

INSPECTION REPORT

**St. Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided
Middle School**
Wimborne

LEA area: Dorset

Unique Reference Number: 113891

Inspection Number: 184020

Headteacher: Mr. P. Nation

Reporting inspector: Mr. A. Nicholl
2473

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708094

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
Type of control:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. G. Lewington
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

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		Teaching
		Leadership and management
		Assessment
Mrs. J. Goodchild, Lay Inspector		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		The efficiency of the school
Mrs. A. Braithwaite	Geography	Accommodation
	Physical education	
Mr. D. Ebbage	Mathematics	Curriculum
Mr. K. Hounslow	Science	Staffing and learning resources
Mrs. D. Nicholl	English	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
	Modern foreign languages	
Mr. T. Payne	Art	
	Music	
	Special educational needs	
	Special educational needs assessment	
Mr. M. Pye	History	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Equality of opportunity	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The new headteacher and the newly constituted governing body are providing strong leadership for the work of the school.
- Music is a strength of the school. Teaching is very good and pupils' attainment is well above average at both key stages.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work, they behave well and they relate well to each other and their teachers.
- Very good provision is made for extra-curricular activities by an enthusiastic and dedicated staff.
- There is good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- Good quality information is provided for parents and they are involved well in their children's learning.
- Pupils' attendance is good: it is above the national average.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. At Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory in English, history and geography, and therefore their overall progress is unsatisfactory.
- II. Assessment is not used effectively to help plan the curriculum.
- III. Teachers sometimes teach outside their subject specialisms. This leads to some weaknesses in teaching and to poorer progress by pupils.
- IV. Teaching and other aspects of the work of the school are not monitored effectively.
- V. The school does not provide sufficient time at Key Stage 3 to teach the National Curriculum for art.
- VI. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' health and safety are poor.
- VII. There are some weaknesses in financial planning processes.

The school has some important strengths but also some significant weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection will be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils in the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has not made satisfactory progress since the time of the last inspection. It has successfully dealt with many of the issues raised as key points for action in the last inspection report. However, the issues concerned with management have not yet been tackled and these remain as important weaknesses. In particular, the roles and tasks of managers have not been sufficiently clarified to ensure that the work of the school, especially teaching, is monitored effectively so that standards can be raised. Pupils' attainment in the national tests has fallen relative to the national averages over the three-year period from 1996-98, although the 1999 results show improvement. In addition, the school has not set itself sufficiently high targets for improving attainment year-on-year.

A new headteacher has been appointed recently and there have been major changes within the governing body. The headteacher and the governing body now have a good understanding of their responsibilities in ensuring school improvement. They have begun to tackle the issues that were unresolved from the last inspection and the school is well set to make rapid development.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 11 year olds based on National Curriculum tests in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
English	C	E	
Mathematics	C	E	
Science	C	D	

The results for science are slightly better than those for English and mathematics. During the inspection attainment was found to be average at Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8 in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Attainment in music is well above average. In all other subjects attainment is average.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 5-6	satisfactory	Music and physical education	English and science
Years 7-8	satisfactory	Science, art, modern languages and music	Personal and social education
English	satisfactory		
Mathematics	satisfactory		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 92 per cent of lessons; in 44 per cent of lessons it was good and in 12 per cent it was very good. The quality of teaching was broadly consistent across each of the key stages.

Some poor teaching was seen in English, science and modern languages and in these cases this was associated with weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. There was also some unsatisfactory teaching in geography and history and in these cases there were weaknesses in the teachers' planning. Teaching in music was mostly very good or excellent.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good: pupils behave well in and around the school. There has been only one fixed term exclusion in the last year.
Attendance	Good: above national average levels.
Ethos*	Satisfactory: a caring atmosphere well based in the school's Christian values in which there are good expectations for behaviour but not always for attainment.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory overall: the new headteacher and governing body are providing a clear sense of purpose for the work of the school but there are weaknesses in the understanding of their role by other managers and in the monitoring of the school's work.
Curriculum	Good: a broad and balanced curriculum enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: pupils make satisfactory gains in their English and mathematics. However, their individual education plans are not systematically used by all teachers to plan their lessons.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory overall: spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory, moral and social development are good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Unsatisfactory overall; there are weaknesses in the match of teachers' subject expertise and the needs of the curriculum. Some teachers teach outside their subject specialisms and have not been supported by training that ensures they can do so effectively. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.
Value for money	Unsatisfactory overall: provision is mainly sound but pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 2.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>VIII. It encourages parents in the life of the school.</p> <p>IX. It is approachable when there are problems.</p> <p>X. It keeps them well informed about what is taught.</p> <p>XI. It keeps them well informed about their children's progress.</p> <p>XII. It encourages pupils to become involved in more than their daily lessons.</p> <p>XIII. Their children like coming to school.</p>	<p>XIV. There were no concerns that were a small number of parents.</p>

Inspectors' judgements generally support parents' views. The school is approachable, it enjoys considerable success in involving pupils in more than their daily lessons, pupils enjoy coming to school, reports are of a satisfactory quality and good information is provided about the curriculum. However, in the view of inspectors the school does not enable pupils to achieve good enough standards of work. At the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection some parents raised concerns about homework in Year 5, about the variability in the quality of teaching between year groups and about how well the school deals with bullying. These concerns were not echoed in the responses to the questions in the parents' questionnaire. However, a significant proportion of parents took the trouble to write comments about their concerns regarding these issues on the back of their copy of the questionnaire. These concerns were investigated during the inspection. In lessons, homework was set, and when it was, it was mainly appropriate. However, inspectors agree with the parents who raised the concerns about homework in Year 5. It is not set systematically. The school acknowledges that there are some problems associated with the setting of homework and intends to improve its practice in this matter. During the inspection there was some variability in the teaching of different year groups. Although the teaching was mainly sound there were significantly fewer examples of good or very good teaching in Years 5 and 7. The school has good policies for dealing with bullying. These were not being applied systematically. The new headteacher understood these problems as soon as he took up post and has taken appropriate steps to deal with them.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To raise further the standards of work and the quality of learning, the governors and senior managers should take the following actions.

- ◆. Improve standards by:
 - . ensuring that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in English, geography and history at Key Stage 2 and that their attainment rises in all of their subjects so that it is at least in line with pupils in similar schools, (see paragraphs: 5, 17-19, 89, 90, 127, 134)
 - . ensuring that teachers use assessment effectively to help plan the curriculum so that pupils make better progress, (see paragraphs: 34, 49)
 - . ensuring that teachers have sufficient specialist knowledge in the subjects that they are required to teach, and that appropriate training is provided to ensure that the gaps in teachers' knowledge identified in the report are rectified, (see paragraphs: 23, 36, 75, 94, 129, 136)
 - . ensuring that all aspects of the school, but particularly teaching, are monitored effectively, and the results used to secure improvements, (see paragraphs: 23, 69)
 - . providing sufficient time to ensure that the National Curriculum for art can be taught in full, (see paragraphs: 42, 114)
 - . providing appropriate homework for all year groups in the school, and communicating the school's requirements in this regard clearly to parents. (see paragraph: 64)
- ◆. Create a policy and sound procedures for monitoring pupils' health and safety. (see paragraph: 62)
- ◆. Improve the quality of financial planning by producing a longer-term plan that is clearly linked to the school's development needs. (see paragraph: 80)

In addition to the key issues above. the following less important issues should be considered

for inclusion in the action plan.

- Provide more opportunities for information technology in other subjects across the curriculum.
- As soon as finances allow, provide technical support staff to help with the preparation for the teaching of practical subjects.
- Create a plan to show how resources will be provided over time to make good the deficiencies identified in subjects.

These are indicated in paragraphs: 76, 79, 144.

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1.The school is situated in Wimborne, a small rural town close to Bournemouth. It has Voluntary Aided Church of England status. The school has grown in size by around 12.5% since the time of the last inspection. The catchment area is large but the majority of pupils live in mainly private housing estates within walking or cycling distance of the school. There are grammar schools nearby and some pupils transfer to these at the end of Year 7. Fifteen pupils from the current Year 8 (11.5%) left at the end of Year 7. This undoubtedly reduces the overall attainment profile of the school during Year 8.

2.The school tests pupils in Year 5 shortly after they enter. The results of the test show that pupils' overall attainment varies from year to year but on the whole is above average.

- There are 447 pupils on roll (250 boys, 197 girls).
- Three pupils are listed as other ethnic origin.
- One hundred and twenty pupils are listed as having special educational needs.
- Three pupils have statements for special educational needs.

1.St. Michael's School sets out a vision of being a happy, caring, co-operative, safe and supportive environment. Some of the targets for improvement it has set itself for 1999 are set out below.

- Reviewing the links between collective worship and areas of the curriculum.
- Producing policy statements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; for health and safety and for pupils' personal and social education.
- Improving pupils' recreational facilities.
- Reviewing the bullying policy.

1. Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	67	60	127

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	39	41	50
	Girls	48	36	51
	Total	87	77	101
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	68 (71)	60 (68)	79 (94)
	National	65 (63)	59 (62)	69 (68)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	40	49	54
	Girls	50	44	55
	Total	90	93	109
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	70 (49)	74 (58)	85 (91)
	National	65 (63)	65 (64)	72 (69)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	5.4
	National comparative data	6.1
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.0
	National comparative data	0.4

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	1
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	12
Satisfactory or better	92
Less than satisfactory	8

4. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

4. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

4. **Attainment and progress**

2. In the last inspection report attainment was judged to be around national averages and this is still the case. Evidence from classroom observations and from looking at pupils' work indicates that overall attainment is close to the nationally expected level at Key Stage 2 (age 11) and broadly average when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8 (age 13) part way through Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 2, the results of national tests are close to national averages in English and mathematics and above them in science. The school test results over the last three years have varied but when considered as a whole they have been above the national average. Nationally results have shown a rising trend over the last three years; this has not been the case in St Michael's. When compared with similar schools, attainment is well below average at Key Stage 2.

3. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1998, the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected level 4 in English was close to the average, as was the proportion attaining the higher level 5. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining 4 was close to the average but the proportion attaining the higher level 5 was below average. In science, the proportion of pupils attaining level 4 was above the average and that for level 5 was close to the average. The results for 1999 show some improvement. In English, a higher proportion of pupils gained level 4 and in all three subjects higher proportions of pupils gained level 5. The national averages for 1999 are not yet available so comparisons with the 1999 results cannot be made at this stage. Overall, when compared to similar schools, the results for English and mathematics are well below average and those for science are below average. Thus, as a whole, attainment at Key Stage 2 is well below average when compared to schools of a similar kind.

4. When they leave school at the end of Year 8, pupils' levels of attainment are broadly average. They are better in science than in English and mathematics. They are such that they might be expected to achieve the national average in English and mathematics and above it in science by the end of Key Stage 3.

5. The school began to carry out a detailed programme of testing pupils' attainment on entry in 1997. The results for 1997 indicate that pupils' overall attainment for that year was average. The 1998 results show that pupils' overall attainment was above average when they entered the school. The current Year 5 have yet to be tested but their knowledge and skills as shown to inspectors close to the start of their first term in the school indicate that their attainment is above average. Pupils' overall attainment on entry clearly varies from year to year but in general it is above average. Each year a significant number of pupils transfer to local grammar schools at the end of Year 7. This means that the overall level of attainment of pupils in Year 8 falls as a result.

6. In English, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is average. By the end of the key stage pupils can listen effectively to their teacher and to each other. Most pupils are fluent speakers and are able to answer questions readily. They can read aloud accurately and with expression and show a good understanding of what they have read. Writing is the weakest skill for many pupils. The majority can write in an organised way while the higher attainers can write in paragraphs. However, punctuation and spelling are weaknesses for a significant number of average and lower attaining pupils. Handwriting is good for most pupils. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is also average. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 can listen carefully and incorporate the views of others in their thinking. By the end of Year 8, pupils are able to undertake reading for research. Writing is still the weakest skill at Key Stage 3. Some pupils

are able to write in a wider variety of forms and the higher attainers are able to adapt their style appropriately. However, some average and lower attainers find difficulty in organising a piece of writing to argue a case or tell a story logically.

