the Foundation Stage, where they are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are very good overall, but the Foundation Stage has no covered area for play in inclement weather. Pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are good, as is the provision of support, advice and guidance based upon monitoring. Links with parents are very good and those with the community and other schools and colleges are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership, management and governance of the school are very good. The headteacher is totally dedicated to the pupils, staff and whole school community. He leads the school very well and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who is a very good practitioner. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and the leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. Governors support the school very well and ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils regard the school very highly. They are consulted on all aspects of school life and know that staff have their best interests at heart. Parents appreciate the open door policy of the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Whilst there are no major areas for development, the headteacher, staff and governing body may wish to consider the following areas for improvement:

- Improve assessment procedures in foundation subjects and improve the use of individual target setting for all pupils, especially the higher attainers.
- Ensure that there is an equal weighting on all aspects of the design and technology curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

Pupils' achievements are very good. Standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. In the Foundation Stage, children exceed the expected standards in all areas of learning and their achievements are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics, science, art and design and music, and in history by the end of Year 6. The pupils achieve very well overall.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve very well in experimental and investigative science.
- Pupils do not write enough in history in Years 1 and 2 and in religious education throughout the school.
- Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress overall but assessment data is not yet sufficiently well developed to move higher attaining children on at a faster rate.
- Target setting is at the early stages of development and, at times, higher attainers spend too long consolidating work especially in foundation subjects.
- Pupils' progress in design and technology in developing, planning and understanding materials and components is not as good as their progress in other elements of the subject.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well throughout the school due to very good leadership and management and very good use of support staff.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.1 (18.4)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.8 (16.1)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.3 (17.9)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.1 (28.0)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.8 (27.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.6 (29.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 23 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The 2004 national test results and teacher assessments show that by the end of Year 2, in comparison with all schools, standards in reading were well above average and in writing and mathematics standards were above average. By the end of Year 6,

standards in English and mathematics were well above average and in science standards were above average. In comparison with similar schools, by the end of Year 2, standards were well above average in reading, and average in writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, compared with similar schools, standards were above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. The 2004 test results were affected by a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the Year 6 cohort.

2. Higher attainers in Years 1 and 2 did better in reading and mathematics than they did in science. Girls performed slightly better than boys in mathematics. The trend in the school's average national curriculum points for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend.
3. In Years 3 to 6, higher attainers did particularly well in English, mathematics and science, with no noticeable gender differences in attainment. However, the trend in the school's average national curriculum points for all core subjects was below the national trend.
4. Current standards differ slightly from national test results. This is because the school recognised in its School Development Plan that standards needed to improve. The quality of teaching and learning was monitored well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and performance management targets were set in place. This further improved the teaching, especially in the teaching of experimental and investigative science, where pupils now achieve very well. Inspection findings show that standards are rising and by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are now well above national average and pupils' achievements are very good. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school and they use their skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and number very well in other subjects.
5. Owing to very good school self-evaluation, based upon subject audits and analysis of test results, the school recognised that pupils could be doing better in experimental and investigative science, such as by following a common format for writing up their experiments. This has had a very positive effect throughout the school on raising standards.
6. In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well and, from average attainment on entry, they exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception year in all areas of learning. Their achievements are good overall but, at times, higher attainers could be doing better: this is because teachers are not yet using assessment data sufficiently well to target the higher attainers in some activities, such as writing. Staff have recognised this as an area for development and are rectifying the issue by assessing the children according to the criteria defined in the linked to the nationally recognised foundation profile.
7. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils exceed the national expectations of the ICT curriculum and their achievements are good, although further use could be made of computers in classrooms.
8. Achievement in the foundation subjects is generally good but higher attainers could be achieving more with more rigorous use of assessment. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall because teachers know their pupils well, but not all teachers are

recording their progress according to skills underpinning level descriptors. As a result, at times, higher attainers only make good progress when they could be making very good progress. This is especially the case in history in Years 1 and 2, when pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write about their work. In religious education in Years 1 to 6, although pupils exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and achieve well, they could be doing even better especially in writing about what they have learnt.

9. Overall, pupils' achievements are very good in English, mathematics and science because:
- Teachers have very high expectations and ensure that pupils who struggle receive extra help.
 - Parents are seen as true partners in their children's education and support their children's learning at home.
 - Systems for school self-evaluation are very good.
 - Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and staff help one another develop their practice.
 - Staff, including support staff, are totally committed to the pupils in their care.
 - Test results are regularly analysed and any underachievement is tackled quickly.
 - Learning is based in real-life contexts, therefore pupils are enthusiastic and want to learn.
 - Good quality resources support all subject areas.
 - Very good links are made with literacy, numeracy and ICT, and pupils have very good opportunities to consolidate their skills.
10. In art and design, music and history in Year 6, pupils achieve very well and standards are well above those seen nationally. This is because the quality of teaching is very good and a high emphasis is placed upon teaching subject-specific skills, correct technical vocabulary and because the curriculum is planned well to ensure that learning becomes real.
11. In design and technology, no overall judgement can be made on standards achieved by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 as insufficient work was seen. Evidence drawn from the evaluation of pupils' models and teachers' planning shows that, whilst good progress is made in the making and evaluating elements of design and technology, pupils' progress in planning, understanding materials and components is not as good as their progress in other elements of the subject. Insufficient teaching of physical education was seen to make a secure judgement on standards, but pupils make good progress in dance and are very well co-ordinated in Years 1 to 6.
12. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress throughout the school because of the very rigorous use of their individual education plans in lessons and very good assistance by support staff in lessons. These pupils are included in all aspects of school life and teachers rightly deserve the praise of parents for the way they cater for these pupils needs in lessons.
13. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as standards have risen in Years 1 and 2 in reading and writing, mathematics, science and religious education, and in ICT in Years 1 to 6. Very good progress has been made in art and design where standards are now well above average and good progress has been made in

history where standards are now above those expected in Year 2 and well above expectations in Year 6.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. The development of pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and cultural development is also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance and punctuality are very good, with pupils keen to come to school.
- Pupils are polite, considerate and behave very well in classes and around the school.
- Pupils have very positive, enthusiastic attitudes to their work and try their best.
- Pupils willingly take on the responsibilities offered by the school and these develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- The school has very good strategies for promoting pupils' personal development.

