

INSPECTION REPORT

CUTCOMBE CE VA FIRST SCHOOL

Wheddon Cross, Nr Minehead, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123831

Headteacher: Mrs M.Best

Reporting inspector: Mrs A.Pangbourne
23818

Dates of inspection: 24th- 27th January 2000

Inspection number: 186598

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wheddon Cross Nr Minehead Somerset
Postcode:	TA24 7DZ
Telephone number:	01643 841462
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E.Norman
Date of previous inspection:	6th Feb 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Alison Pangbourne	Registered inspector	Areas of learning for children aged under five English Information technology Physical education Music Art Equal opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mr Jan Zachary	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
Mr Graham Jones	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Science Design and technology History Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cutcombe Church of England First School is situated in the village of Wheddon Cross in an isolated part of Exmoor. It draws its pupils mainly from the local area, which comprises a mixture of farming properties, housing association and private properties. The school has retained most of the characteristics described in the previous inspection, although the building has been altered to provide a hall and extra classroom accommodation. Children's attainments on entry are broadly average, although most children start school with well-developed personal and social skills. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are broadly average with no pupils currently entitled to a free school meal, which is well below average. The pupils are all white with no pupils from ethnic heritages. Numbers of boys and girls are about the same.

At the time of the inspection, 29 pupils were on roll, of whom none have statements of special educational need and seven were included on the special educational needs register as needing levels of support provided by the school itself. All these pupils were in Key Stage 1. At the time of the inspection three children were aged under five. They are admitted to school on a part time basis at the beginning of the year in which they have their fifth birthday and become full time after their first half term. They are accommodated in one class that also contains pupils in Year 1 and Year 2.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cutcombe Church of England First School is an effective school with many good features. The pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science because the quality of teaching is very good. The strengths of the school greatly outweigh its weaknesses. The headteacher, governors and staff work well together and are committed to raising standards even higher. A judgement on value for money is based on what the school achieves in relation to its expenditure. The school's income is above average, as is usual for such a small school. The school makes good provision for the personal and non-academic needs of its pupils, standards are high and the quality of teaching is very good. However, because the school's income is so high, the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average, both by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time the pupils leave the school.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes to their work. There are very good opportunities for them to take responsibility.
- There is very good provision for personal development including spiritual, moral and social development.
- The school is well led. The headteacher, governors and staff work well together as a team.
- The school enjoys highly effective links with parents and the wider community.

What could be improved

- The organisation of mathematics lessons for higher attaining pupils in Year 4.
- The arrangements for the appraisal of teachers.
- The way in which the school promotes an understanding of the multicultural society that exists in Britain.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in 1996. Standards have improved and the quality of teaching has improved considerably from satisfactory to very good. The school has worked hard to successfully address the issues pointed out in the previous inspection. Pupils use their literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills effectively across the curriculum and this contributes to the improvement in standards. There has been good improvement in planning and assessment procedures. The school has sustained the high quality of relationships and community involvement. All these improvements contribute to the high standards seen during the inspection. The school is well placed to make further improvement.

STANDARDS

Given the very small number of pupils in each year group, too much emphasis should not be placed on one year's performance. Consequently, the requirement to report on pupils' attainment compared with both all schools and similar schools is lifted. However, in the most recent National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments, the performance of pupils was above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. All pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and science and the majority easily attained this level. Pupils do very well considering that they start school with skills which are broadly average.

Inspection evidence shows that standards overall are above average by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils sustain these high standards until they leave the school at the end of Year 4. Standards throughout the school are above average in reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics and science. Standards in information technology are in line with national expectations.

The size of the school means that a comparison of results in recent years as an indicator of improvement is unreliable. This is because there are differences in attainment between different year groups and the size of the cohorts vary. However, results for 1998 were similarly high as those in 1999 and show that pupils are attaining broadly above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The school sets challenging targets for individual pupils in English and mathematics and these are regularly reviewed to ensure that they provide sufficient challenge.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They enjoy coming to school because they are offered interesting activities and they know that their contributions are valued.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous and show respect for property.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have very good personal development. As they get older, they take responsibility for a range of duties around the school. Relationships are also very good. Older pupils work well with younger ones.
Attendance	Well above average. Pupils are rarely late for school and lessons start promptly.

Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour, personal development and attendance are all very good. In six out of ten lessons, pupils showed very good attitudes and behaviour and in one lesson behaviour was excellent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Nine out of ten lessons were good or very good and the rest were satisfactory. Thirty one per cent of the lessons seen were very good. Very good teaching was seen in both classes. Teaching in English is very good and enables pupils to make good gains in their learning. The quality of teaching in all English lessons in Key Stage 1 was very good. The teaching of mathematics is good, with examples of very good teaching seen in half the lessons. Strengths in the quality of teaching include a very good understanding of how to teach literacy and numeracy, the use of challenging questions, which extend learning and effective use of resources which motivate the pupils. Small classes and the effective deployment of the classroom assistant contribute positively to the progress made. The organisation of the curriculum, where pupils in Year 2 are taught with Key Stage 2 for mathematics, sometimes contributes to a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils in Year 4 as the span of ability is so wide.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good curriculum. Literacy and numeracy make good contributions to other subjects. There is a good range of extra curricular activities. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for personal development. Provision for spiritual, social and moral development is very good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The school is good at promoting local cultures but it is not as successful at promoting understanding of the multicultural society that exists in Britain.
How well the school works in partnership with its parents	Parents have very positive views of the school and the school has very effective links with them. They receive satisfactory information about their children's progress, but reports lack clear information on progress in individual subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. Staff know pupils very well and effectively monitor their personal development. There are good assessment procedures, which are used well to ensure that pupils are offered tasks which are well matched to their needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Despite a heavy teaching commitment the headteacher provides strong and caring leadership. She is well supported by both the full time and the part time teachers who share in the management of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are committed to the school and they are very supportive. However, they have not ensured that the statutory requirement for the appraisal of the headteacher and the national requirements for the appraisal of teachers are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Realistic individual targets are set for pupils. The school is not obliged to set targets agreed with the local education authority because the number on roll is so small. Thorough analysis of test results ensures that individual targets are sufficiently challenging.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Good. Small classes contribute positively to pupils' learning because they are able to have individual attention when required. The accommodation is attractive and the school uses the village playing field to compensate for the sloping playground. Resources are good.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The governors evaluate spending and are well informed about budgetary matters. The principles of best value are applied well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • Behaviour is good. • Their children receive the right amount of homework • The teaching is good • There is a happy, family ethos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No negative comments received.

The inspection team fully supports parents' positive views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The significance of comparative test results or teacher assessments, as measures of school performance depends on the number of pupils in a year group. Given the very small numbers of pupils in each year group, too much emphasis should not be placed upon any one year's National Curriculum test results.

2. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, the results achieved by the pupils were above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics when compared with all schools. Teacher assessments in science show that the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was very high. All pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and science. One pupil exceeded the expected standard in reading and science and two pupils exceeded it in mathematics. The school has improved on the average standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science, which were identified in the previous inspection.

3. The very small size of the cohort means that a comparison of results in recent years as an indicator of improvement is unreliable. The results between 1996 and 1999 show fluctuating levels of attainment, particularly in 1997, illustrating variations in standards which may occur as a result of differences between year groups and because of the small number of pupils in each year group. However, results for 1998 were similarly high as those for 1999 and show that pupils are attaining standards that are broadly above average in all three core subjects. Each year group has significant differences in gender and consequently, any analysis to assess whether there are significant differences in attainment between boys and girls is unreliable. Due to its small size, the school is not obliged to set specific targets to raise standards. However, the school expects all pupils in Key Stage 2 to at least reach the nationally expected level by the end of the key stage. The school sets challenging individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics based on a thorough on-going analysis of baseline assessments, standardised tests and statutory tests. These targets are shared with pupils and regularly reviewed to ensure they provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. This contributes positively to the high standards because all pupils strive to meet their targets.

4. There is national data about the performance of schools in a similar context - that is, schools with up to and including eight per cent of pupils who are entitled to a free school meal. Compared to these schools, achievement at the age of seven is average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. However, the small cohort again distorts the figures and care must be taken not to put too much emphasis on this data.