7. In other subjects, pupils make gains in their oral skills. Pupils are given opportunities for reading aloud and develop their confidence in the use of a range of specialist vocabulary in art and music, for example. In some subjects, such as history and design and technology, pupils are encouraged to make use of a range of sources of information to research topics. In Key Stage 2, some good extended project work has been produced by higher attaining pupils as a result of their stay in Purbeck. In Key Stage 3, pupils write reports or longer descriptive pieces in subjects such as geography. Their writing is generally clear and punctuation is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are able to organise their work into paragraphs and are beginning to use some evaluation.

8. In mathematics, attainment in lessons and in pupils' work is close to the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to use number in a satisfactory way and can understand and use simple fractions. They can collect data and use it to construct appropriate graphs. Higher attaining pupils can use appropriate mathematical language. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is also average. Most pupils can understand the differences between mean, median and mode and understand inverse functions. Higher attaining pupils can draw graphs of straight lines and understand that a quadratic equation is not linear. Lower attaining pupils are able to conduct surveys, discuss their findings with confidence and represent them by drawing bar charts

9. Pupils have satisfactory proficiency with number across the whole curriculum. They use mental arithmetic skills well in many subjects. When required to do so, pupils can draw and interpret simple graphs. For example, they extract information from tables and graphs in geography and can interpret graphs produced in information technology. Opportunities for handling data are provided in several subjects and allow pupils to show increasingly good skills in sorting statistical information.

10. In science, attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have an understanding of the need to conduct experiments so that they are fair tests. They know about the classification of animals, about the effects of forces, about simple chemical changes and the physical differences between solids, liquids and gases. By the end of Year 8, attainment is above average. Pupils can make simple electrical circuits. They can use microscopes to study the structure of plant cells. Most know the differences in elements, compounds and mixtures and higher attaining pupils have an understanding of the periodic table.

11. Attainment in information technology is average at the end of Key Stage 2 and also by the end of Year 8.

12. Pupils begin to learn French in Year 5, two years ahead of when they are required to do so by the National Curriculum. By the end of Year 8, attainment is average and this is low considering the extra time pupils have had to study the subject.

13. Changes to the National Curriculum requirements in 1998 mean that inspectors only report on levels of attainment at the end Key Stage 2 in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information technology. Attainment in music at the end of Year 8 is well above average. This is due to very good facilities and high quality teaching. Attainment is average at the end of Year 8 in art, design and technology, geography, history and physical education

14. In Key Stage 2, progress is unsatisfactory, since pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment and by the end of the key stage their overall attainment is average. In this key stage the school devotes a considerable proportion of its teaching time, in excess of a quarter, to English and the progress made by pupils does not reflect this investment of time.

15. Progress in English is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2, largely because of the quality of some of the teaching. Some teachers lack subject expertise and do not know the requirements of the National Curriculum well enough. As a result, they are not able to move their pupils on to higher levels of work sufficiently quickly. The national literacy strategy was introduced into Year 6 in September 1998 as a means of improving English teaching. It was not introduced into Year 5 until September 1999. This was a year behind other schools in the country and helps to explain some of the unsatisfactory progress made by pupils. In most classrooms the literacy strategy is working well but in some teachers do not fully understand the teaching methods they should be employing and some of its impact is lost.

16. In geography, progress is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2, and in history, it is unsatisfactory in both key stages. In both subjects this is for similar reasons. There are no suitably qualified teachers to lead the work in the subjects, coordination across the school is weak and the teaching schemes are poor at Key Stage 2.

17. In music, pupils make very good progress in both key stages. There are clear reasons for this. There are very good facilities. Teaching is of a very high quality and is often inspirational. Pupils are encouraged to play instruments and to take part in extra-curricular activities and many of them do so.

18. In English, progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. It is also satisfactory in all other subjects at both key stages.

19. In Key Stage 3, progress is satisfactory overall. Pupils begin with average attainment and by the end of Year 8 their attainment is still average in relation to expectations for their age.

20. Although in the majority of the lessons, at both key stages, observed during the inspection pupils made at least satisfactory progress, and in many lessons progress was good, this is not sustained over time. This was indicated in discussions inspectors held with pupils and in the work they saw in pupils' exercise books. There are two major factors that lie behind progress not being good over time. The first of these is a lack of subject expertise by teachers. Several teachers are teaching subjects in which they lack subject knowledge. In addition, they have received no recent training in these subjects to support their teaching. They are often able to teach individual lessons that overall are judged to be satisfactory but they are not able to extend and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding over a series of lessons. This could be seen most clearly in a sample of pupils' work and the way in which different teachers, those with and those without sufficient subject knowledges, mark it, identify what needs to be improved and thus help pupils to make progress. The second factor that leads to weaknesses in pupils' progress is a lack of monitoring. Until this term there has been no systematic formal monitoring of teaching or marking and, as a result, the unevenness in teaching has not been identified.

21. During the inspection no discernible difference was observed in the progress of boys and girls.

22. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at both key stages. They make progress in line with their average levels of attainment. The quality of individual education plans that have been written for these pupils is good and pupils make sound progress towards the targets set for them. At present all teachers do not use these plans to support systematic planning for pupils' progress. The support from classroom assistants is

good and, when it is available, pupils usually make better progress.

25. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

23. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and often display a keen interest in lessons. They answer questions readily and are happy to make presentations to the rest of the class and to read aloud. They usually concentrate well, but in some lessons which are not well planned, their attention flags and some talk about matters not related to the lessons. High numbers of pupils attend lunchtime clubs related to subjects such as information technology and music.

24. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, behaviour is almost always good in lessons and often it is very good, but some pupils become restless in lessons in which the teacher does not hold their interest. They listen to and follow instructions and show a good regard for safety in practical lessons. Around the building between lessons, in the playground at breaks and lunchtime and in the dining area behaviour is generally good. Most pupils are courteous and polite. On occasions, however, a few pupils are boisterous when moving around the school, and noisy and impatient when waiting outside classrooms. There was only one fixed term and there were no permanent exclusions last year.

25. Relationships between pupils and those they have with their teachers are good. Teachers show respect for pupils and they, in turn, show respect for the teacher and each other. They listen carefully to the teacher and other pupils. They support each other well, offering help to others who are having difficulties with their work. Pupils are not afraid to offer opinions, knowing that others will respect their feelings. They work together well in lessons, and in games they apply the rules and accept decisions. They take good care of resources and equipment. No incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection, and, in talking to inspectors, pupils said such incidents are rare.

26. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They can work well independently when given the opportunity to do so and work well when not closely supervised by the teacher. When encouraged to do so, they take pride in their work and present it very well. There are some examples of excellently presented work in pupils' writing in their project concerned with the Purbeck visit and in some projects about musical instruments. However, the quality of presentation is variable and, depending on the teachers concerned, it can be untidy and unsatisfactory. They enjoy taking responsibility, but in most subjects there are few opportunities for this. In art, they enjoy choosing which materials to use, and in music, they choose their own instruments and organise themselves into groups. Some pupils act as monitors and sports captains, but at present there are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school and to use their initiative, and this limits their personal development. The newly appointed headteacher recognises this and has plans to form a school council and to provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility.

29. Attendance

27. The overall level of attendance of pupils is good and is above the national average. Unauthorised absence is very low and below the national average. There has been slight deterioration in the level of attendance since the previous inspection. A minority of pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory. This impedes the progress these pupils make and has a detrimental impact on their overall level of attainment. Pupils are punctual arriving at school for morning and afternoon registrations sessions. Lessons usually start promptly.

30. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

30. Teaching

28. Teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection. It is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons. It is good in over four lessons out of ten and it is very good in one lesson out of ten. Some teaching shows weaknesses and teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson in twenty and poor in one lesson in twenty-five. Teaching is broadly consistent in Key Stages 2 and 3 and also across year groups. However, there is significantly less good or very good teaching in Years 5 and 7. At the meeting with the registered inspector prior to the inspection parents expressed a concern that their children had experienced variability in the teaching between different year groups. This is borne out by the inspection findings.

29. A number of features contributes to the better teaching. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. There is sound long-term planning through effective teaching schemes and teachers base their day-to-day planning on these. Classroom control is very good and teachers use encouragement and humour effectively to motivate pupils. Teachers' organisation is good and is appropriate to the knowledge and skills that are being taught. Time and resources are used well and there is often a crisp pace through lessons.

30. In all subjects there are many examples of better teaching and some of these are set out below.

- In English, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher was concentrating on requiring pupils to refer closely to the text they were reading and to select sentences to quote to support their views of the characters. This effectively encouraged them to write at a higher level in the National Curriculum. They were stopped frequently during the lesson to check that they understood what to do and that they were quoting from the text to demonstrate what characters had said or done. They were encouraged to set their thoughts out logically by the use of a writing frame that made them confine each idea to a separate paragraph.
- In science, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher gave pupils a clear demonstration of how to make a microscope slide. Pupils helped to distribute equipment so that the minimum of time was wasted. The teacher moved around the class quickly, checking that pupils were able to set their microscopes up correctly. Pupils were asked to complete a range of tasks. The teacher was always aware of the time so that not a minute was wasted. As a result, all pupils completed every aspect of their work and were able to make detailed drawings of the specimens they had been observing.
- In history, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher used questions very skilfully. Pupils were consistently required to think more and more deeply about the subject through a series of skilful and probing questions. This technique led to an increasing emphasis on pupils beginning to raise questions. They began to understand the differing views of peasants, lords and the king in the feudal system.
- In music, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to form their own groups, to select appropriate instruments and to direct performances of their own compositions.
- In modern foreign languages, in a Year 8 lesson with average and lower attaining pupils, the lesson was planned to allow pupils ample practice of key phrases they needed to learn. The teacher effectively supported the lower attainers to help them learn small amounts of language until they could put sentences together. By the end of the lesson many pupils could take part in a conversation about their holiday plans.

1. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress overall is unsatisfactory. It is used well by some teachers to ensure activities are matched to levels of attainment. Some classes contain pupils with mixed levels of attainment. In a number of classes all of the pupils are taught at the same level and work is not presented at a range of different levels that are closely matched to pupils' differing levels of understanding. Even in classes where pupils have been grouped according to their level of attainment, some teachers do not pay sufficient attention in their planning to the differences in individual pupils' attainment.

2. Homework is sometimes used well to support and extend pupils' understanding of work begun in class. In the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection, a significant number of parents expressed concerns about homework. In the main, these were about a lack of consistency in the setting of work to Year 5. During the inspection week, homework was set by some teachers and in these cases was, in the main, of good quality and was planned to extend and develop the work begun in class. However, inspectors share parents' concerns about consistency. The setting of homework is too dependent on the wishes of individual teachers. The new headteacher shares these concerns and has plans to monitor this aspect of teachers' work

3. Teaching was poor on occasions and this was because of weaknesses in the teachers' subject knowledge. This was the case in English where the teacher did not have a sound understanding of the lesson objectives and confused the pupils who made very little progress. In science, a lack of subject knowledge created difficulties for the teacher in a practical lesson. In French, both accuracy and teaching methods created difficulties for a non-subject specialist teacher. These weaknesses and their effect on progress are amplified and can be clearly seen in the clearly in the examples set out below.

- In English, in a Key Stage 2 literacy lesson, the teacher used materials prepared by another teacher under an arrangement whereby teachers take turns to be responsible for a topic. The lesson was not planned effectively and the teacher evidently did not understand the teaching point and how the suggested activities related to it. Explanations were unclear and the pupils were confused. The teacher did not work with a selected group as suggested by the literacy strategy, nor did they circulate effectively to ensure that pupils understood what to do. Pupils were moved from one activity to another with no explanation or clear transition, and made poor progress as a result.
- In science, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, a non-specialist teacher teaching a practical lesson showed a lack of attention to detail. They introduced the lesson and then proceeded to hand out the equipment. This process took ten minutes and during this time the pupils sat doing nothing. The teacher denied to pupils the opportunity to measure the volume of water they were using accurately or take its temperature, both important features of the science they need to learn. Time ran out before pupils could complete the experiment. They were unable to obtain any results and the major purpose for conducting this practical lesson was lost.
- In modern languages, in a Key Stage 2 lesson the teacher was not a specialist. Pupils were not given enough practice in using the language as a class before being expected to use it without the teachers' support. Pairs of pupils were set to practise numbers by asking each other the answers to simple calculations. They could not do this effectively because they had not been effectively taught the words for plus and minus.