Commentary

14. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending it. They are enthusiastic in their approach to formal lessons and the wide variety of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. In class they respond well to the teachers' high expectations and are attentive in assemblies when others are singing or playing musical instruments.
15. Behaviour is very good throughout the school in lessons, assemblies and at break times. This is universally recognised and appreciated by parents. Expectations of behaviour are high and the vast majority of pupils live up to these. This has a very good impact on their progress. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils are aware of the needs of other children and adults. No pupils were excluded in the last school year. Parents recognise the absence of bullying in the school and pupils state that other children are friendly. During the inspection, pupils were very polite, very courteous and keen to talk about themselves and their school. Children in the Foundation Stage exceed the expected standards in personal, social and emotional development and settle well into all classroom activities. They are developing secure learning habits.
16. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to work. They are confident and keen to learn because they receive high quality support and are able to play a full part in lessons.
17. Pupils are enthusiastic to take on responsibilities in school and there is a very effective elected school council. A major pupil opinion survey was run by the children themselves. The older pupils act as "buddies" for new children and sit with younger ones at lunch. In classes and in school activities, such as assemblies, pupils fulfil many valuable roles as monitors. In this way the school develops pupils' confidence and self-esteem as they become mature members of the school community.
18. There are very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Close links with the local church introduce pupils to spiritual values and, through simulated ceremonies such as marriage, to many of their own cultural traditions. In addition to taking regular assemblies, the vicar takes classes on moral issues. Pupils' social development is enhanced by their involvement with local senior

citizens and interaction with the many parents who run after-school clubs. There is little ethnic or cultural diversity amongst the pupils but the school works well to prepare them for life in a multi-cultural society. Through religious education, pupils are introduced to the five major world religions and artefacts from these are displayed around the school. A parent recently visited the school to discuss Judaism with pupils. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good and pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are now very good.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.0	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

19. Attendance and punctuality are very good, with pupils keen to come to school and arrive on time. As a result classes start promptly and this has a positive effect on learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 1 to 6 and good in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is good and well enriched with visits and visitors. Pupils are well looked after, and support, advice and guidance are good. Parents support their children's learning very well and their partnership with the school is very good. The school has good links with the community and other schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and children learn well. Assessment is good overall. It is good in English, mathematics and science and is satisfactory in other subjects and in the Foundation Stage. The weaknesses identified are minor shortcomings.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and convey this very well to their pupils.
- Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils.
- Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils.
- Teachers mark work regularly and offer good pointers for improvement.
- Individual target setting is not systematically applied throughout the school; assessments are not sufficiently well developed in foundation subjects and this slows down pupils' progress, especially those who are higher attainers.
- Best practice throughout the school has not been shared among staff.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (16)	14 (38)	17 (46)	0	0	0	0

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

20. Pupils learn very quickly because teachers make learning fun. They ensure that new learning is linked to pupils' needs and interest levels, for example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have been investigating how many cans of soft drink it would take to fill a bath. They took great delight in estimating and researching and, as a result, pupils' skills of problem solving in mathematics are improving.
21. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They offer very good explanations and continuously check pupils' understanding. Throughout the school, in English, mathematics and science, teachers set very high expectations by whole class teaching, this results in pupils of all abilities and those who have special educational needs, making rapid progress also because of the good quality of support that they are offered by teaching assistants. However, sometimes higher attainers are not always sufficiently pushed in foundation subjects and religious education. This is because individual target setting is not rigorously used to plan the next steps of pupils' learning and higher attainers are held back from developing their own learning. In the excellent lessons seen (Year 6 English and music in Years 3 to 6), teachers taught with a passion that gripped the pupils' interest levels. Teachers' planning was watertight, with excellent opportunities for pupils to explore their skills of independent learning. In Year 6, technical vocabulary was used very well and pupils of all abilities succeeded very well in making the best possible use of time. In music they composed music in response to the stimulus of poetry.
22. Parents are very pleased with the hard work and dedication of all staff. Teachers are passionate about their work. They are true professionals who give their best to their pupils. There is no complacency; teachers continuously strive to improve on previous best performance and embrace any change that might improve their practice. This is especially the case in Year 6, where several examples of excellent practice were seen. In this class, the teacher relentlessly pushes pupils by encouraging them to "reach for the stars", everybody's work is valued and less confident learners beam with delight when their efforts are praised.
23. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is good. Basic skills are taught well and children entering Year 1 are well prepared for the demands of a formal curriculum. There is appropriate emphasis on structured play and formal learning but, as yet, the outdoor environment has limitations in inclement weather and cannot be used as an outdoor class room. Teachers spend a great deal of time undertaking written evaluations of the children's work and interactions with one another. They have recognised that they now need to cross reference this information with the nationally recognised levels so that tasks can become even more structured for higher attainers who need more opportunities to record their work. These children, at times, spend too long consolidating learning.
24. Pupils throughout the school learn very well because a strong work ethic permeates throughout the school. When lessons start, pupils are very attentive and pick up basic skills of reading, writing and number very quickly. They are very well prepared for their next steps of education. Excellent teaching was seen in English and music. In these lessons, pupils made excellent progress because the teaching was of a very high

quality. Staff used subject-specific language very well and continuously checked pupils' understanding. Their very high expectations encouraged pupils to want to surpass their previous best.

25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good both in small groups and in class. These pupils are very well supported in lessons and the special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that targets on pupils' individual education plans are used well in lessons. As a result, pupils overcome their barriers to learning quickly. The teaching of English, mathematics, science, art and design and music is very good throughout the school. In all other subjects seen, teaching is at least good with examples of very good practice. Staff have not had the opportunity to share examples of best practice and have not had sufficient opportunities to see one another teach. This would extend their repertoire of teaching methods even further.
26. Assessments are good in English, mathematics and science and are satisfactory overall in other subjects. The best use of assessment is in English and mathematics and this model of good practice has not yet been extended into other subjects. There are missed opportunities for pupils to develop their own learning. Assessments in foundation subjects and religious education are satisfactory but do not fully take into account pupils' acquisition of subject-specific knowledge and skills. This is especially the case in history in Years 1 and 2 and religious education throughout the school where pupils' written work shows that they could be achieving more. The school has recognised this as an area for development and pupils have been set targets, but they are not specific enough and do not fully enable pupils to reach higher standards. Generally, pupils' written work throughout the school is of a high quality. Pupils' books are neat and reflect a great level of care. Marking is thorough, regular, recognises pupils' efforts and offers good pointers for improvement.
27. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. This is attributable to effective training, successful implementation of performance management and very good monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

THE CURRICULUM

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 meets statutory requirements and provides good breadth, balance and relevance and is good overall. The school's provision for opportunities that enrich the curriculum is good. The programme of rebuilding has been successfully accomplished and the accommodation is very good and used very well. The quality of resources is good overall and used effectively to support pupils in their learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good.
- The strong emphasis upon numeracy, literacy and science enables pupils in Years 1 to 6 to achieve very well in these subjects.
- The school offers a fully inclusive curriculum to all its pupils, including those with special educational needs.

- There are some gaps in provision for design and technology.
- The school prepares its pupils very well for the next stages in their education.
- There are good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum through clubs, visits and visitors to the school.
- Pupils' participation in the arts is very good.
- Pupils' participation in sport is good and enhanced by visits from professional organisations who provide teaching expertise.
- The use of literacy, numeracy and ICT across other subjects is well developed.
- Accommodation facilities are very good and there is a good range and quality of resources in most subjects which are used well to support pupils in their learning.
- Outdoor storage for the Foundation Stage needs further development with a covered area so that facilities can be used during inclement weather.