5. The results of the baseline assessments and inspection evidence show that children start school with broadly average skills in all the areas of learning, with the exception of personal and social development, where most pupils have well developed skills. Children make sound progress and by the time they start their statutory education their attainments are in line with what is expected for their age in all the areas of learning. During the inspection, all children made good progress in lessons due to the good teaching they received.

6. Inspection evidence shows that standards overall exceed the expectation for the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards also exceed those expected in speaking and listening, reading and writing. By the time they leave the school, at the end of Year 4, pupils have maintained these above average standards. All pupils make good progress in developing their skills. The school is committed to raising standards even higher and it has introduced several new initiatives to raise standards in writing. For example, one lesson each week for pupils in Key Stage 2 is devoted to the teaching of poetry writing and dedicated times are included in the literacy hour for the teaching of writing skills such as how to plan a story. These initiatives are impacting positively on the standards attained.

7. Standards in speaking and listening are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and pupils maintain these above average standards by the end of Year 4. Pupils make good progress

in developing these skills. By the time they leave the school, most pupils are confident and express themselves clearly in both planned and informal situations. Standards in reading are also above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4 and pupils make good progress. By age seven, many pupils read simple texts with reasonable fluency and use a range of strategies to help them read unknown words. By the time they leave the school, they are confident readers and discuss their preferences. Standards in writing also exceed expectations by the end of the key stage and by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils write for a range of purposes, including stories, poems and letters. The focused teaching of writing, which emphasises the importance of structure, is contributing positively to the continued rise in standards. By the end of Year 2, most write in simple sentences using correct spelling for a range of common words and use punctuation with confidence. Pupils make good progress. By the time they leave the school, at the end of Year 4, pupils redraft their work and use a wide vocabulary in their stories. The National Literacy Strategy is making a positive impact on standards.

8. Standards in literacy are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and these high standards are maintained throughout the school. Pupils use their good literacy skills to enhance learning in other areas. For example, they use their writing skills to record their experiments in science and to write labels to use in assembly. They use their speaking and listening skills to discuss historical artefacts and patterns on Japanese wallpaper in art lessons. They use their reading skills well to research information in history and geography. Standards in numeracy are also above average by the end of Key Stage 1. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils conduct statistical surveys on eye colour in science and record their results using block graphs.

9. In mathematics, pupils develop their understanding of number concepts and use appropriate mathematical language. They understand place value and how to give change. They learn to multiply and divide and how to estimate time, weight and length. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced and is impacting positively on the standards attained.

10. Pupils experience a good range of scientific activities and develop their scientific language as they move through the school. They understand what plants need to grow and they plan and organise their own investigations. Standards in information technology are broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils use word processors confidently, direct a programmable toy and use simple simulation programs. Pupils achieve appropriate standards in all other subjects of the curriculum and steadily develop their skills as they move through the school. Factors, which contribute to the progress made in many subjects of the curriculum, include the consistently high quality of the teaching and the good provision for individual attention in the small classes.

11. The small number of pupils with special educational needs, all of whom are in Key Stage 1, make good progress in relation to prior attainment. Tasks are well matched to their needs and these pupils receive good support in the classrooms.

12. Higher attaining pupils generally achieve as well as might be expected. The exception to this is in mathematics, where the recent reorganisation of lessons to include pupils in Year 2 leads to a broad range of ability. Consequently, higher attaining pupils in Year 4 are not always sufficiently challenged, particularly in mental arithmetic sessions where they consolidate their skills. The school plans to review this arrangement, which was introduced to allow a better balance of class sizes for physical education lessons, which take place at the same time for pupils in Year R and Year 1. Although statutory test results indicated that girls did better than boys in reading, the cohort of pupils in 1999 contained mostly boys and consequently the data is unreliable. Inspection evidence suggests that there is no significant difference between the attainments of boys and girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour, their personal development and relationships are very good. Attendance is also very good. The school has maintained these high standards since the previous inspection and parents appreciate the high standards of behaviour. All lessons observed showed at least good attitudes and behaviour. Six out of ten lessons showed very good attitudes and behaviour and in one lesson behaviour was excellent.