1. Teaching was also unsatisfactory on occasions in English, history and geography. This was also caused, in the main, by teachers' lack of subject knowledge. In addition, the lack of suitable teaching schemes in history and geography leads to weaker planning particularly by non-specialist teachers. For example:

- in history, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, planning had not concentrated on the development of subject-specific skills. As a result, the lesson drifted into a general examination of musical instruments rather than focussing on the evidence and what that revealed. The pupils failed to note the point that historians could learn much from the fact that such musical instruments existed.

1. A number of teachers are teaching outside their subject expertise. During the inspection their teaching in individual lesson was mostly satisfactory. However, the school's policy of encouraging teachers to teach a wide range of subjects means that, over time, pupils are not making sufficient progress. This can be seen clearly in a sample of pupils' work. Marking is variable and when teachers mark work in a subject where they have insufficient expertise, they do not identify pupils' difficulties clearly nor offer appropriate suggestions for

improvement.

2.The teaching of English and mathematics in the groups for pupils with special educational needs is always at least satisfactory and often it is good. More generally, the quality of teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs satisfactorily promotes their learning. The majority of teachers are well prepared to teach these pupils and identify them in their lesson plans. In the best lessons, they have high expectations that challenge the pupils appropriately, and plan and organise their lessons to give the necessary support for the pupils. Support assistants help pupils appropriately in lessons and individual attention is often provided. All pupils with special educational needs have good individual education plans. Work is often well matched to the needs of pupils as identified in these plans. However, not all teachers use them to ensure that work in lessons is systematically well-matched to pupils' attainment.

39.

The curriculum and assessment

3.The curriculum provided is broad and balanced, and prepares pupils for the next stage of their education. It promotes pupils' intellectual and physical development, includes all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and makes appropriate provision for religious education. At Key Stage 3 subject teaching is complemented by a programme for pupils' personal and social education which encompasses aspects of drugs and sex education. Pupils receive a satisfactory introduction to the world of work and careers education through a mini-enterprise project. The total teaching time remains at 23 hours 45 minutes, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. This is in excess of the nationally recommended minimum time for Key Stage 2 but slightly below it for Key Stage 3. The time not devoted to the requirements for teaching the basic curriculum (subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education) is used to make provision for the literacy hour, to teach a sound introduction to French in Key Stage 2 and a drama programme in both key stages. In Key Stage 2, a significant proportion of curriculum time, over a quarter, is used to teach English. Given the time that pupils spend on English they do not make sufficient progress in Key Stage 2.

4.Planning to ensure that pupils make progress as they move between schools is mainly done well. There are good links with the three main feeder first schools. Meetings take place regularly between subject staff and a shared agreement has been reached about the broad curriculum content for each subject. The curriculum prepares pupils satisfactorily for transfer to the upper school where again subject leaders from both schools liaise well with each other. The documentation prepared about pupils when they transfer is very detailed and includes their National Curriculum levels for all subjects. There are regular meetings concerned with the curriculum between the first schools, the middle school and the upper school. The planning of the curriculum within St Michael's is generally satisfactory. There are, however, some weaknesses, and planning for pupils' progress is unsatisfactory in history, geography, and personal and social education. These weaknesses are particularly marked in history and geography where planning does not ensure good progress, particularly between the key stages. There is no clear teaching scheme for personal and social education and pupils in different classes have different experiences. Provision in information technology is well planned and achievement is in line with expected levels. However, pupils do not use computers systematically within their subjects as is required by the programmes of study of the National Curriculum.

5.Time allocations are satisfactory for all subjects, except art. In Key Stage 3, the allocation of time to art does not meet the statutory requirement to ensure that the programme of study for the National Curriculum can be taught in full. This was also a concern that was raised at the time of the last inspection.

6.The literacy hour was introduced in Year 6 in September 1998 in accordance with the new national requirements for the curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2. It was not introduced in Year 5 until September 1999. The school is following the national framework of guidance provided, however, in some lessons this provision is unsatisfactory. Pupils' experience is not consistent or coherent across the school. In particular, in some classrooms they are missing opportunities for the intensive input of teachers who have sufficient specialist knowledge to extend their attainment.

7.In the main, pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy equality of access to the curriculum. However, variations in the quality of teaching, particularly by non-subject-specialist teachers, make for some considerable inconsistencies in the experiences of pupils. This term the school has become involved in a local education authority initiative to support higher attaining pupils. These pupils have been identified and additional work is beginning to be provided for them. The curriculum meets the requirements of all pupils on the school's special educational needs register. They all have individual education plans. These are formally reviewed annually, and each pupil's individual targets are reviewed termly. These pupils receive satisfactory levels of support in classrooms but subject teachers do not always plan their work to ensure it is matched appropriately to their levels of attainment.

8.As was the case at the time of the last inspection, the curriculum is considerably enhanced by the provision of opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Teachers work hard to provide an extensive range of visits and school clubs that are much appreciated by pupils. Visits are used well as a basis for work in class. For example, day visits to Hampton Court, Wimborne and Salisbury enhance learning in history. Music is a strength of the school and pupils use the facilities and resources extensively both during school time and after school. There is good extra-curricular provision for both boys and girls in physical education. The good range of clubs and teams covers traditional games, gymnastics and also non-traditional activities such as archery. Over a hundred pupils regularly take advantage of the competitive sporting activities on offer and these are well supported by many staff.

9.The school has worked hard to improve its processes for the assessment and marking of pupils' work since the last inspection. At that time, concerns about these areas of the school's work were such that the need for improvement was identified as a key issue for action. New and appropriate policies have been introduced for both assessment and marking. Practice in assessment is now satisfactory overall. The procedures for assessment are good. They require subject areas to apply the principles in the school's policy to the assessment of pupils' work. This is not being done consistently. For example, the practices in history and geography vary between Key Stages 2 and 3, and this makes teachers' planning for progression and continuity more difficult. Some subjects have examples of pupils' work at different National Curriculum levels of attainment to help to ensure consistency between teachers' assessment. However, this is not the case in all subjects.

10.The school has good systems for gathering data. The results of the tests pupils take on entry and their reading ages are recorded on group lists and shared with teachers. The levels they reach in the national tests at Key Stage 2 are added to these to help provide a clear picture of pupils' potential and attainment to date. At present this data is not used sufficiently to predict levels of attainment and to set targets for pupils.

11.There is a good marking policy. However, this is also not being followed consistently by all teachers. One important concern about marking is linked to individual teachers' expertise in some of the subjects they are teaching. Where the teacher lacks subject expertise, their marking of work does not provide pupils with sufficient challenges for improvement by highlighting the specific issues that need to be improved.

12. Some teachers use assessment to inform their planning and make changes to their teaching programme. Generally across the school, assessment is not used effectively to inform planning and this results in pupils making poorer progress. This can be seen most clearly in history and geography where the transition between Key Stages 2 and 3 is not planned effectively through being firmly based on what pupils know and can do.

13. The school has satisfactory systems for assessing pupils with special educational needs. They meet statutory requirements and are well understood by staff. Individual education plans are effective and contain well-written targets. Parents attend annual reviews of pupils' progress.

50. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

14. Overall provision is sound. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, it goes some way to supporting the aims which are at the heart of the school's life. A policy document that identifies the school's objectives in this area of its work has recently been written. This provides a useful outline of intentions but does not identify where and when the various elements that support pupils' development are to be taught in subjects and across the school.

15. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. There are some good opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge of and insights into their own and others' beliefs and values during collective worship, but there is some inconsistency in the quality of these occasions. In the best of them there are clear moral messages on such themes as coping with failure in life, and celebrating success. The themes that are followed are based around the Christian calendar. There is little other, more detailed planning for worship, and the overall provision is not monitored. On some occasions, pupils do not join in the period of reflection effectively and opportunities are missed to make the most of these occasions. The religious education programme adds considerably to spiritual development throughout the school. In other subjects, such as music, when pupils experience, and acknowledge their excitement at playing a musical instrument, there is satisfactory provision for spiritual development. However, opportunities such as these are not provided in a consistent way across the school.

16. The arrangements for pupils' moral development are good. Pupils' conduct around the school results from a sense of shared responsibility, and the clear expectations of their teachers. It reflects the commitment and hard work of the school in this area of its provision. Pupils are made aware of their rights through the code of conduct, and they appreciate that individuals should take responsibility for their own actions. All staff help pupils to understand right from wrong and reinforce this consistently. The personal and social education programme offers pupils some sound opportunities to explore moral issues in topics such as bullying. However, there is inconsistent provision of opportunities to consider a range of moral issues across both key stages.

17. Provision for pupils' social development is good. It is enhanced by the opportunities provided for pupils to work cooperatively in lessons. Pupils work well together when asked to share resources, and in their polite and courteous behaviour in lessons they show their understanding and acceptance of the positive moral code which the school encourages. Provision for pupils' personal development is limited. There are some opportunities for pupils to exercise initiative and carry out duties around the school, including acting as sports captains and form monitors. A school council is planned, reflecting the school's understanding of the need to consider how to involve pupils further in the exercise of real responsibility. There are good opportunities for pupils to involve themselves in working on behalf of a range of charities including supporting disadvantaged children, cancer research and third world charities. Residential visits such as those to France and to an outdoor pursuits centre make a major contribution to the development of pupils' social skills.

18. The arrangements for pupils' cultural development are satisfactory. Pupils benefit from very

good music provision. In lessons such as history, the pupils learn of their own culture. In other subject areas there are similar examples of good practice, such as the study of literature in English and the work of different painters in art. The impact of non-European culture is also given some attention when pupils are presented with writing by authors from different cultural backgrounds in English lessons, and when aboriginal paintings are studied in art. The lack of whole-school planning for cultural development results in inconsistency and missed opportunities. As a result, pupils do not fully benefit from the deeply enriching experience that a varied and vibrant school curriculum can offer.

55. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

19.The overall provision the school makes for the support, guidance and welfare of its pupils is satisfactory. A caring and supportive environment has been created where there are good relationships between pupils and adults, and between pupils themselves. There is a good induction programme for pupils entering the school in Year 5, and they are well supported during their early life in school. The preparation of Year 8 pupils for transition into the next phase of education is good. There are limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the school and the wider community, and this impedes their personal development. The recently appointed headteacher has recognised this and is putting in place measures to address the situation. The procedures for monitoring the progress and personal development of pupils are sound. Form tutors monitor pupils' personal and academic progress and help them to set personal targets for improvement based on the results of twice-yearly progress checks. There is an inconsistency amongst form tutors in the quality of this monitoring and target-setting process, which means that all pupils do not receive the same level of pastoral support to help them raise their level of attainment. The personal and social education programme includes sex and health education for pupils at Key Stage 3. However, a teaching scheme has not been written to ensure continuity and progression across the key stage. The provision in Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory. There is no scheme of work and no time has been allocated in the timetable. It is anticipated that personal, social and health education is taught through the subjects of the curriculum but there are no structures in place to ensure that this happens.

20.The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. The headteacher has taken overall responsibility for monitoring attendance and meets regularly with the education welfare officer to discuss those pupils causing concern.

21.Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support. The school uses a range of assessment data to identify pupils who need educational support. Good quality individual education plans are produced for all relevant pupils. There is an inconsistency amongst teaching staff about the use of these to inform lesson planning to ensure that pupils attain their identified learning targets. There is good liaison with the support services, relationships are good and effective use is made of their specialist advice.

22.The school makes good provision for promoting and monitoring discipline and behaviour. The school has high expectations of good behaviour based on pupils' self-discipline and respect for others. There are sound systems in place to manage the behaviour of those pupils who misbehave. Pupils are encouraged to care for and respect the school environment. Procedures are clear for managing any incidents of bullying that occur and pupils are made aware of whom they can approach for help if it occurs. Pupils say that any incidents are taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and effectively. The procedures for exclusion of pupils are clear and are overseen by the governing body.

23.The school's procedures for child protection are satisfactory. There is a member of staff designated as child protection coordinator. She has received the appropriate training. However, staff have not received any recent training to raise their awareness of issues concerned with child protection.

24.Care for pupils requiring medical attention is good. There are sufficient members of staff with first aid qualifications. The arrangements made for pupils who become ill during the school day are good. The school canteen provides a good selection of hot and cold meals at lunchtime and pupils are encouraged to sit and eat their meals in a civilised manner.

25.The procedures for monitoring and promoting health and safety are poor. There has been no improvement in this area since the previous inspection. There is still no health and safety policy in place, risk assessments have not been carried out and there are other breaches of the statutory regulations relating to the inspection of equipment, particularly in science. The school has successfully addressed the key point for action raised in the previous report and now ensures that all adults providing poolside supervision are familiar with current resuscitation procedures.