Commentary

28. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides good breadth and balance in providing children with structured learning opportunities, learning through their senses and purposeful play, which is similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. Good curriculum plans are in place which successfully incorporate all the areas of learning that should be taught by the end of reception. The overall quality of lesson planning is good and a good range of opportunities are provided for children to follow their interests and develop independence during activity times. There is a wide range of interesting activities and learning experiences, centred around themes which provide a good balance between skills development and play. However, lack of an outdoor covered area limits what can be undertaken during winter months and during inclement weather. The school has improved provision since the previous inspection of 1999.
29. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements, with all subjects taught with a strong emphasis on English, mathematics and science. Policies are in place for all subjects and are reviewed regularly. Very good plans are in place for delivery of the music curriculum. National guidance is used effectively to plan the curriculum and lessons in most subjects. However, the school needs to review the policy and curriculum in design and technology to ensure that all areas are taught with sufficient depth and rigour so that pupils receive their full entitlement. Literacy and numeracy skills are well developed across subjects. ICT is used well to support other curriculum areas.
30. Equality of access and opportunity for all pupils is good overall, although assessment information is not always used as well as it should to provide more challenge for higher attaining pupils in the Foundation Stage and in foundation subjects. Subject managers are not sufficiently involved in monitoring teachers' planning or looking at pupils' work to ensure pupils are achieving at the correct levels. The school provides good opportunities to develop skills of citizenship and personal, social and health education and this contributes very well to pupils' personal development.
31. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good because they have very good access to the curriculum through the use of their individual education plans and unobtrusive but very effective support from designated adult help. The school's very good resources and access help these pupils to learn.

32. The school provides good support for learning outside of the school day. There is a wide range of well-organised visits and visitors to the school to extend learning beyond the classroom. Older pupils undertake a residential trip to Norfolk to support science, geography, and adventurous activities. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in sport and there are regular friendly seasonal sporting fixtures and tournaments with other schools in the area. Teaching and coaching expertise is provided from professional organisations such as Kent Cricket Development and also Chelsea Community Development Officers. These activities contribute well to pupils' personal and social development, as well as providing opportunities to use skills and knowledge. There is a good range of well-supported clubs and activities during lunchtime and after school and these are popular. Provision for the arts and music are very good. A well-supported recorder club and weekly input from Kent music tuition provides very good opportunities for playing a musical instrument and pupils regularly perform in the annual local musical festival. Pupils regularly take part in Christmas and summer term concerts, involving the whole school in drama and music which promotes personal and social skills well.
33. There are sufficient well-qualified, experienced teachers and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation facilities are very good and the old and new classrooms blend well together. The school is clean and well maintained by the efficient caretaker and all areas are used well with accessibility into classrooms for disabled pupils. There is a large nature area with an enclosed pond, spacious grassed and outdoor hard-play areas and plans for an adventure play area. The library is well resourced and organised and includes mathematics games and activity area, providing good opportunity for pupils to undertake their own research. There are sufficient good quality resources in all subjects to support pupils' learning, which are accessible and well organised. This has a positive effect on learning. However, in the Foundation Stage, a lack of a covered area prevents children from using the outdoors as a learning area in inclement weather and limits their opportunities for independent learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school has maintained its broad and balanced curriculum.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

There are good arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The school provides good support, advice and guidance and involves them very well in its work by seeking and acting upon their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good methods to seek and act upon pupils' views through surveys and the school council.
- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with their teachers and other staff.
- The school's good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly into formal education.
- Pupils' health and safety is safeguarded by secure procedures and effective risk assessment.

Commentary

34. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and high standards have been maintained. This is a caring school with a family ethos. Pupils are welcomed into

school every morning by the headteacher who knows them all by name. Parents recognise that their children are treated fairly and that behaviour is very good. Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils are confident in their dealings with teachers and other staff. All pupils are well known to their teachers, who monitor and assess their academic and personal development. As a result, pupils receive good advice and guidance. Within the school pupils with special educational needs benefit very well from specialist support. Reports and assessment of particular difficulties and support required for these pupils are thorough, detailed and up to date.

35. The school provides a safe environment. The headteacher and two school governors carry out a survey of the school every half term. The health and safety policy is reviewed every year and clear job descriptions ensure that routine tasks are carried out by staff including the caretaker who lives on the site. The trees in the school grounds are regularly checked and remedial work undertaken where necessary. There are good risk-assessment procedures in place covering all visits outside the school. The control of medicines is effective and a number of staff are trained first aiders. Child protection procedures fulfil the requirements and the headteacher, who is responsible for this, has undergone recent training, which he disseminates to other staff. There are good links with other agencies that provide support such as speech and language therapy. A theatre group uses drama to enhance pupils' understanding of health and social issues including litter and drug awareness.
36. The good induction process starts with two half-day visits by parents and children, when pupils are introduced to formal education with the help of a buddy from the older pupils. Parents are provided with a folder containing a great deal of helpful information about school life and how they can support their child.
37. Pupils' views are taken into account through the school council. Two elected representatives of each class meet regularly with the deputy headteacher to discuss items raised by their classes. The school has recently carried out a major survey of pupils' views about the school, which was organised by the pupils themselves. They carried out a detailed analysis of the results which they presented to other pupils, staff and governors using computer display technology.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

There are very good links with parents. Links with other schools and the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents support the school and believe that it is receptive to their views and concerns.
- Parents are active in helping the school as volunteers and the parent, teacher and friends association provides considerable extra funds to the benefit of pupils.
- Parents' involvement in school greatly enhances pupils' learning through activities such as after-school clubs.
- Good links with the local church enhance pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

Commentary

38. The partnership with parents is very good, which is an improvement on the previous inspection when it was good. Parents believe that their children are happy at school

and that behaviour is good. The school consults them very well both informally and through surveys which are carefully analysed and the results communicated to staff, governors and parents. There is easy access to teachers, and parents particularly appreciate the presence of the headteacher at the school gate every morning to greet them and their children. As a result, any problems are quickly and effectively dealt with.