14. The pupils have very good attitudes towards their learning and this contributes positively to the high standards attained. Pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and children who are aged under five, show interest in their work. They enjoy coming to school because they are offered interesting tasks and they know that their contributions are valued. For example, during an assembly, pupils were asked to write their definitions of 'respect' for display and one of the very youngest children laboriously wrote his definition, secure in the understanding that his effort would be valued. Pupils show enthusiasm about their work and are willing to join in class discussions. The small size of the school allows teachers and pupils to know each other very well and pupils strive to please their teachers. They settle quickly to lessons and concentrate well for sustained periods. Pupils take pride in their work and listen carefully to their teachers' instructions.

15. Behaviour in lessons and in the playground is very good. It contributes well to an orderly and secure environment which is conducive to learning. In one lesson, behaviour was excellent. In this lesson, pupils were enthralled by authentic Tudor artefacts, which had been loaned by a parent. They showed great respect and care for these precious items and sketched them quietly to a background of taped Elizabethan music. This also contributed positively to their spiritual development. All pupils, including the very youngest, respect and follow the school's rules. Pupils are very polite, friendly and courteous towards adults and each other. They show respect for their environment and handle resources carefully. There have been no exclusions during the past year.

16. Pupils' personal development is also very good. They show a very good level of independence in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 1, where they are expected to complete their tasks without recourse to the teacher if she is working with another group. Older pupils willingly take a lot of responsibility in the school. They arrange the hall for assembly, setting out benches and chairs and being responsible for the music to which pupils enter and leave. During assemblies they set up the overhead projector, paying very good attention to safety. They also take responsibility for switching on the computers each day. Older pupils take care of younger ones, both in lessons and in the playground. A particularly good example was seen during a physical education lesson where pupils in Year 4 ensured that younger ones could catch balls thrown by older pupils. They use their initiative well and tidy their classrooms without needing to be asked. They particularly enjoy being chosen as the 'tidy table' at lunchtime. All these opportunities for personal development contribute positively to the ethos of the school.

17. Relationships between the pupils and between pupils and adults are very good throughout the school. Pupils know that they are valued and there is a high level of mutual respect. Pupils work well in pairs and small groups and willingly help each other. A positive feature is the very good relationships evident between older and younger pupils. Due to the size of the school, brothers and sisters are often in the same class, leading to close relationships. At play times, boys and girls play well together.

18. Attendance is well above the national average, with low levels of unauthorised absence. Pupils are rarely late to school, and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is a strength of the school. Nine out of ten lessons were good or very good and the rest were satisfactory. Thirty one per cent of the lessons seen were very good. Examples of very good teaching were seen in both classes. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection, where it was judged to be sound. The school has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified then, which mainly concerned too narrow a range of experiences to encourage the use of speaking, writing and mathematical skills. The very good quality of teaching has a significant impact on the standards attained and on pupils' learning.

20. The quality of teaching for pupils in Key Stage 1 is very good overall. The small number of children aged under five are taught in the same class as pupils in Key Stage 1 and benefit from this very good quality teaching. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was consistently good in the lessons observed specifically for children aged under five, and this enabled all children, including those with special educational needs, to make good gains in their learning. The able classroom assistant makes a positive contribution to this good teaching as she often supervises the youngest

children under the direction of the teacher. Good teaching is characterised by effective organisation and planning, where the youngest children are offered activities that are well matched to their needs. For example, during the literacy hour, when the teacher was working with a group of older pupils, children under five learned to make left and right turns on a tricycle in the hall under the supervision of the classroom assistant before returning to the classroom to read with their teacher. All adults working with these children have a good understanding of their needs and ensure that they have ample opportunities to develop their skills through practical and play activities. This contributes positively to the development of independence skills and motivates the children. Questions are used effectively to extend learning and adults skilfully use comments made by the children to develop their understanding. For example, a request for help in making some construction equipment stand up enabled children to learn a variety of ways of achieving this. Children are very well managed and assessment is used well to plan what they need to learn next. The small number of children enables the teacher to match activities to the needs of individuals very successfully, so ensuring that all children achieve as well as they can. The good ratio of adults to children contributes positively to their acquisition of skills.