62. Partnership with parents and the community

26.The school's partnership with parents is good. Parents serve the school well as members of the governing body, the parent teacher association and helping within the school or with extra-curricular activities. They raise considerable sums of money that support the school in maintaining the swimming pool and providing qualified swimming teachers. Funds are also raised for equipment and other resources. Pupils, teachers and governors value these efforts and they contribute significantly to the quality and quantity of the resources available to support pupils' education.

27.The quality of information provided for parents is good and they feel welcome to contact the school if they have concerns. Parents are informed about the daily life of the school, and the curriculum their children are following, through newsletters and booklets. The pupils' personal notebooks are a means of daily communication between home and school, and these are well used for this purpose. Parents are expected to take an active role in monitoring the completion of homework. If problems occur, parents are contacted and work in partnership with the school to resolve them. At the meeting held with the registered inspector prior to the inspection some parents raised concerns about homework in Year 5. In lessons, homework was set, and when it was, it was mainly appropriate. However, inspectors agree with the parents who raised the concerns about homework in Year 5. It is not set systematically. The school acknowledges that there are some problems associated with the setting of homework and intends to improve its practice in this matter.

28.At the beginning of the school year a 'Meet the Staff' evening is held for parents. There are consultation evenings held each term which give parents the opportunity to meet subject and pastoral staff to discuss the academic and personal progress of their child. In the meeting with the registered inspector held before the inspection parents raised concerns that they were rationed to seeing only two teachers on these consultation evenings and often could not get detailed information about progress in subjects about which they had worries. This matter has been drawn to the attention of the headteacher and he has said that this practice will be reviewed. Parents receive a half-yearly progress report in January. Annual reports to parents are generally satisfactory but there is inconsistency between subjects. They do not all contain information about what pupils need to do to improve their level of attainment.

29.The school has very good links with its local partner schools. There are curriculum links in most subjects that contribute towards the smooth transition of pupils between the different phases of education. Pupils compete in sporting events against other local schools. Music makes a significant contribution to the community. Musicians perform at a variety of venues

throughout the local area including Wimborne Minster. Good links are maintained with the Local Education Authority and support agencies.

30. There is satisfactory use of the local and wider community to enrich the work of the classroom. Pupils in Year 6, for example, go on a residential visit to the Purbeck Centre, the local area is used for fieldwork in history and there are links with the local parish church of St. Michael and All Angels. Pupils in Year 8 visit France and this contributes significantly to their linguistic skills and knowledge and understanding of the culture of the country. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to become involved in raising money for a range of charities. Links with the community are not extensive. The Neighbourhood Engineers' Scheme is no longer in place and there are no visits from representatives of the world of work. The school swimming pool and playing fields are well used by the local community and first schools in the area. There are also links with the local special school and its pupils visit St Michael's and attend some lessons. The choir and orchestra visit local old people's homes to entertain the residents.

67. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

67. Leadership and management

31. Recently there have been significant changes in the personnel involved in the management of the school. A new headteacher has been appointed and had been in post for a month prior to the start of the inspection. There have also been important changes within the governing body. A new chair has been elected and some new members have joined the group. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school and is providing strong leadership and a clear sense of educational direction for the work of the school. The newly-constituted governing body has already understood that there is need for them to have a strategic view on the development of the school. The new chair and several key governors had these longer-term needs of the school very much in mind when they were involved in the appointment of the new headteacher. There is now a good sense of the governing body and headteacher working together to create clear plans for the longer-term needs of the school.

32. A key issue for action in the last inspection report concerned the roles of the two deputy head teachers. This issue has not been fully resolved. There are still considerable imbalances in the roles and management responsibilities of the two deputies and this has a negative impact on the overall efficiency of the school. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective. The special needs coordinator provides appropriate direction, guidance and support for the teachers who work with the pupils within their classes, take smaller groups or give one-to-one support. Many middle managers provide good leadership in the areas of work for which they are responsible. However, there are some weaknesses, and in some cases, for example in history and geography, managers do not have a clear understanding of their roles or responsibilities. In the main, curriculum development is well supported. Subject coordinators have ensured that staff are aware of how to teach the recently introduced national literacy and numeracy programmes. However, there are weaknesses in other areas, for example, in history and geography, because teaching schemes give insufficient guidance to staff, particularly non-specialists, on what is required. A major deficiency in the work of all middle managers is their lack of involvement in monitoring. This has not been a part of their brief in the past and the work of the school, through its teaching and curriculum development, has not been effectively monitored. Thus, deficiencies in the implementation of the literacy strategy have not been identified and remedied. The new headteacher has begun to tackle this concern with some vigour and has already established mechanisms for monitoring key aspects of teaching.

33.The school has created a sound plan that sets out targets for development in the current year. The priorities identified in the plan are appropriate and it provides a sound basis for defining the activities that are necessary for their implementation and also for evaluating progress in achieving them. At present the plan is not sufficiently long term nor does it set out the detailed costs for each of the targets listed to help to provide a basis for financial planning.

34.The school has not made satisfactory progress since the time of the last inspection. Many of the issues raised as key points for action in the last inspection report have been dealt with. For example, there have been improvement in design and technology, the arrangements for assessment and for swimming. However, the issues concerned the roles and tasks of managers indicated above have not yet been tackled and these remain as important weaknesses. Pupils' attainment in the national tests has fallen relative to the national averages over the three-year period from 1996-98. Although the 1999 results show improvement, the school has not set itself sufficiently high targets for improving attainment year-on-year. The new headteacher and the governing body have a good understanding of their responsibilities in ensuring school improvement and the school is well set to make rapid development.

35.The school has a sound set of aims and values that stress the Christian nature of its provision and these are reflected well through all of its work. A useful range of policies has been written to support the school's values. These are, in the main, followed effectively, but there is some inconsistency between teachers in the way they use some policies, such as those for marking and assessment. In the main, the school creates equal opportunities for all pupils. However, the governors' report to parents does not have a clear equal opportunities statement. Similarly, not all subject policy documents make clear the approach to equal opportunities that should be taken by subject teachers.

36.The school has a positive ethos. This is reflected in high expectations for behaviour and good relationships with teachers. In many classrooms the learning environment is good and teachers have high expectations for their pupils. This is not always the case and in some classrooms pupils are not being challenged effectively.

37.In the main, the school meets the statutory requirements, however it does not do so in the following areas:

- it does not provide sufficient teaching time for art at Key Stage 3 to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met,
- it does not have a health and safety policy, nor ensure that risk assessment are carried out routinely.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

1.There are sufficient teachers to teach the curriculum. However, the match of their qualification to the needs of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are, for example, no teachers qualified in geography to lead the teaching of this subject in the school and there has been no expert leadership in history. In addition, many teachers teach subjects in which they have insufficient expertise and they have not received enough support in the form of staff development to ensure that their teaching is effective in these subjects. This is a very significant problem in the teaching of English, history and geography, but it also creates difficulties in many other subjects. The problem is further exacerbated because very often teachers do not teach enough of the subject in which they have expertise. Thus, for example, teachers who have expertise in English teach other subjects whilst English is often taught by non-subject specialists. These problems were identified at the time of the last inspection and the school has not responded well to rectifying this situation, although improvements have been made in providing specialist support in design and technology.

2.They are insufficient support staff to meet all the needs of the curriculum. The school makes satisfactory provision for the support of pupils with special educational needs. There is, however, no technical support for teachers in science, art, information technology and design and technology, and this affects the quality of education provided and the standards achieved in these subjects. There are sufficient office and administrative staff and they all make valuable contributions to the smooth running of the school.

3.Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are unsatisfactory. Staff training, is in the main, linked to the development plan. However, planning has not clearly identified deficiencies in teachers' subject expertise and provided suitable training to ensure that these deficiencies do not lead to pupils making unsatisfactory progress over time. There is a satisfactory programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. The arrangements for appraisal are sound in outline. They follow the Dorset model and are linked to the staff development programme. However, this model has failed to pick up and remedy shortcomings in teachers' expertise in the school.

4.The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall and sufficient for the effective teaching of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in several areas. A new room has been built for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. This has enabled the school library to be moved from a corridor into a refurbished room that provides an attractive area for resources, although this is still in the early stages of development. The rooms for design and technology have been reorganised and improved and a room has been converted for the teaching of information technology. There are now good facilities for these subjects. The classroom for music has been relocated and there are excellent practice rooms nearby. In response to concerns raised in the last inspection, the art room has been improved and it is now satisfactory. Provision for physical education, including the swimming pool, is good but the changing rooms are small for the number of pupils in some groups. The inadequate soundproofing in some rooms, which was identified during the last inspection, is still an issue and storage remains inadequate in some classrooms. Provision for science is unsatisfactory. The school has one purpose-built laboratory. This needs refurbishment, particularly to provide facilities for the teaching of physics and chemistry. The second room used for the teaching of science is not fully equipped as a laboratory and places limitations on practical work by pupils. The school is set in extensive playing fields and grounds and very good use is made of these areas for environmental education. The building is generally well maintained and provides a good environment that is respected by the pupils. The school benefits from an effective and efficient team of caretaker and cleaning staff who work hard to keep the school spotlessly clean and in good order.

5.Learning resources are just satisfactory in most subjects to meet the needs of the school's curriculum and the range of pupils. The picture with regard to resources varies from subject to subject. Learning resources for music are excellent. There are few computers in relation to the number of pupils by today's standards. New computers have been purchased recently and there is, as yet, only a limited stock of software to support them. The money made available to design and technology and science for resources is low and this makes the teaching of the practical aspects of these subjects difficult. In science, for example, the use of measuring sensors linked to computers to collect data is now commonplace, but this equipment has not been purchased. In geography and history there are insufficient textbooks, and consequently teachers use worksheets too often. The stock of books in the library is adequate, although many of the non-fiction books are old. Good use has been made of the money provided for the literacy hour to improve the quality of fiction stock since the last inspection. Since then, some improvements have been made to the school's resources. For example, information technology is now used more efficiently. However, there is still no clearly-costed plan for the replacement and development of resources.

6.The overall efficiency of the school is unsatisfactory. Financial planning takes careful account of the sums needed to manage the work of the school. The chair of the governors' finance committee makes detailed projections of the way in which the school's income might vary with changes in intake and the number of pupils gaining places at grammar schools. However, there is no long-term documented strategic plan that links financial planning to the development needs of the school. There has been a marked deterioration in the school's efficiency since the previous inspection. The governing body has not addressed a number of issues that were identified at that time. The level of management responsibilities delegated between the deputy heads has not been resolved, there are no clear projections for increases in the provision of resources, and no detailed records are kept of delegated funding for pupils with special educational needs. This is, however, a school in transition. The headteacher has only been in post since the beginning of the current academic year. He and the governing body are aware of the urgent need to rectify this situation and it is high on their list of priorities. The school overspent its delegated budget in the last financial year. It has also fixed a deficit budget for the current financial year that it is meeting out of contingency funds.

7.The deployment of teaching staff is inefficient. The school's planning does not ensure that the expertise of specialist teachers is used effectively. Thus teachers are often used to teach subjects in which they do not have sufficient expertise while other non-specialist teachers are used to teach their subject. This is particularly evident in English, where it has a detrimental impact on the attainment and progress of pupils. The percentage of the budget spent on teaching costs is high compared with other schools due to the large number of experienced staff. The deployment of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is effective. The accommodation is used well. Although the amount of money allocated to resources is very low compared with other schools nationally, resources are judged to be adequate for the needs of the curriculum, except in science.

8.Financial control and school administration are satisfactory. The finance officer manages the computerised system effectively and produces regular budget statements for the governing body.

9.The overall attainment of pupils when they join the school is above average. Its funding per pupil is in-line with that of other schools nationally. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. In relation to the above-average attainment of pupils on entry and their average attainment on leaving, the school gives unsatisfactory value for money.

83. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

83. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

83. English

10. Attainment overall is average in both key stages. This represents a decline since the last inspection. In the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1998, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected level 4 and the higher level 5 were close to the national average. Nationally girls do better than boys in these tests but the difference was greater than that normally found. Overall the school's results were close to the national average for all schools but well below average when compared with similar schools. Results were better in 1999, with more pupils gaining both levels 4 and 5. National comparisons are not yet available for 1999. Taking results in the last three years together, the school's are slightly above the national average, which represents an advantage of around three months' progress.