39. There is a very active Parents, Teachers and Friends Association which provides substantial financial support to the benefit of pupils. Parents, grandparents and local villagers are involved in supporting pupils' work in school such as hearing readers and organising the library. Parents now run a programme of after school classes over a five-week period where they use their individual skills to enrich the learning of several small groups of children. Classes cover a very wide spread of subjects such as bell-ringing, Spanish and pottery which enhance the curriculum very well.
40. Annual reports are comprehensive and give a clear picture of children's progress with targets for the following year. Regular newsletters are sent by the school and the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association informing parents of news about routine information and events as well as regular encouragement to support the school as a volunteer. The school runs curriculum evenings in mathematics and literacy. A project called "Maths in Mereworth" provides parents with an information pack and ongoing updates containing valuable resources which enable parents to support children's learning at home. As a result parents support their children's learning very well.
41. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed and supported by the school.
42. Pupils go on to a number of independent, grammar and non-selective secondary schools. The school has effective links with these and works closely with Oakwood School which provides specialist support in mathematics and ICT. There are three members of staff who are trained student mentors and the school typically provides placements for four student teachers each year
43. Pupils visit the local church for services such as harvest festival. The vicar attends the school to take services and lessons on moral issues. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by pupils joining in simulated ceremonies in the church, such as marriages. There are good links with local senior citizens, which develop pupils' social skills. In addition to collecting and distributing harvest festival gifts the pupils organise a tea party for them each year.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governance is very good.
- The headteacher and governors' strategic planning is very good.
- The headteacher's leadership sets a very good example and strongly motivates staff and pupils.
- There are too few opportunities planned for staff to see one another teach.
- Performance management is very good, as is the school's self-evaluation.

- The school's resources are linked strongly to raising standards in all aspects of school life and finances are very well managed.
- Administration is very good.

Commentary

44. The very good governors' input helps shape the vision and direction of the school through the wide range of experiences and knowledge they bring to the school. Governors are highly involved in the school's strategic planning and are kept very well informed by the headteacher, particularly with regard to standards and finances. Financial planning is very good. Governors are keenly aware of their duties and carry them out very well. Their grasp of important elements means they are able to challenge and support the headteacher. All statutory requirements are met.
45. The headteacher, senior management team and governors have acted well on the previous inspection report to raise standards and improve accommodation. Standards have been raised but target setting could be even more precise to ensure that a greater number of pupils achieve Level 5 by the end of Year 6. The headteacher, very ably supported by his deputy, shows very high aspirations for pupils and the school in all aspects of its work, especially in its spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects and these pervade the whole of school life. The leadership is very well placed to improve standards further because it has a clear grasp of what needs to be done. The school development plan shows careful evaluation, reflection and thoughtful prediction of the school's future needs. The headteacher sets very high standards and leads by example. Pupils like and respect the headteacher very much and he motivates them to work hard, achieve well and to be happy at school.
46. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good and show a very high level of commitment, organisation skills and insight into the needs of pupils with special educational needs and their families. The headteacher is very well informed and supports the co-ordinator for special educational needs by ensuring that time is made for teachers to be involved and updated in training, and information sessions analysed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. The very effective level of communication and use of school's resources helps pupils achieve very well.
47. The leadership and management of the curriculum are good. Teachers and support staff have very good opportunities to update their knowledge linked to their performance management targets, but valuable opportunities are missed for staff to develop their practice even further by watching one another teach. Performance management is very good and gives teachers very clear targets and sense of direction in school life. This raises standards throughout the school. Performance management is taken extremely seriously and care is taken to ensure that staff have appropriate responsibilities. There is some shadowing of responsibilities to ensure a smooth take-over when members of staff are due to leave, in the management of music for example. The school is sensitive to the needs of individuals and is highly inclusive in its practice. Throughout the school, adults present very good role models to pupils and this example is set most strongly by the headteacher.
48. The management of the school is very good. Pupils' attainment is monitored carefully by the senior management team, especially in the core subjects. Pupils' tracking systems and their use to plan lessons is very good although target setting could be

more rigorous for the higher attainers in foundation subjects. School self-evaluation is very good; it is accurate and well focused on raising standards.

49. The leadership and management has maintained its high standards since the previous inspection through influential leadership, clear strategic thinking and very good management.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	546,773	Balance from previous year	62,096
Total expenditure	512,624	Balance carried forward to the next year	53,902
Expenditure per pupil	2,470		

50. Financial management is very good and effective and careful financial planning has been in place for a significant length of time, enhancing the school's security and ability to maintain clear strategies in the event of change. Administration is very efficient and ensures the school runs smoothly. The ten per cent carry over is appropriate as it is already allocated to purchasing more ICT equipment.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

51. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Sound assessment procedures are in place linked to the nationally recognised foundation profile. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with improved teaching and standards, revised curriculum implemented and improvements in outdoor play facilities.
52. Children enter the reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. There is provision for 30 children and at the time of the inspection there were 29 children on roll. Eight children had already attained their fifth birthday. A significant number of children have previously attended the local nursery.
53. The school's assessments of children on entry to the reception class and inspection evidence indicate that attainment is broadly average in all areas, although there are wide variations from year to year. Induction procedures are good, with visits to and from the nursery. Pre-visit meetings are arranged for parents and children and parents complete an Early Years Profile in September. Records are passed on from the nursery, which provides the school with prior information. Very good partnerships are maintained between home and school, once children are admitted, through daily contact when parents/carers collect children. There is a home/school contact booklet so that parents are encouraged to be effective partners in their child's learning.
54. From scrutiny of previous work, assessment information and lesson observations, most children achieve well and are likely to exceed the nationally expected standards in all areas by the end of the reception year in all areas of learning.
55. Scrutiny of planning indicates that staff provide a good range of interesting and relevant activities around themes. Weekly and daily planning is well planned within the six areas of learning but could be improved by linking activities more closely to the recognised 'stepping stones' which would help with assessment procedures. Sound assessment records are maintained and regularly updated. However, the information is not used sufficiently well to provide relevant activities for different ability groups and challenge for higher attaining children. Often children undertake the same activities in groups with insufficient attention paid to their ability and, as a result, they consolidate learning rather than move forward.
56. In lessons seen, and by looking at planning and previous work, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Two teachers job share. They work well with teaching assistants who are used well in group activities but are not always utilised sufficiently to monitor and assist children during introductory activities. All staff provide good role models, are conscientious, caring and supportive so that children are happy and secure. High expectations ensure children are well behaved and interested in what they are expected to do.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide a caring and secure environment in which children quickly learn to co-operate and help each other.
- Relationships between children and adults are very good.
- Adults are constantly trying to promote learning in this area.
- Children's independence is developed well.
- Staff provide very good role models and have high expectations.

Commentary

57. Most children are likely to exceed the standards expected by the end of the reception year. The vast majority of them achieve well because of the consistently good teaching and learning. Children quickly settle into the daily routines of directed and self-chosen tasks. All adults provide good role models and set clear expectations for the children, developing them socially and as independent learners. Relationships between children and children, and children and staff, are very good. Children show good independence, for example in the confident way they quickly settle to tasks, organise themselves at various self-chosen activities and clear away and tidy up and the end of sessions. Good activities are planned within which children can work and play co-operatively together. High standards and caring relationships ensure that the children know what is expected of them. Praise and encouragement are used well and behaviour is very good. Most children show very good levels of interest in what they are doing and are keen to learn. They go to the toilet unaided, and most already manage to dress themselves and put on their own coats.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high emphasis on developing speaking and listening, and reading and writing skills, and these are taught well.
- Staff provide a good range of opportunities to develop children's language skills.
- Reading materials are used effectively to provide a stimulus for creative development.
- Higher attainers are not always pushed enough to record their work and this limits their rates of progress.
- Data from assessment is not sufficiently well used to move children on in their learning.