11. Attainment in Year 8, part way through Key Stage 3 just before pupils leave to go to the upper school, is in line with that expected of pupils of their age.

12. In both key stages, pupils generally listen carefully to their teachers and each other and can usually show their understanding by answering questions. They speak confidently when making presentations to the class. Some higher attainers in Key Stage 3 successfully use humour to enliven their talks. Pupils can express their opinions of the characters in novels they are reading in class, and give reasons for them, and can explore ideas orally. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 can listen carefully to others' views and take account of them when developing their own thinking. Drama lessons provide opportunities for pupils in both key stages to work in groups to discuss and prepare short scenes to present to the rest of the class. There are often opportunities in class for pupils to discuss their work in pairs, and they do this quite effectively.

13. The majority of pupils can read aloud accurately and with expression. They show a good understanding of what they have read, including the plots, themes, characters and settings and can express opinions about texts giving reasons for their answers. Higher attaining pupils can support their views with close reference to the text. Pupils in Key Stage 2 undertake a study of a non-fiction topic which helps them to learn to use a variety of different texts to produce their own writing. This effectively addresses the criticism in the last inspection report that pupils were given insufficient opportunities to read and explore texts which carry information and opinion. Many pupils evidently enjoy reading, and read for pleasure outside school. All pupils in Key Stage 2 keep a reading log and agree with their teacher a target for how long they will spend reading each evening. Many pupils also read in school, for example during registration sessions.

14. Writing is the weakest skill for many pupils. In both key stages pupils write in a range of forms including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, newspapers and reports and most can adapt their style appropriately. The range of work set varies between teachers. In some cases it is good and in others pupils are given limited experience of any one form, for example fiction writing, thus opportunities for practice are insufficient. Pupils generally show a satisfactory level of imagination and creativity and higher attainers use a good range of vocabulary. Lower attainers use more simple language and less sophisticated ideas, for example for plot and character. Some average and lower attainers in Key Stage 3 find difficulty in organising a piece of writing to argue a case or tell a simple story logically. Handwriting and presentation are generally good. The majority of pupils have a firm grasp of punctuation, but for some, including some higher attainers, this is a weakness. Higher attainers in both key stages can write in paragraphs. Most pupils spell accurately, but this is a weakness for some pupils, particularly for some average and lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3. Pupils are used to drafting work, but corrected versions indicate that this is not well developed by all teachers.

This was also the case at the time of the last inspection.

15. Evidence from observation of pupils in Year 5 and from the tests of pupils' verbal ability which the school uses when pupils have settled into the school shows that in most year groups pupils start with levels of attainment in English that are above average. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are average. This clearly indicates unsatisfactory progress at this key stage.

16. In both key stages progress depends in the main on teaching. In some classrooms where teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise in teaching English, pupils make good progress. The experience pupils receive as they move through the school does not ensure their knowledge, skills and understanding are systematically built on and they do not make sufficient progress. For example, in Key Stage 2 there is some unsatisfactory teaching and pupils make unsatisfactory progress because the tasks they are set have not been carefully planned and designed to help them to focus on and improve their skills. Thus on one such occasion, unsatisfactory planning on the part of the teacher led to pupils wasting time for much of the lesson. On another, the non-specialist teacher's use and lack of understanding of a lesson plan designed by another teacher left pupils confused and having made very little progress. The recently introduced literacy hour is having positive effects in some classrooms with some teachers, but is ineffective where there is unsatisfactory teaching, and is less effective when it is timetabled in the afternoon than it is in the morning.

17. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Generally lessons are well planned so that satisfactory progress is made over time. Even so, in some lessons, teachers who do not have a sufficiently high level of subject expertise plan lessons carefully but miss important opportunities to move pupils' learning on. The timetable makes insufficient use of the skills of specialist English teachers to teach English in Key Stage 3.

18. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups for most of their English lessons. Teaching is generally good and pupils make satisfactory progress.

19. Pupils respond well to their English lessons. They are generally very interested in the lessons and behave well. They are keen to answer the teachers' questions and to volunteer to read aloud. In most lessons they sustain concentration well, although some pupils' attention drifts in lessons which are not well planned. Pupils make good use of dictionaries and the thesaurus to check spellings and add variety to their work. The unit of work planned for Year 6 pupils on study skills makes a useful contribution to developing their ability to work effectively. They show respect for others and for property, and have good relationships with other pupils and their teacher. They work well together in pairs to discuss aspects of their work and boys and girls usually collaborate harmoniously. In some classrooms, pupils work in pairs to help each other to make improvements to their work. They are generally sensitive to each other's feelings on these occasions.

20. Teaching is mainly satisfactory in Key Stage 2. It is good in around half of lessons but one unsatisfactory and one poor lesson were also observed. Teaching is better in Year 6 than in Year 5 and almost all of the good lessons seen were in Year 6. At Key Stage 3 teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and good in just over a third of them. This inconsistency in quality was evident in the last inspection report. In almost all lessons class management and discipline are good. In the good lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and they have a thorough understanding of the National Curriculum. They know exactly what pupils need to be able to do to progress to the next level and have developed strategies to assist them in this. Lessons are well planned, focus on developing pupils' skills and understanding and ensure that they make progress. In these lessons, time and resources are used well and teachers have high expectations of pupils. In some lessons in which teaching is judged to be satisfactory overall, the teacher's lack of subject expertise meant that opportunities to help pupils move forward were missed. What pupils are expected to learn in

these lessons is less clearly expressed. In addition, teachers do not structure lessons in such a way as to ensure pupils can achieve this learning. In one such lesson, the teacher talked to the pupils at some length to make a point, but did not effectively reinforce it by, for example, writing it on the board. Both the teacher and the pupils became side-tracked and one important aim of the lesson was lost. In unsatisfactory and poor lessons, the aims of the lessons are unclear, planning is ineffective, and time and resources are not well used. The quality of teachers' marking is similarly inconsistent and linked to teachers' subject expertise. In the best examples, teachers analyse pupils' work carefully, identify areas for improvement and give pupils targets to work towards. It is clear from pupils' books that this encourages good progress.

21. The coordinator provides good leadership for the department. A good level of support is provided for other teachers teaching English although they do not always use this effectively. Until recently, however, her role has not included monitoring the work of these teachers in lessons. The need for monitoring to ensure that all pupils receive similarly rich experiences was raised as an issue at the time of the last inspection. A series of sound measures to help to address this have been put in place, but these stopped short of monitoring teaching and did not place sufficient emphasis on reviewing pupils' books. A programme of monitoring of teaching has recently been put in place by the new headteacher, and this will provide an opportunity for many of the issues raised above to be resolved. The present timetabling arrangements result in an inefficient use of the specialist English teachers, none of whom teach in both Years 7 and 8.

22. In other subjects, pupils make gains in their oral skills. Most answer questions readily. They are given opportunities for discussions and for explaining their work to others in groups in many subjects such as art, design and technology, geography and history. They use the correct technical vocabulary when talking about their work in art and music and they are confident when introducing their work to others in music. In almost all lessons, they listen well to their teachers and to other pupils. They are keen to read aloud when given the opportunity, and in some subjects, such as history and design and technology, pupils are encouraged to make use of a range of sources of information to research topics. In Key Stage 2, there are close links between the work in humanities and that in English. Some good extended project work is produced by higher attaining pupils as a result of their stay in Purbeck. In Key Stage 3, pupils write reports or longer descriptive pieces in geography. Their writing is generally clear and punctuation is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are able to organise their work into paragraphs and are beginning to use some evaluation. There is little evidence that pupils redraft their work to make improvements in it except when humanities work is used as a basis for writing in English in Key Stage 2.

23. Pupils have one drama lesson a week for around a third of the year in a rotational arrangement with design and technology. These lessons provide useful opportunities for pupils to learn to work together in groups, and teach basic theatrical conventions. They are also used successfully as a mechanism for pupils to explore issues connected with family life and their reactions to experiences at home and in school. It was only possible to observe two drama lessons during the inspection. Teaching was satisfactory in one of these lessons and good in the other. The better teaching challenged pupils to think about their reactions to situations and to consider the consequences of these reactions. Pupils made good progress in this.

97. Mathematics

24. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with the national average. In the 1998, national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level 4 or above was close to the national average, although the proportion attaining the higher level 5 was below it. Overall, pupils' performance in mathematics at Key Stage 2 is close to the national average but well below the average for similar schools. These results are similar to those for 1997. Taken as a whole, the results over the last three years have been close to the national average and there has been little difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 1999, results were slightly better and the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 increased. In Key Stage 2 lessons, higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of number and show confidence in it. Lower attaining pupils are working to develop their number skills, although their difficulties in retaining important facts slows their progress. All pupils are studying fractions as part of the new national numeracy strategy. Most pupils understand what fractions are and how they relate to whole numbers. They handle numerical work on forming equivalent fractions efficiently.

25. Attainment when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, part way through Key Stage 3, is broadly in line with the average for pupils of a similar age. By this stage pupils understand how to break down numbers into parts for long multiplication sums and are confident in handling data. They understand the differences between mean, median and mode, and can construct frequency tables using tally marks. They have a developing understanding of inverse functions. Higher attaining pupils confidently draw graphs of families of straight lines and understand that a quadratic equation is not linear. Lower attaining pupils are able to conduct surveys, discuss their findings with confidence and represent them by drawing bar charts

26. Progress is satisfactory in both key stages. In the better lessons, progress is very good. Pupils' progress is well supported in nearly all lessons by teachers revising with them the work of the previous lesson to help form a basis from which they can move on. In some lessons, progress is limited by pupils being allowed to spend too much time on one type of task, usually working through exercises. Generally, the range of pupils' different levels of attainment within classes is not well catered for and this limits the progress of the higher attaining pupils. In Key Stage 2, pupils are developing an understanding of fractions. They clearly made very good progress in one lesson, where they were actively involved in finding out about multiples of numbers. By the end of the lesson they were able to make an important link between the use of multiples and equivalent fractions. Similarly, in a Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils made good progress through experiments using dice, cards and sweets to aid their understanding of probability. Progress in mental arithmetic is satisfactory and most lessons begin with a short session in which pupils practise numeracy skills. The use of appropriate mathematical terminology is encouraged, practised and, as a result, used well by pupils. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. It is good in Key Stage 3, where it is aided by the school's practice of grouping pupils in classes according to their level of attainment. In September the school introduced the new national numeracy strategy for pupils in Key Stage 2. The very detailed lesson planning involved in this is beginning to help to improve progress.

27. There is a very positive attitude in classrooms. Pupils are keen to learn mathematics and apply themselves well to study. They concentrate well in lessons, show good interest and take an active part in question and answer sessions. They respond well in mental arithmetic sessions, and are stimulated by numerical games. Relationships between pupils are very good and they assist and support each in lessons. Pupils show good respect for each other's feelings. The presentation of work in exercise books is a weakness and pupils do not take enough pride in their written work.

28. Teaching is similar in both key stages. It is always at least satisfactory or better. Good in

approaching half of the lessons, and very good in one tenth of them. All teachers have at least a sound knowledge of mathematics, while those who teach in Key Stage 3 have very good subject knowledge. Long-term planning has been carefully considered, and teaching schemes have been developed in conjunction with local schools who send pupils to or receive them from St Michael's. Lesson planning is good in the main but some plans lack detail concerning the requirements of the National Curriculum or fail to provide estimates for the time that aspects of the lesson could be expected to last. Teachers are well organised and some use resources to good advantage. The management of pupils is firm, fair and friendly, and there are good standards of discipline. In a few lessons, teachers use humour effectively to help motivate pupils. Teachers have satisfactory expectations in terms of pupils' attainment and high expectations in terms of their behaviour, politeness and attitudes to study. Time is well used in most lessons. However, the pace is not always fast enough, and on these occasions, teachers spend too long on written exercises and do not move pupils on to new topics quickly enough. Teachers do not always provide summaries at the end of lessons to help consolidate pupils' learning. Work is marked regularly but most teachers do not provide useful comments to help pupils to improve. Pupils are not routinely expected to correct their work. Assessment is well planned. It is used effectively as a basis for grouping classes by attainment in Years 6, 7 and 8. In Key Stage 3, homework is set regularly according to the school timetable, and is used well to extend and consolidate work begun in class. The setting of homework is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2, where it is done inconsistently and is dependent on the wishes of the individual teacher.

29. Curriculum planning is broadly satisfactory but computers are not used sufficiently. Leadership for the work of the subject is satisfactory. There are clear guidelines for the objectives, and expected standards in mathematics. There is no monitoring of the work of teachers, the effectiveness of the curriculum or the progress of pupils in different classes. This was a concern raised at the time of the last inspection. The new headteacher has begun to establish processes for monitoring the work of the school and a timetable for monitoring the work in mathematics has been arranged. The new national numeracy strategy has been satisfactorily introduced to Years 5 and 6. The deputy head teacher is coordinating the programme and the number of mathematics lessons has been increased to reflect the priority afforded to this work.

30. In their work in other areas of the school, pupils have satisfactory competence in number work. In French lessons pupils handle simple mental arithmetic with confidence. Similarly, in their information technology lessons, most pupils show reasonable ability with mental calculations when using Logo. The majority of pupils measure accurately in design and technology in both the designing and making processes and, in Key Stage 3, they can use three-dimensional sketches to illustrate their designs. When required to do so, pupils can draw and interpret simple graphs. They extract information from tables and graphs in geography and show good ability to interpret graphs produced in information technology. Opportunities for data handling in several subjects allow pupils to show increasingly good skills in sorting statistical information. In music, pupils count in beats and work out time values mathematically. In athletics, pupils measure distances and time events. They keep score in games and identify symmetry and asymmetry in gymnastics. Year 8 pupils use topologically transformed maps, scales and grid references. There are weaknesses in the way in which pupils are expected to use number in science. They are not provided with sufficient opportunities to complete calculations, especially in physics and chemistry at Key Stage 3.

104. Science

31. Attainment in science by the end of Key Stage 2 is above the national average. In the 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 4 was above the national average while the proportion achieving level 5 and above was close to it. Overall, these results were in line with those for all schools but below those for similar schools. The 1999 results show an improvement, with a significantly larger proportion of pupils attaining level 5. Results in these tests in the three years up to 1998 show that pupils' performance was above the national average. Over these three years boys' performance was above the national average and that of girls was well above it.

32. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate levels above those expected for knowledge and understanding. They know about forces in terms of their effects, about simple chemical changes and how solids, liquids and gases can be accounted for in terms of molecular structure. Pupils in Year 5 can use keys to classify animals. Pupils' laboratory skills are below the expected level. Most pupils know about the need for experiments to be fair tests. They do not have sufficient understanding of the implications of this when the experimental conditions are not controlled. Many pupils find making conclusions from their experimental work for themselves quite difficult. In Year 6, pupils can read a thermometer to the right degree of accuracy but then fail to use thermometers correctly when measuring temperatures.

33. By the end of Year 8, when they leave the school part way through Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is above average for their age. At Key Stage 3, pupils show a sound understanding of fair testing as they develop their investigative skills. Lower attaining pupils in Year 7 can make a slide, use a microscope, and make a satisfactory drawing of their specimen. The highest attaining pupils in Year 8 have a good understanding of the periodic table and atomic structure. At Key Stage 3 pupils are not able to apply their numerical skills well because they are not given enough opportunities to develop them in science. In both key stages, pupils have satisfactory levels of factual recall and understanding of recent work.

34. Pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. At Key Stage 2 pupils enter the school with attainment that is generally above average and are attaining at similar levels by the end of Year 6. They make satisfactory progress when learning about food chains in Year 5, and when investigating materials as insulators in Year 6. In Key Stage 3, progress in some lessons is good or very good, but over time progress as a whole is satisfactory. For example, some Year 8 pupils make very good progress when learning about the rules for chemical formulae and some Year 7 pupils make good progress when using microscopes to learn about the structure of plant cells. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress in line with their peers in both key stages. Teachers are aware of pupils' individual education plans but sometimes their progress is hindered because they are not provided with work that is suited to their needs.

35. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and most show interest and enjoyment in their lessons. Their behaviour is usually good. They mainly concentrate well in lessons, an improvement since the time of the last inspection. They work well together when carrying out experiments. When moving around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment, pupils mostly act responsibly. They follow instructions well and are careful to ensure their working practices are safe. Few opportunities are provided for pupils to show initiative.

36. Teaching is substantially better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 2 teaching is mainly satisfactory but a significant proportion of it is poor. At Key Stage 3 teaching is always satisfactory. It is good in six lessons in every ten and very good in two in every ten. Teachers in Key Stage 3 have good subject knowledge. Non-specialist teachers teach some pupils in Key Stage 2 and there are weaknesses in their subject knowledge. This is demonstrated most starkly in a lack of expertise in developing pupils' practical and investigative skills sufficiently. Lessons are usually carefully planned, sometimes using a

range of resources and methods. Where the teaching is poor, it is due to inadequate planning. This results in pupils not being given anything to do for too long and setting them inappropriate tasks such as copying from the blackboard. Teachers set high standards for discipline, which are achieved. Their expectations for pupils' levels of attainment are generally appropriate, although lessons are often not planned to take sufficient account of the different levels of attainment within the class. Materials to support planning of this kind are available in the department. There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and methods of assessment used by different teachers. Homework is not used sufficiently in Key Stage 2 to support pupils' learning.

37. Insufficient use is made of computers, for example, in data logging. The annual sum of money made available by the school is unsatisfactory for a practical subject like science. This leads to some serious shortages of equipment, a concern that was raised at the time of the last inspection, and has a detrimental impact on standards. In addition, the department still does not have the support of a laboratory technician. The design of the laboratory places serious limitations on the type of practical work that can be carried out, particularly with respect to chemistry and physics. The department gives attention to health and safety, but there are some shortcomings in practice which have been brought to the notice of the coordinator. Assessment procedures are sound and this is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. However, the information yielded by assessment is not used to monitor teaching effectively. The science coordinator manages the department well. She has developed good links with other schools and uses the information gained by this means to modify the curriculum in both key stages. The lack of monitoring of teaching was a concern raised at the time of the last inspection and this remains unsatisfactory because this has not been seen as part of the coordinator's role.

111. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

111. Art

38. In Year 5, pupils make sound observational drawings as, for example, when they were able to include appropriate details of different textures in painting a fantasy creature after examining 'St George and the Dragon' by Uccello. Higher attaining pupils were able to represent smoothness, soft folds and the scales of a creature, making effective use of line, tone, shape and texture. Work on Tudor roses shows delicate textures and accurate shading. Year 6 pupils use appropriate vocabulary when discussing how to create wallpaper using repeated patterns. Sketchbooks show a good range of work such as that based on Cubism following exploration of some of Picasso's work. Pupils know about the work of some famous artists such as Monet, Turner and Van Gogh.

39. By Year 8, when pupils leave the school, part way through Key Stage 3, they are working at a level broadly average for their age. Standards have declined since the last inspection when they were above average. In Year 7, pupils show appropriate standards in their project work on Aboriginal art where they make good use of colour. They are aware that contrast of tone is important. Brush and pencil control are satisfactory. By Year 8 pupils can draw skylines stimulated by observations and discussion. The higher attaining pupils present bold imaginative work with suitable attention to detail. Their work on pop art using acrylics, following independent research, collage work based on environmental themes and papier-mâché pots inspired by Kandinsky show that most pupils are reaching appropriate standards and some are working at higher levels.

40. Pupils make good progress in the limited art curriculum that is taught at Key Stage 2. Insufficient time is provided to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study at Key Stage 3. This means that the statutory requirements are not fully met. It also leads to pupils only making satisfactory progress across the key stage, despite good progress in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in line with their peers. Over

both key stages pupils increasingly recognise the different approaches taken by different artists and learn how visual elements are used to convey messages.

41. Pupils' attitudes are positive and most pupils enjoy art. They work well, sustain their efforts and concentrate well on the given task. Most pupils are well behaved and polite. They show respect for resources, each other and their teachers. They collaborate well, helping each other as appropriate. They enjoy being given responsibility for choosing the subject for their work and materials they will use.

42. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and always good in Key Stage 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they provide clear demonstrations. Their understanding of the concepts and skills used in art supports their teaching well. Their expectations of pupils are appropriately high. Pupils are challenged to express their feelings and use their imagination in their work, and then to reflect on it critically. Teachers' planning achieves a balance of activities within the limited curriculum time available that is well matched to pupils' needs and the National Curriculum. Classroom management is good and clearly understood routines have been established. Time is used well and lessons proceed at a good pace. Teachers use a wide range of resources including posters and photographs to stimulate ideas. Skilful questioning is used to check what pupils know and their answers are used as a basis for teachers to show pupils how they can improve. Appropriate homework is set.

43. Since the time of the last inspection, facilities for art have been improved, but the use of the specialist room is limited by its use as a tutor base. The use of information technology in art is inhibited by the lack of a computer in the art room. The newly appointed acting coordinator works enthusiastically. The limited part-time nature of the post makes the role of coordination very difficult. There is no technical support for art and this has a detrimental affect on standards. The coordinator is preparing a development plan and a new teaching scheme for art. The latter will include provision that is planned to promote pupils' personal development. At present art is not displayed sufficiently well around the school to promote a wider cultural awareness and insufficient use is made of visits to promote this aspect of pupils' development.

117. **Design and technology**

44. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can express clear ideas for a design proposal. They can describe and illustrate their ideas showing consideration for the appearance and the function of the finished item. They recognise that materials have different properties and know that decisions need to be made regarding the suitability of materials for a particular product. They can measure, mark out and cut a range of materials and they understand that different methods of joining them need to be considered. In their use of tools and materials, they know the rules for safety which apply to themselves and others.

45. When the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, part way through Key Stage 3, their attainment is generally average and sometimes above average. At this key stage, pupils can use a wide range of tools and they understand the properties of different textiles, of the ingredients of food and of materials used in construction. Most pupils demonstrate accuracy in measurement, sound skills in cutting and joining and an awareness of the need for care when using tools and machinery. At this key stage, many pupils understand that designing, making and modifying are part of a continuous process in the manufacture of products. Where attainment is above average, pupils demonstrate that they can make a critical evaluation of their products at both the designing and making stages to bring about improvements in quality.

46. In Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory. It is sometimes good in individual lessons. Pupils in Year 5 develop their skills in cutting, pinning and sewing and increase their knowledge of textiles in order to make a bag. Others in the same year group make good progress by

acquiring new skills in the use of sewing machines. In Year 6, pupils make steady progress in the construction of circuits as part of an electrical device. At Key Stage 3, progress is also satisfactory. It is often good in Year 7 where pupils are successfully selecting, mixing, cooking and testing their own ingredients for a healthy snack. In Year 8, the pupils make sound progress by developing their understanding of how pneumatics can be employed to make devices move. At both key stages, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory

47. Pupils' behaviour and their response to the subject are consistently positive. They show interest, listen to instructions well and put forward their ideas in a confident manner. During practical sessions, most pupils maintain their concentration on the designing or making activity. They show care in the handling of tools and materials and a good attitude towards instructions concerning safety. All pupils have respect for their teachers and the majority show a willingness to collaborate with others. As they progress through Key Stage 3, they demonstrate an increasing ability to work independently.

48. Teaching is satisfactory throughout Key Stage 2 and good in one fifth of those lessons inspected. At Key Stage 3, all teaching is at least satisfactory and it is good in half of the lessons. All teachers show sound practical knowledge within their particular specialism and they have a good grasp of the overall subject philosophy of designing and making. They make effective use of time and resources and are consistent in their approach to safety and hygiene. The planning of lessons is always satisfactory but it sometimes lacks detail. While class management is generally good, strategies for keeping pupils purposefully occupied during busy, practical lessons are not always effective. When teaching is good, planning is detailed, the lesson moves at a good pace, the tasks are challenging and pupils are managed effectively while taking part in a variety of activities.

49. The design and technology provision meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Since the time of the last inspection improvements have been made to the teaching schemes. Teachers now have more appropriate expectations of the design capabilities of pupils. The reduction of the number of teachers involved in design and technology and the provision of staff development have led to more effective teaching at both key stages. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment are satisfactory but they are not used effectively to inform teachers' planning. The lack of monitoring of teachers is a weakness in the department. The money available to the department each year is insufficient to support any development in resources.

123. **Geography**

50. No teaching took place in Key Stage 2 during the inspection and there was only a small amount in Key Stage 3. As a result, judgements on attainment and progress are made on the basis of a scrutiny of pupils' work in books and on display, teachers' long term plans and discussion with pupils and teachers.