Commentary

58. Children's achievement in speaking and listening, reading and writing is good and the majority are likely to exceed expected standards by the end of the reception year. Children enter reception with a wide range of language skills and vocabulary. Teachers and support staff have good knowledge of the early acquisition of language and provide a good balance of direct teaching to individuals, groups and as a whole class. Questioning is used well to encourage children to listen and think during supervised activities, ensuring that children take turns and listen to others. They take a keen interest in what children have to say and this encourages them to further develop

the confidence to talk. Children listen attentively when a story is read to them, for example the story of Chinese New Year. They regularly take books and words home to share with parents and carers, and there are many opportunities when children can look at books themselves. There is effective teaching of sounds with 'letter of the week' and phonic skills so that children learn to recognise sounds and simple words from their reading books and classroom displays. In writing, children are encouraged to write letters, use the computer to word process labels for their owl pictures, and write lists and tickets in 'The Travel Agents', but insufficient opportunities are given to higher attainers to encourage them to write more, and this limits their rates of progress. Most children already confidently write their names and higher attaining children write simple sentences unaided. Good links are made between drama and hand/eye co-ordination in support of handwriting skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults plan a wide range of practical activities to promote children's mathematical knowledge and understanding.
- Good use is made of mathematical language.
- Good use is made of resources to support children in their learning.
- At times, insufficient use is made of assessment information to provide challenging activities for higher attainers.

Commentary

59. Most children are likely to exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception year. Teaching, learning and provision are good, with staff planning a wide range of activities to promote mathematical understanding, making good use of equipment. Children are encouraged to count and match numbers, for example higher attaining children count and add spots on two dice to a number snake with numbers to 12 and 'The Chinese New Year' story is used well to introduce ordering of numbers to 12. They explore shapes using a good range of resources, in structured and less formal activities, and many accurately name simple plane and solid shapes. Adults use number rhymes and songs to help children reinforce counting and most count accurately to at least ten and many to 20. Children have regular access to sand and water activities to explore their properties. Adults ensure they use correct mathematical words to develop and extend children's understanding of mathematical language for example when children explored 'more' and 'less' and undertook simple subtraction using toy animals crossing a river. However, whilst higher attainers make good progress over time, they could be challenged even more in lessons to record their work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of interesting and imaginative activities is planned and provided to promote learning in this area.
- Staff use questioning effectively to enhance the children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them.
- There is a good range of visits and visitors to the school to develop awareness beyond the classroom.
- Children have regular access to, and confidently use, computers.
- There are few opportunities for observational and interactive displays to develop children's investigative skills.

Commentary

60. Most children are likely to exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception year and achievement in this area is good. The quality of teaching, learning and provision is good and children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Through the use of road layouts, simple construction kits and role-play area (currently a 'Travel Agent'), children increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. There is a good range of visits and visitors to extend children's knowledge and understanding. They explore and handle a wide range of materials and tools as they make models, create collages, work with sand, water and a wide range of construction materials. In the current theme of Chinese New Year, they look at a wide range of Chinese objects, paint Chinese characters and make paper dragons. In previous activities they have learnt about owls, the moon and making moonscapes and places in London. Children have regular access to computers and confidently use the mouse and keyboard to word process, design and make pictures and develop hand/eye co-ordination moving objects and characters round the screen. Religious education is taught systematically in line with the Kent locally agreed syllabus. However, there are few opportunities for children to develop investigational and observational skills through interactive displays with resources such as magnets, magnifying glasses, mirrors and torches.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for outdoor play have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Hand and eye co-ordination is encouraged in a variety of activities that require the use of scissors, glue sticks, crayons, pencils and brushes.
- Insufficient use is made of the outdoor play facilities, except at break times, due to lack of a covered area.

Commentary

61. Most children achieve well and the majority are likely to exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception class. The quality of teaching, learning and provision is good. There is regular access to the facilities in the hall for running, jumping, climbing, gymnastics and dance. The children respond well to instructions, stopping and starting on request and use small apparatus well both independently and in pairs. Outdoor play provision is good and improved since the time of the last inspection but is not used sufficiently except at break times, largely due to the lack of a covered area. Children move freely, with growing confidence, and are developing good awareness of space and others. They confidently use large wheeled toys and are encouraged to take turns. Staff are fully aware of health and safety issues as they support children. Children are offered a wide range of opportunities to develop their co-ordination and manipulative skills by handling glue sticks, cutting with scissors, making models and painting with a range of brushes. There is a good range of construction kits and jigsaws, which is readily available to develop co-ordination and fine control.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of role-play to develop children's creativity and imaginative responses.
- Good links are made between creative development and other areas through the themed approach.

Commentary

62. Staff provide a good range of opportunities to promote creative development so that most children are likely to exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception year. The quality of teaching, learning and provision is effective and children achieve well. Planning and displays show that, through the use of art and design, role-play, songs, rhymes and stories, and small world toys, children successfully develop their imagination and creativity. Children confidently use paint to create imaginative pictures of the moon and make collage owls. They draw Chinese characters linked to the theme of Chinese New Year, draw pictures of Chinese artefacts and create pictures using the shapes from the seven-piece tan gram. They enjoy making paper-chain dragons and decorating paper plates in the style of the willow pattern. Good quality resources are plentiful and well used. Children readily take part in role-play activities in the 'Travel Agents' researching holidays in travel brochures and writing tickets.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2 ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Behaviour is very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Individual target setting is still in the process of being developed.
- The curriculum is stimulating.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

63. The 2004 national test results and teacher assessments show that, in comparison with all schools, standards in reading were well above average and standards in writing were above average. In comparison with similar schools, standards in reading were well above average and standards in writing were average. Standards in English have been high consistently since the previous inspection. Pupils come into Year 1 with standards above those usually seen and very good teaching and leadership and management ensure that pupils build thoroughly and speedily on their previous attainments so that levels of attainment and achievement are maintained and improved. The Year 6 national test results show that, in comparison with all and similar schools, standards were above average in spite of the high percentage of pupils who had special educational needs.

64. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils attain standards that are well above average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Overall, their achievement is very good. Pupils of different ability groups, including boys and girls, achieve well. Pupils express themselves clearly, coherently and persistently. They ooze with confidence. They can explain the purpose of their work and their opinions logically and correct themselves if they think they have not made themselves clear. They listen carefully and understand their teachers and other adults as well as other children. They remember new knowledge and understand and follow instructions quickly and this gives them a great advantage when learning other subjects. Their reading is fluent and they have a good range of skills to help them decode print, use picture clues and extract meaning. Pupils draw on knowledge of print and the spoken word to assist them with different aspects of writing. Their spelling of basic words is good and their systems for working out spellings are strong, although the level of language pupils use in their writing exceeds their spelling level. Their basic punctuation is very good and used consistently. Their writing is clear, joined and well formed. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, their standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are well above average. Pupils choose vocabulary with care and speak with great confidence so that they are expressive, accurate and lively communicators. They read widely, fluently, accurately and with enjoyment. Their writing is very good. Pupils use suitably complex structures in writing which reflect the high quality of their spoken language and draw on the different styles they encounter in their reading. Their use of vocabulary is varied and apt.
65. English is very well taught throughout the school. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very highly organised. They continuously push pupils to answer their questions by using extended sentences. Teachers encourage their pupils to discuss their understanding of texts and, in an excellent lesson seen in Year 6, pupils gave very detailed explanations of how Ted Hughes book "*Iron Man*" differed from the film. They know all their pupils very well, and use tracking and assessment effectively to plan suitable work for their pupil. Teachers' questioning is very good, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and so pupils are confident, diligent and keen to learn. Their behaviour is very good. Pupils learn very fast because teaching is clear, interesting and challenging. Provision for homework is very good and involves parents well. Resources are very good and teachers and pupils use them well.
66. The curriculum is good. The literacy hour is used suitably and the school is lively and creative in the way it approaches the subject. Pupils have many opportunities to use drama and hear, write and read poetry as well as having very good access to a stimulating range of books.
67. The leadership and management are very good. The subject co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge, organisational skills and a passion for the subject. Tracking and assessment have been well established and target-setting systems are being developed even further as, at present, the targets set are too broad and not specific enough. This results in pupils occasionally not fully understanding what they need to do in order to improve. The high standard for provision for pupils with special educational needs has been maintained. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

68. Generally, pupils use their skills of language and literacy well across the curriculum but in history (Years 1 and 2) and religious education there are missed opportunities for writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of the current Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics are very good and the National Numeracy Strategy is well embedded in the school's practice.
- The enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject manager provides very good leadership and management.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in practical problem-solving activities.
- The use of mathematical skills across the curriculum is very good and pupils have many opportunities to practise skills learnt in mathematics lessons in other subjects such as science, history and geography.
- The use of homework is very good.

Commentary

69. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards of current work seen during the inspection are well above average. Most pupils, including those identified as having special educational needs, achieve very well. Standards since the last inspection have improved at the age of seven, and have been maintained at age eleven.
70. The results of national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2004 showed standards to be above average compared to the national average but average when compared to similar schools. The number of pupils achieving the higher level was well above average. Standards in the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average, and above average, compared to similar schools. There was an above average number of pupils attaining the higher level in spite of the fact that there were many pupils in this cohort who had special educational needs. Data analysed from regular assessments is used well to alter curriculum planning and pupils are well prepared for the national tests. Most display very positive attitudes to mathematics, settle quickly to tasks and work hard independently or with partners so that they quickly acquire new skills and knowledge.
71. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen and from looking at pupils' work is very good overall. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the range of activities and coverage of the curriculum is very good. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned so that teaching methods are often very effective. Lessons begin briskly with teachers clearly explaining learning intentions so that pupils are fully aware of what they will be learning and doing. As at the time of the last inspection, there is a heavy emphasis on developing pupils' mental skills. The lesson introduction is used very well to encourage and engage pupils, which successfully helps them to use mental skills in solving problems. Very good use is made of

homework and this supports learning very well. Teachers have very high expectations and pupils respond well, applying themselves effectively to tasks and showing very good concentration. Relationships are very good and pupils show very good respect for what others have to do and say. Final sessions are used well to assess what pupils have learnt and give them the opportunity to explain what they have been doing. Where teaching is very good pupils respond eagerly to the high expectations of them, work very well in groups and are very keen to solve problems. The very good range of quality resources is used effectively to support pupils all different groups of pupils in their learning.

72. Throughout the school, teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to use mathematics to solve real-life problems and high quality work was observed in Year 6 by higher attaining pupils. Classroom assistants are used very well to support groups of pupils during the main part of the lesson but are not always used as effectively during the beginning and end of sessions to monitor and support pupils. Good use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning in mathematics. Homework provision is very good and extends pupils' learning very well, giving parents effective opportunities to be involved in their child's learning.
73. The subject manager provides very good leadership and management. She is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic and offers very effective support to colleagues and parents. A recent very successful maths evening for parents was very well supported. The 'Maths at Mereworth' folder, and the 'Development of a standardised approach to calculation' initiated by her provides very good support and guidance for pupils, parents and staff. Regular assessment is used well to monitor pupils' progress and identify weaknesses and adapt planning. This information is not currently used to set individual and group targets for pupils, of which they are aware, to raise standards even further and is an area for development. There are very good relationships with the local grammar school who provide teaching expertise on a regular basis for higher attaining pupils in Year 6 in problem-solving and investigation activities. They have also undertaken a whole day undertaking problem-solving and investigation work at the grammar school. The mathematics corner in the library area with games and activities, organised by the subject co-ordinator, further enhances and raises the profile of mathematics very well.
74. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved from average to well above average and have been successfully maintained at well above average by the end of Year 6. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented and is well established in the schools practice. Resources have been updated and improved and the subject co-ordinator has moved the subject forward very well.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. The use of mathematical skills across the curriculum is very good. Links between mathematics and other subjects, such as science, history and geography, are very well developed and give pupils many opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge and understanding, especially in problem solving and interpreting data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in experimental and investigative science are now very high and staff have worked very hard at raising standards in this aspect of the science curriculum.
- Teaching is very good and pupils learn very well.
- Pupils are given very good opportunities to carry out research especially in Years 3 to 6 and pupils' skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are used very well to support learning.
- Higher attainers in Years 1 and 2 are not always given sufficient opportunities to be responsible for their learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Resources are good and support learning well.
- In some instances, pupils do not offer sufficient explanation as to how findings from experiments differ from presented hypotheses.

Commentary

76. Pupils' results in the national curriculum tests and teacher assessments in 2004 by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were above average when compared to all schools; in comparison with similar schools they were below national average. Previously over the last three years, standards by the end of Year 6 were well above national averages. The lower standards in Year 6 in 2004 were simply a result of natural variations of pupils' capability in that particular year group and the higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
77. Inspection findings show that standards are well above national average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievements are very good overall. A very high percentage of pupils attain the higher levels but, in Years 1 and 2 there is still room for improvement in ensuring that higher attainers are challenged even further to develop their skills of independent learning, such as finding out information for themselves. There were no differences in attainment by gender. Staff have worked extremely hard at raising standards. The co-ordinator has analysed test results and targeted resources to raise standards, especially in experimental and investigative science. This has had a positive effect on raising standards.
78. Pupils throughout the school thoroughly enjoy experimental and investigative science because the experiments that they set up are linked to their everyday experiences. They have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. In Year 2, pupils investigated the taste and texture of baby and toddler foods and, in Year 3, several examples of excellent work were seen where parents supported their children in researching different materials used in designing and making disposable nappies. Pupils' books throughout, clearly demonstrate the very good use of literacy, numeracy and ICT to support learning. Line graphs, bar charts and a full range of graphs are used very well to enable pupils to present their findings in a variety of ways.
79. The quality of teaching is very good and this is the main reason why standards are so high. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and, by the end of Year 6, pupils

successfully use their knowledge of scientific facts to make predictions, competently plan, carry out and record their investigations. However, in Years 3 to 6, on occasions, not enough emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to evaluate their findings in light of their predictions.