51. In Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory use of maps and plans in their work. They understand why settlements arise and, in their work on Wimborne Minster, how settlements change. They have some understanding of physical change, for example the effect of rivers on the landscape. Their work shows only limited use of appropriate geographical language and variable knowledge of places, particularly beyond their local town and district.

52. When pupils in Year 8 leave the school, part way through Key Stage 3, they are working at appropriate levels for their age. They can describe the influences and patterns of development in a country, as they did in a project on Brazil. They can gather geographical information from a number of sources and compare what they find. This was demonstrated when they looked at the effects of different volcanic eruptions. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to undertake investigations. They are able to identify key geographical questions and how they

should collect information and evidence in order to answer these questions. Lower attaining pupils have not yet developed these geographical skills and they base their work more on the presentation of facts.

53. In Key Stage 2, progress is unsatisfactory. Discussion with pupils shows they are not confident when talking about work they have covered in previous years. The curriculum is poorly planned and fragmented. The teaching schemes are not sufficiently systematic or detailed to provide a basis for the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Geography is taught as a series of topics forming part of a humanities programme. This term geography is not being taught. A number of fieldwork visits is used to support pupils' work in the humanities topics and these provide good opportunities for teaching aspects of geography. However, the work done is used to give pupils a wide range of experiences that can be used in other subjects and the geographical content is lost. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in line with their peers. Progress in lessons in Key Stage 3 is variable. When the teaching is challenging, pupils respond well and make very good progress. In other lessons when the pace is slow and pupils have little opportunity to contribute to the lesson, then progress is unsatisfactory. Over time, pupils in Key Stage 3, including those with special education needs, make satisfactory progress as they extend their knowledge of different places and geographical themes such as weather and climate. Pupils' geographical skills are developed more systematically than is the case in Key Stage 2 and they have a wider vocabulary of geographical terms.

54. Pupils' response in lessons in Key Stage 3 is variable and linked to the opportunities offered by the teaching. Pupils are well behaved and listen carefully. When given the opportunity, they contribute to lessons in a lively manner. Group work is productive as pupils value the opinions of others and are confident when offering their own ideas.

55. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 varies equally from unsatisfactory to very good. In the best lessons, teachers plan tasks, including those for homework, carefully, so that they are matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Questions are used very well, not only to establish pupils' knowledge, but also to probe and extend their understanding. Explanations are generally clear and teachers organise pupils and resources efficiently so lessons proceed smoothly. The pace of lessons varies, pupils respond well when the teaching is lively and challenges them; when the pace is slower they are more passive. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the teacher had weak subject knowledge. This led to an over-reliance on textbooks and worksheets as a medium for teaching.

56. The coordination of geography in the school is unsatisfactory. There is a coordinator for each key stage and both have other significant responsibilities in the school. Planning across the school is inconsistent and does not support pupils' progress in the subject. This is particularly true in terms of the arrangements for the systematic development of geographical skills. A number of teachers who lack subject expertise teach geography. There is no monitoring of the teaching or of teachers' planning to ensure a consistency of content or approach. There are important weaknesses in consistency within Key Stage 2 and thus in pupils' preparedness for Key Stage 3. Within Key Stage 3, there is greater consistency. Planning is more detailed and identifies the content to be taught and the resources that are suitable for this.

57. Assessment in Key Stage 2 is made informally by teachers with little reference to agreed criteria. In Key Stage 3, there is a different system. Thus, it is difficult to chart pupils' progress in their acquisition of the knowledge and understanding of geography and their development of important skills. There are no examples of pupils' work at different levels of the National Curriculum to help ensure consistency in assessment. There is no specialist teacher of geography in the school to lead work in the subject. No significant professional development in the subject has been undertaken in recent years. Good links have been established with the upper school in the area and this is providing a forum for discussion about the geography

curriculum in Key Stage 3. Resources for the subject are barely adequate, some are out of date and a wider range of maps, atlases, photographs and other visual material is needed. Since the last inspection the school now provides a separate report for geography for parents. Procedures for monitoring standards and the curriculum remain unsatisfactory.

131. **History**

58. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils are able to understand chronology and are able to identify the main characteristics associated with the periods studied. This is demonstrated when pupils in Year 6 identify houses from Roman to modern times, and are able to place them in their correct order on a time line. Pupils have a sound sense of the past and how things change through their study of the local development of Wimborne. They are increasingly aware of and use a good range of subject vocabulary such as when Year 5 pupils learn about the names of different Tudor musical instruments. Pupils are less secure in their use of the skills needed in questioning evidence and in their understanding that events can be interpreted differently.

59. By the end of Year 8, when they leave the school, part way through Key Stage 3, pupils' levels of attainment are broadly in line with those expected for their age as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a sound knowledge and understanding of periods such as Ancient Egypt, the Middle Ages and Tudor times. They have a sound understanding of cause, and higher attainers in Year 7 identify economic, political and social causes behind the death of Becket. Others are less confident and concentrate only on the personal relationships involved. In Year 8, pupils have consolidated their understanding of cause and effect. However, their ability to understand contrasting interpretations of events in history is more limited. Because teachers tend to provide pupils with questions they should be asking about evidence rather than encouraging them to think of their own, this key history skill is weak.

60. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is above average. This is not maintained in history, and progress across both key stages is therefore unsatisfactory. Whilst pupils make sound progress in developing their knowledge and understanding, they make insufficient progress in developing important subject-specific skills. In Key Stage 2, pupils learn about the Aztecs, Corfe Castle and aspects of Tudor England such as the Mary Rose. In Key Stage 3, they extend their knowledge of events in the Middle Ages, and Henry VIII's break with Rome. Progress in the development of the skills needed to study history is unsatisfactory in both key stages, but particularly in Key Stage 2. These include, for example, handling and questioning evidence, analysing change and continuity, and understanding different interpretations of events. There is a failure to identify these skills sufficiently in the content of the Key Stage 2 humanities course. As a result, they are not taught and pupils are not provided with a sound basis for beginning their work at Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs, in the main, have appropriate support and make progress in line with their peers throughout the school.

61. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They show an interest and enjoyment in their work, and respond well at both key stages. They settle quickly, can sustain their concentration and take a pride in their finished work. Nearly all pupils are able to work effectively on their own. They are willing to answer questions, show respect for the views of others, and work together well. Pupils can switch efficiently from work led by the teacher to working independently on writing activities, and remain on task for prolonged periods.

62. In Key Stage 2, teaching is always satisfactory and at times good. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory, but on occasion is unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge at both key stages. Consequently, the learning objectives they set for lessons and the assessment criteria they use to judge success in them tend to be too general. The questions they ask do not challenge pupils to think more deeply or encourage their understanding. In the best lessons teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils' attainment and behaviour. Time is used well and the pace and level of work in lessons varies to meet the needs and attainment of all pupils. Teachers establish efficient classroom routines and an environment conducive to good learning. Standards of assessment by teachers vary, and there are examples of incorrect and infrequent marking, particularly at Key Stage 2. Marking generally tends to be supportive and provide encouragement for pupils. It does not show them how to improve their work further and leads to them making unsatisfactory progress over time.

63. Assessment practices in Key Stage 2 are unsatisfactory. There is little attempt made to record pupils' work in terms of National Curriculum levels. At Key Stage 3, pupils' achievements are recorded in terms of National Curriculum levels. However, these assessments predominantly track attainment in pupils' knowledge and understanding. There is insufficient assessment and recording of pupils' progress in the development of skills in both key stages. Records of assessment are not transferred from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, and thus cannot be used to inform teachers' planning. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to assess their own progress but teachers do not ensure that their comments are sufficiently focused on their development of the key skills needed in history.

64. The coordination of history in the school is unsatisfactory. There is a coordinator for each key stage and both have other significant responsibilities in the school. While the teaching of individual lessons is mainly satisfactory, planning across the school is inconsistent and does not ensure that pupils make appropriate progress in the subject. This is particularly true in terms of the arrangements for the systematic development of historical skills. Different policies, assessment methods and approaches to lesson planning in each key stage further complicate the management of the subject. In addition, the coordinators are not encouraged to develop their own subject specialism. Monitoring of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Insufficient attention is given to the development of vital subject skills in both key stages, but particularly at Key Stage 2. Non-specialist teachers, who often lack subject knowledge, teach the subject. Due attention has not been paid to ensuring that these teachers are supported effectively by appropriate staff development. The resources for learning are satisfactory overall, although there are some shortages in computer software and textbooks at Key Stage 2. Sound use is made of visiting groups to help teach topics such as the Tudors. Local studies and fieldwork that is directed at developing key skills are not always used effectively.

138. **Information technology**

65. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that found nationally and slightly above average in control technology. Pupils in Year 5 are confident in their use of the computer keyboard and can enter and edit the text of a letter in order to communicate with pupils in the first school. In Year 6, pupils use basic control commands to direct a cursor across the screen, while higher attainers can use procedures to program at a simple level. There is little evidence to show that pupils can use simulations or CD-ROM technology for research.

66. When the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, part way through Key Stage 3, their attainment is average for their age, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Year 7 can research information on cars and enter the data under different headings to prepare their own database. In Year 8, pupils understand how to use a desktop publishing package to combine text and graphics in the design of a letter heading. They can use the

facilities to enlarge, reduce and copy in order to modify the appearance of their design. There is no evidence of pupils' ability to use information technology to sense and monitor physical data in the form of light, heat and sound.

67. Progress is satisfactory at both key stages. Satisfactory progress is made in the development of keyboard skills in word processing and data-handling by all pupils including those with special educational needs. These pupils also develop their literacy and numeracy skills through taking part in these activities. Pupils make good progress when they demonstrate their ability to apply their skills to more complex situations. This is true of some Year 6 pupils who are using Logo commands within a procedure to make simple programs. Good progress is also made by pupils in Year 8 in their ability to work independently with increasing confidence. Progress is less effective in the way that pupils use information technology to support other areas of the curriculum. Although there is evidence of the Internet being used in science, history and religious education, this means of researching information is not sufficiently developed.

68. Pupils show a consistently good attitude to their work. They listen well to instructions and have a friendly yet purposeful relationship with their teachers. Most enjoy the opportunity to have individual use of a networked machine in the new computer room but they also show good collaborative skills when asked to work with a partner. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and most show sustained concentration during the practical parts of lessons. They are generally supportive of other pupils and they show respect for computer equipment and other resources.

69. Teaching is at least satisfactory throughout the school and it is good in half of the lessons at each key stage. The management of pupils is consistently good and teachers make effective use of the new computer suite. The planning of lessons is sound, but some lesson plans lack detail. Classroom organisation is good and this allows teachers to assess each individual's progress and to help pupils as the need arises. Assessment procedures are sound but the results of assessment are not used effectively to inform future planning. There is some unevenness in teachers' subject knowledge. This results in lower expectations of what pupils can achieve in Year 5 than in Year 6 and throughout Key Stage 3.

70. Information technology is taught as a separate subject in the new computer suite. This provides an effective learning environment. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It is well managed and includes opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in communicating and handling information, using control and solving problems. The use of information technology to support and enhance other areas of the curriculum is less well managed and this was a concern raised at the time of the last inspection. There are no coherent strategies for developing staff expertise in order to capitalise on the potential of the Internet for the purposes of communication and research. There is also a lack of monitoring of teaching or learning in information technology. The new computers have been very recently installed and are used efficiently. The computers they have replaced have been redeployed to other areas of the school but these are not yet being used effectively. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

144. **Modern foreign languages**

71. Pupils begin to study French for one lesson per week in Key Stage 2, two years earlier than required by the National Curriculum. They are given a sound introduction to the topics in the Dorset scheme designed for middle schools. By the end of the key stage they have gained useful experience in speaking and listening to French and a grounding in basic vocabulary within a range of topics. Because the scheme emphasises speaking and listening, reading and writing are less well developed.

72.By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, part way through Key Stage 3, their attainment is around that expected for their age. All pupils can ask and answer questions about themselves and their families, and many can talk about their holiday plans and preferences. Higher attainers can carry out quite lengthy conversations in French on some topics. Some pupils are beginning to try to use French to communicate with the teacher in lessons. When some pupils, especially in Year 7, are encouraged to do this by using prompts on classroom walls they have difficulty in reading aloud the sentences they need. Almost all pupils can understand the teachers' instructions and explanations given in French, and they are beginning to read books in French for pleasure. All pupils can copy sentences accurately and most can write some sentences from memory. When given the opportunity, many average and higher attainers can write short paragraphs accurately.