80. Generally, pupils learn very well because teachers use a wide range of very good resources, correct scientific terminology and offer very good explanations. Teachers are enthusiastic in their work, learning is fun and this captures pupils' interests.
81. Very good opportunities are provided to link science with other subjects. Pupils use their literacy skills to develop their understanding of rocks by writing stories about 'Ros Rock' who became 'Susie Soil'. This fun approach to learning underpins most aspects of the school's science curriculum. Assessment procedures are good overall but focus mostly on recording pupils' knowledge and not enough on their skills acquisition. This results in target setting being too general. This is compensated for by the fact the teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and are aware of their strengths and areas for development in learning.
82. Leadership and management are very good. Performance management is well implemented. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The rates of pupils' progress, especially in Years 1 and 2, has improved from satisfactory to very good. This is because the school has very good systems for self-evaluation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above national expectations.
- The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, especially in developing specific ICT skills.
- The curriculum is well planned and delivered using national guidance to ensure progression of skills and knowledge.
- The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is good.
- Resources for developing ICT are good.
- The school needs to carefully monitor the use of the computer room to ensure it is used efficiently during the week by all classes.
- The school needs to further develop whole-school assessment procedures to monitor pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding and use them consistently to provide challenge for higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

83. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, from discussions with pupils and samples of work, most achieve standards above national expectations. All groups of pupils, including those identified as having special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well.
84. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have improved at the end of Year 2 and have been maintained at the end of Year 6 despite the raised

national subject requirements since 2000. Government funding has been used efficiently to establish a modern computer suite, improve the number of computers and continue to raise teachers' knowledge and understanding through staff training. This has meant that staff knowledge and confidence has improved and these have raised the quality of teaching and learning significantly.

85. In lessons seen and from discussions with pupils and staff, scrutiny of teachers' planning and looking at samples of pupils' work, the quality of teaching and learning are good overall and sometimes very good when pupils are taught in the ICT suite. Teachers plan lessons carefully using national and guidance to ensure ICT skills and knowledge are well covered in the computer suite. Good guidance and explanations are given, with class teachers modelling the expected outcomes on the interactive whiteboard. Teachers display good subject knowledge, especially in their explanations of how to import pictures into text, set up spreadsheets and use the web for gaining information. This motivates pupils very well and results in their very good attitudes to learning. Lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils learn well because teachers clearly explain what they will be doing. Relationships are very good. Pupils show very positive and confident attitudes towards the use of ICT, clearly enjoy their lessons and work effectively with partners. Good links have been established for older pupils to visit the local high school for more specialised teaching in the skills of control and monitoring during the summer term. The significant number of pupils who have regular access to computers at home use them very effectively for word-processing, research and practising skills learnt at school.
86. Leadership and management by the subject co-ordinator are good and much has been done in ensuring that teachers use ICT as an integral part of learning. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic, keen and hardworking and leads by example, providing good support to colleagues with training and advice. However, she is not yet sufficiently involved in rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Whole-school assessment procedures have recently been introduced in the infants to monitor and track pupils' progress but need further development in the juniors to ensure pupils are meeting national standards. Overall, assessments are satisfactory. National guidance is used well to plan the curriculum and teachers use this successfully in planning effective lessons. The recently established computer room is well equipped with 16 modern computers, which are used effectively to teach specific skills and support other curriculum areas. There is a good range of supporting resources including scanner, digital camera, overhead projectors, listening centres and headphones although, during the inspection, computers in classrooms were rarely in use to support pupils in their learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. The use of ICT across other curriculum subjects is generally good and ICT skills are used well especially in literacy, numeracy, science, history and geography.

HUMANITIES

88. No judgement has been made on the provision for **geography** because no teaching took place during the inspection and insufficient evidence was seen to make a judgement on standards. Scrutiny of pupils' books demonstrates a wide range of well-presented work with a high level of subject-specific vocabulary used at a level above that normally seen. Pupils are given good opportunities to write accounts of

geographical features of places and climates. In their study of Water Watch in Year 6, pupils investigated marine litter and toxicity. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high standard for provision for pupils with special educational needs has been maintained.

89. Insufficient teaching was seen in **history** in order to make an overall judgement on provision. However, two lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, both of which were very good. No teaching was observed in Years 3 to 6. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average and by the end of Year 6 they are well above average. Overall, pupils' achievements are good but in Years 1 and 2 pupils, especially those who are higher attainers, are not given sufficient opportunities to write about the work that they have undertaken. This results in some missed opportunities for pupils to reflect on and deepen their historical knowledge and understanding. For example, by writing in role to gain empathy with people in the past. This is quickly rectified in Years 3 to 6 where pupils are given very good opportunities to develop their writing skills. For example, in Year 6, when writing about the Second World War, one pupil wrote "the malignant smell of burning fumes rose up into the air like leaves flying high in a gust of wind". Teachers give pupils very good opportunities to express themselves and this enables them to develop their skills of empathy. The curriculum is well planned and the breadth of good learning opportunities enables pupils to develop their historical skills of enquiry at a fast rate. Pupils are given good opportunities to deduce information from a variety of sources such as portraits, paintings, inventories, letters, documents, books and the web. In Year 5, pupils have made very good gains in learning Old English by studying John Bussington's Inventory with respect to life in Tudor times. In the two lessons seen, the quality was very good and pupils learnt very well. In Year 1, pupils were absorbed in creating a Victorian toy museum for their parents. They meticulously planned games and eagerly wrote instructions. It was very apparent that they had good chronology skills and were able to describe features of Victorian toys. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and enjoy history, especially the good range of visits. ICT is used very well to support learning and pupils are given very good opportunities to present their finding in a variety of ways. Assessments are satisfactory but record pupils' acquisition of knowledge rather than precise skills. The subject is well led and managed by a knowledgeable co-ordinator who ensures that good quality resources support the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and pupils are making good progress.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above those expected and pupils' achievements are good.
- Pupils throughout the school have good knowledge of other faiths.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not recording enough of the work that they have covered.

Commentary

90. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and their achievements are good. Pupils in Year 2 have good knowledge of the stories that Jesus told and eagerly talk about their visits to the local church but scrutiny of their work shows that they have not had sufficient opportunities to write

about what they have learnt and valuable opportunities are lost for them to develop their extended writing skills. Pupils have good knowledge of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

91. By the end of Year 6, pupils know that in many religions people fast and that it is easier to fast in a group than it is individually. They explain the meaning of Lent and that the Bible is divided into the Old and New Testaments and they have a good knowledge of religious symbols.
92. The quality of teaching is never less than good. Teachers use a good range of resources to keep pupils interested in learning, including good use of ideas, stories, texts and visits to the local church. Pupils learn well because they are given opportunities to make comparisons between different religions and relate religious beliefs to their own lives. For example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 compare the lives of religious leaders such as Guru Nanak and Jesus, and understand the concept of being true to principles and convictions. Religious education makes a very valid contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
93. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and show deep respect for different religions.
94. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but are in need of being aligned to the locally agreed syllabus. The leadership and management of the subject are good and the co-ordinator is aware that more opportunities could be provided for younger pupils to develop their writing skills.
95. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as standards have improved from satisfactory to good in Years 1 and 2 and resources are now good.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

96. Insufficient teaching was seen to make an overall judgement on provision in **art and design**. Scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning, displays and interviews with pupils demonstrates that, by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, standards are well above national expectations and pupils' achievements are very good. The curriculum is well planned with clear expectations of what pupils should be achieving at the end of each year and good emphasis is placed upon teaching art and design skills such as use of paint brush, shading and colour mixing. Pupils have very good knowledge of the work of different artists such as Picasso, Lichtenstein, Tracy Emin, Susan Hiller and Marcel Duchamp. Pupils have very good knowledge of different styles of art work including Cubism, Romanticism and Modern Art. In Year 6, several very good examples of comic strip illustration inspired by Roy Lichtenstein were seen. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors, for example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have visited the National Gallery and in Years 1 and 2 pupils have worked with a range of different artists. This has had a very positive effect on pupils' learning because they are inspired to produce high quality work. Art and design is used very well to enhance other subjects such as science and history. Pupils' work is meticulously illustrated, such as their drawings of Roman mosaics in Year 4. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The subject is well led by a very knowledgeable co-ordinator who has a very good understanding of the pupils' strengths and areas for development.

97. In **design and technology** there was insufficient evidence available on standards and the quality of teaching, so that it is not possible to make a judgement on provision. However, from talking to pupils and teachers and looking at planning, it is clear that elements of the National Curriculum are not fully developed. Whilst making skills are well managed, insufficient attention is given to pupils' designing, planning, communication and evaluation skills, and to their knowledge and understanding of materials and their uses. There are also insufficient opportunities for pupils to undertake small focused practical tasks to develop design and technology skills before making final products. Activities are often too prescriptive, providing pupils with little opportunity to develop their own ideas, specific skills and knowledge. The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management in the limited time available for monitoring. Discussions with her indicate that the subject is soundly planned using national guidance. However, the school needs to review the current policy and ensure topics provide sufficient development of skills and knowledge as pupils progress through the school. Design and technology weeks during the past two years have supported the subject and raised the profile well, ensuring that all aspects of design and technology are touched upon. There are good subject resources that are readily accessible and well organised in the dedicated design and technology room. Although teachers assess pupils' work, there are no whole-school systems in place that make use of National Curriculum levels to monitor pupils' standards and progress, and provide more challenge for higher attaining pupils, and this is an area for development. From the limited evidence available, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
98. **Physical education** was not a focus during the inspection, so it is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision, standards or teaching and learning, as only one lesson was observed. Standards in dance are high by the end of Year 6. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator provides good support to colleagues and leads by example. The policy has recently been updated and national guidance is used well to plan lessons, which ensures all areas are well covered. Extra teaching support and expertise is provided from various coaches from outside organisations. There are good resources which are well organised and readily accessible. There is a large hall which is soundly equipped for gymnastics and dance activities. Spacious grassed areas and a netball court provide good facilities for games and outdoor activities. The subject is supported by a good range of after-school clubs and there are seasonal sporting fixtures, competitions and tournaments with other schools. These promote personal and social development well and give pupils the opportunity to use their skills. Good support for these activities is provided from parents. Swimming takes place from Year 2 in a local pool and the majority of pupils swim at least 25 metres and many much further by the end of Year 6. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and record opportunities for pupils to meet national standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with updated curriculum policy, planning, and resources, and clubs and sporting activities with other schools have been maintained.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above those usually seen.

- Pupils achieve well.
- Attitudes to music are very good.
- There is a high percentage of excellent teaching.
- The curriculum is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

99. Standards in music are well above those normally seen. There is a well-established tradition of high quality teaching and involvement in out-of-school activities. By Year 6, pupils are well able to compose in groups using tuned and untuned percussion and to record their work quickly using simple conventional notation. They sing tunefully with a good sense of tempo and dynamics and in more than one part. A good proportion of pupils play recorders and some other wind and brass instruments, and this means that the school has a good number of performers. Pupils listen very well. By Year 1 and Year 2, pupils listen carefully, follow instructions clearly and can perform complex rhythms. They have a good grasp of how to play instruments to make different effects and listen and watch the beat as they sing.
100. A visiting teacher delivers the great majority of lessons and pupils respond eagerly to excellent teaching and are very quick to learn. Many opportunities are made for pupils to work together and the opportunities made for social and cultural development are outstanding. The use of language is especially good, for example, when composing in response to poetry. Few examples of pupils' writing about composers were seen but their knowledge of the different aspects of music, and their capacity to listen, appraise and perform is very high because of the very good quality of teaching. As well as having very carefully planned lessons appropriate for different age and ability groups for all aspects of the curriculum, classroom management skills, subject knowledge and organisation are excellent.
101. Pupils adore these lessons and leave singing, groaning that the lesson is over. Their behaviour is very good because they enjoy and respect their work.
102. The curriculum is very well planned and delivered so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, can make very good progress. The school's resources are varied, plentiful and in very good condition. The school has its own music room for teaching as well as a large hall. All resources are very well used to improve pupils' learning.
103. Leadership and management are very good. Resources and accommodation have been carefully planned over a long period of time to improve the quality of teaching, learning and hence pupils' standards. Resources are very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Assessments are satisfactory. The high standard of provision for pupils with special educational needs has been maintained and improvement since the last inspection has been good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

104. Provision in **personal, social and health education** was sampled. The school provides a rich programme of learning opportunities which includes diet, health, sex and relationships education and the dangers of drugs, as well as personal safety. This programme helps pupils to develop a safe and healthy lifestyle, gain confidence and develop very good relationships. The good care provided for pupils' wellbeing supports

pupils' personal development very well. Pupils undertake a range of jobs throughout the school that helps them to become aware of the responsibilities of living in a community. Pupils' involvement with the School Council provides a good opportunity for them to experience democracy at first hand and helps them to develop as school citizens. Citizenship and a keen sense of responsibility are further developed through the good links with the community and the school's involvement with supporting a good range of charitable work.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

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

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