73.Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, although progress is unsatisfactory when the teacher has insufficient subject knowledge and expertise. Despite some good teaching in Key Stage 3, progress is unsatisfactory, given the fact that pupils have had experience of French in Key Stage 2 and that their overall attainment on entry to the school is above average. This is because in earlier years pupils have been given too few opportunities to undertake tasks at higher levels. The coordinator is aware of this and has begun to put into place exercises in all skill areas that challenge pupils to attain at the higher level they are capable of. Problems associated with teachers with insufficient subject knowledge have restricted the range of experiences pupils have been offered in recent years. The curriculum has now been rewritten to ensure that progress improves. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress.

74.Pupils generally show interest in lessons and sustain concentration well. The importance of the use of dictionaries and other reference materials is emphasised in lessons, as is the structure of the language. This is building good foundations for pupils' further study of languages. Pupils behave well in lessons, are courteous and generally show respect for each other and the teacher. They work well together in pairs to practise speaking

75.The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory, around half of it is good, and one lesson in eight is very good. There is more good and very good teaching in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2. One poor lesson was observed in Key Stage 2. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise. Some teachers make good use of French in the classroom for instructions and explanations, as required by the National Curriculum, but this is not the case in all lessons and it cannot be explained by a lack of command of the language. Thus, pupils are missing opportunities to hear the language spoken, to come to regard this as routine and normal and to begin to want to use the language more themselves. A key point for action in the last inspection report was to encourage pupils to use French more in the classroom. Greater use of the language by some teachers is necessary if this is to happen. Teachers' control and management of pupils are generally very good. Teaching methods and planning are generally appropriate although opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to work in pairs to practise speaking. Most, but not all, teachers pay more attention to good pronunciation and accuracy as required by the last inspection report. Where methods and planning are unsatisfactory, it is because of the teacher's lack of subject knowledge and expertise. This results in pupils being given insufficient opportunity to practise new language thoroughly before being expected to use it for themselves. Where homework is set, it usefully extends work begun in class.

76.The coordinator provides good leadership for the subject, and good support for others teaching French. Her role as defined by the school in the past has not included that of monitoring the work of other teachers, and this is a weakness. Progress in addressing the issues raised in that report, as described above in the paragraph on teaching, has been unsatisfactory. This is largely because of the lack of monitoring of teaching. Teachers are not all following policies that have been put in place in response to the concerns raised by the last inspection. Assessment has been well used to plan the curriculum. Results from assessment

have been used to make changes to ensure pupils are given better opportunities to reach higher levels in the National Curriculum. This was a key point for action in the last inspection report. The lack of a specialist room for French in Key Stage 2 means that books and equipment have to be carried around the school, and this is an unsatisfactory situation.

150. **Music**

77. Pupils enter the school showing a wide range of attainment related to the quality and amount of teaching they have previously experienced and the levels of instrumental tuition they have received. The majority of pupils enter with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with the average.

78. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain at high levels for their age and their attainment is well above average by Year 8 when pupils leave the school part way through Key Stage 3. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. Standards in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work are also well above average. In both key stages, pupils sing well in lessons and in assemblies. They sing confidently, tunefully, with appropriate volume, diction and expression. In instrumental work, pupils play parts in rhythm accurately showing good control, orchestral discipline and correct techniques, for example when using beaters in percussion work or correct fingering when playing keyboards or recorders. In the upper part of the school, most pupils show very good music-reading skills and many play orchestral instruments to high levels. In composing, groups are often led by the most musical pupils who show confident directing skills by the time they are in the upper part of the school. Pieces created to show parody after listening to examples by Mahler or Charles Ives show clear understanding of form and devices. Pupils listen and appraise well and show good knowledge and critical awareness, for example, in Year 5 when they are discussing Tudor music or in Year 8 when they are discussing how composers achieve effects. Musical vocabulary is very well developed; pupils understand technical terms and this contributes to their literacy. They demonstrate a knowledge of composers, styles, instruments and artists that is well above average.

79. Progress is very good at all levels because pupils build on their prior learning. Vocal, instrumental, composing, listening and appraising skills are developed and used consistently. Pupils who are instrumentalists are sufficiently challenged and given full opportunity to use their skills in the classroom. The use of pupils' own instruments and the instrumental tuition they receive, supported by extra-curricular work, helps all pupils' to make progress. Those who are deeply involved in music-making make excellent progress. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in music because of the practical approach. The rapid advances in learning in lessons and over time relate directly to the very good provision of resources, the excellent accommodation, with areas that allow group work in composing, and to high quality teaching.

80. Pupils' attitudes in music are very positive; they respond to the challenge in lessons. Almost all pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy music; they are very keen to contribute to lessons and answer questions. They enjoy very good relationships with their teachers whom they respect. Pupils appreciate being given opportunities to work collaboratively and take responsibility for their own learning. In group work, pupils use equipment very sensibly and make good use of time. They support each other well and are polite and courteous.

81. Teaching at both key stages is always satisfactory; the majority of lessons are very good and many are excellent, especially in the upper part of the school. In the best lessons, teachers make full use of their specialist subject knowledge in accompanying or in making arrangements of music. Instructions are clear and delivery is lively, humorous and confident. Expectations of work and behaviour are high. Objectives are clear, and content is varied and well matched to the needs of the pupils and the National Curriculum. Lessons are well organised and proceed at a frenetic pace, making excellent use of the time available and of a

very wide range of resources, including visual images. Skilful questioning determines what pupils understand and they are shown how to improve; there is ample praise and encouragement to stretch pupils. Teaching style is warm and pleasant and relationships are sound. Appropriate homework is clearly set and this reinforces and extends learning.

82. Music is extremely well led and well organised by the enthusiastic and charismatic coordinator. The resulting ethos in music is excellent, giving pupils a wide variety of experiences, developing competence and literacy, providing an outlet for creativity and expression, nurturing talent, promoting a love of and enjoyment in music.

83. Half of the school's population, 108 boys and 114 girls, receive instrumental lessons on string, wind, brass, percussion keyboards and guitar from 12 visiting instrumental teachers. There are also recorder groups who are tutored by several members of the school's staff. These numbers are outstandingly high and the standards in instrumental work are well above average. Talented pupils perform at high levels in relation to their age with many playing at about grade 3 level and some above. Pupils show very positive attitudes, are well taught and make very good progress. Skilful, well organised, dynamic teaching was observed in strings, percussion and double bass tuition. Pupils were able to accompany a 12 bar blues piece on double bass after only one lesson. Lessons in keyboard, though satisfactory do not have the same rigour. Instrumental lessons are well supported by, and impact positively upon, extra-curricular activities which include the 70 strong junior and 55 strong senior orchestra, choirs and recorder groups. The teaching these groups receive is excellent and they perform at very high levels in assemblies and concerts as well as outside events for the community. School concerts and productions regularly involve hundreds of pupils. The extra-curricular groups reflect the exceptional quality of teaching, the commitment of pupils and the support of staff and parents. The musical reputation of the school is fully deserved. Music contributes enormously to pupils' personal development and supports their other learning. It is a major strength of the school.

157. **Physical education**

84. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have satisfactory games skills. In netball, they can throw and catch the ball with confidence and they apply these skills in games. In gymnastics, they have a satisfactory range of movements such as jumping, rolling and climbing, and they perform these actions safely on apparatus. Pupils in Year 5 have a good standard of swimming for their age. They are confident in the water and many can swim using both front and back strokes.

85. At the end of Year 8, when pupils leave school part way through Key Stage 3, they are working at a level that is broadly average for their age. A small number work at a higher level of attainment. Pupils have satisfactory skills and knowledge of the basic rules in a number of games. They understand simple tactics such as the roles of attackers and defenders. Some boys in Year 8 show good levels of attainment in soccer. They control the ball well and sustain their skills when required to do so under pressures of time and space. In dance, pupils demonstrate their increasing understanding of spatial awareness when working on a group dance based on pathways. They can plan their dances by selecting movements within a clear structure provided by the teacher. Pupils throughout the school understand the need to prepare themselves for activities and do this carefully. When given the opportunity, many pupils observe and comment on the performance of others, but few then use this information to improve their own performance. In the same way, the skills of planning are less secure because of lack of opportunity to practise this in some lessons. This variability in the opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate their work remains an issue from the last inspection. Pupils work safely alone and in groups. They cooperate well when practising skills and in team games.

86. In lessons across the school, pupils of all levels of attainment make satisfactory and often good progress. In lessons when progress is good, teachers have better subject knowledge, pupils are well motivated and lessons proceed at a brisker pace. This could be seen in a Year 6 netball lesson where pupils were keen to keep practising until they had improved their marking skills and then to use these skills in their games. Where progress was satisfactory the pace of the lesson was slower and pupils did not work with such energy and enthusiasm. Over longer periods of time pupils make satisfactory progress as they build up their skills of performance in a range of activities and play games of a more complex nature. Pupils enter the school with well-established basic skills in physical education, for example, in the way they handle apparatus in gymnastics. They make good progress in swimming through the regular use of the pool on site; the majority of pupils can swim 25 metres by the end of Key Stage 2. As they move through the school pupils are taught by both specialist and non-specialist teachers. As a result, they have a variable experience and hence make variable progress in the required planning, performing and evaluating aspects of physical education. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress.

87. Pupils have good attitudes towards physical education. They are usually well motivated, they enjoy physical activity and participation rates are high. A few pupils are less energetic and need urging to repeat and refine their movements in order to improve, although the requirement to do this is not always a feature of some teaching. Group work is particularly strong. Pupils cooperate well and support the work of others. They accept the need for rules and apply them fairly in their own games. Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral education.

88. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory. It is good in just over a half of lessons and very occasionally very good. There is little difference between the key stages. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is satisfactory but in some lessons this is still a relative weakness, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. In some lessons, tasks are not broken down into sufficiently small steps to help pupils to consolidate existing and then learn new skills. The best lessons have a real sense of pace. For example, in a Year 8 soccer lesson, the teacher used good subject knowledge and a very good range of quickly changing and developing practices to challenge pupils to perform to a high standard. Teachers manage pupils and equipment efficiently, so lessons run smoothly. They use a range of methods to sustain pupils' interest, including the use of questioning to clarify pupils' understanding and observation of others. This does not always extend to asking pupils to evaluate what they see and what they need to concentrate on in order to improve. Teachers encourage pupils with positive comments about their work.

89. Coordination of the subject across the school is good. The curriculum for physical education is good, offering a wide and varied programme of activities. A handbook has recently been produced with detailed help for non-specialists showing, for example, how to develop the skills of planning and evaluating in pupils' work. Teaching is not yet being monitored to ensure these suggestions are put into practice consistently across the school. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress are also clearly set out in the handbook. The results of assessment are used well for the purpose of reporting to parents but they have not yet been used to review the effectiveness of teaching or the curriculum. Accommodation for physical education is good with the exception of the small changing rooms which were identified as a problem at the last inspection. The need to provide appropriate training for adults providing poolside supervision, identified as a concern at the last inspection, has been met.

163. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

163. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

90. The inspection team consisted of 9 inspectors, including a lay inspector. During the week 109 lessons, 21 registration sessions, whole school and year group assemblies and a range of extra-curricular activities were inspected. Teachers were seen teaching several times. Planned discussions were held with pupils, teachers, other members of staff and governors. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including a sample across the range of pupils' attainment from each year group. A large amount of documentation, including teachers' planning, provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 18 parents shortly before the inspection, and analysed 265 responses to a questionnaire about their opinions, distributed by the school.

91. Inspectors spent a total of 31 inspector days in school gathering first hand evidence. They spent 82 hours observing lessons, 2 hours talking formally to pupils and 20 hours in evaluating pupils' work.

92.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y5 – Y8	447	3	120	20

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y5 – Y8)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	20.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.1

Education support staff (Y5 – Y8)

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked each week	82.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	86
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Average teaching group size:	KS2	27.2
	KS3	27.2

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	739 772
Total Expenditure	708 029
Expenditure per pupil	1 616
Balance brought forward from previous year	(12 457)
Balance carried forward to next year	19 286

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

447

Number of questionnaires returned:

265

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	24	61	10	4	2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	31	57	6	6	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	11	47	32	8	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	18	64	14	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	27	60	9	2	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	16	63	14	7	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29	60	10	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	12	60	12	14	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	55	16	4	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14	62	16	7	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	32	55	8	4	2