21. Very good teaching is a feature of most lessons for pupils in Key Stage 1 and this ensures that pupils make good progress. All English lessons and half the mathematics lessons were very good and the rest were good. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching in any other subject because little or no teaching was seen during the inspection due to its length. Strengths in the quality of teaching in English and mathematics include a very good understanding of how to teach literacy and numeracy. For example, during the literacy hour, correct terms such as 'definition' and 'explanation' enabled pupils to learn how to use a dictionary. The very effective and imaginative use of resources motivates the pupils and encourages them to persevere. During a literacy hour, word cards, which split in pieces, were used very effectively to teach compound words. The pupils could hardly wait to have a turn because they were so interested in how they came apart. In mathematics, challenging questions and the use of attractive number sheets and real money enabled pupils to understand 'change' and how to work it out practically. Lessons are very well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The high quality of the planning ensures that activities are offered which challenge pupils in all three year groups and consequently they make very good gains in their learning.

22. In Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching was consistently good. It is good in all English and mathematics lessons. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement in any other subject. Good teaching is characterised by good planning where work is closely matched to the pupils' needs and high expectations. Sensitive questioning is used well to establish what pupils have learned and to extend their learning. For example, during a literacy lesson, most pupils made significant gains in their understanding of when to use an apostrophe because of extensive discussion and good use of examples. Pupils in Year 2 are taught mathematics with pupils in Key Stage 2 and this sometimes leads to a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils in Year 4 because the span of ability is so wide, particularly in mental arithmetic sessions, and consequently these pupils consolidate their skills.

23. Other strengths in the quality of teaching at both key stages are the very effective use of support staff and resources. Small classes and the very good ratio of adults to pupils ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, receive good support both individually and in very small groups. This contributes positively to the good progress made in lessons. The classroom assistant and other helpers are well briefed and interact positively with pupils. Resources are well chosen and motivate the pupils. For example, in a history lesson, genuine Tudor artefacts inspired pupils in Key Stage 2 to produce detailed observational drawings that were of good quality. In a geography lesson for pupils in Key Stage 1, well-chosen photographs of buildings in the village encouraged pupils to use correct geographical vocabulary. A strong feature, which contributes to the very good quality of teaching, is the consistently very good management of pupils in lessons. The discipline is based on warm affirming relationships which are very much part of the school ethos. Pupils respond positively to the tasks they are given and teachers use firm and effective strategies. They make their expectations of behaviour clear to the pupils and the standard of discipline is high. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects which they teach and their enthusiasm is transferred to the pupils. For example, in a music lesson for pupils in Key Stage 2, pupils were motivated to compose syncopated rhythms because of the teacher's effective use of humour. There is a good balance between practical tasks, problem solving and whole class teaching. Lessons

include a good variety of activities which stimulate the pupils' interest. Teachers assess pupils well and set individual targets for improvement. Pupils are frequently encouraged to refer to their targets and this contributes to the good progress they make. The small class sizes, particularly at Key Stage 2, have an enhancing effect on pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding as pupils receive much more individual attention and teachers are generally able to plan tasks which are well matched to their individual needs. Homework is used well to extend and enrich pupils' learning. All pupils take books home to read and they are expected to learn spellings, number bonds and tables. Parents expressed their satisfaction with the amount and type of homework that their children are expected to do.

24. Teachers plan effectively to meet the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are currently only in Key Stage 1. They receive close attention in the small class and the teacher has a good knowledge of their individual needs. Consequently, the targets on their individual education plans are translated into work that is closely matched to their needs.

25. Literacy is taught very well. The school has successfully adopted the National Literacy Strategy throughout the school. Good emphasis is placed on the teaching of reading and writing and this contributes positively to the high standards attained. Teachers act as very good role models in the literacy hour when they model good handwriting or work alongside pupils. All teachers show a good understanding of how to teach literacy skills. Literacy skills are taught very well across other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils use their writing skills to record their findings in science and to write accounts of their village in geography. They use their speaking and listening skills to discuss artefacts in history and they use their reading skills to research information in history and geography. The teaching of numeracy is good and the school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers are skilled in teaching mental arithmetic strategies and give clear explanations, which enable all pupils to make progress.

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

26. The school offers a good curriculum that is broad and balanced and fulfils all National Curriculum requirements. The requirement to provide health, sex and drugs education is well met through the science programme of study and also by visits from outside agencies and participation in local authority schemes. There are sound statements of policy and schemes of work in all subjects.

27. The curriculum provided for children aged under five is good. It is broad and balanced and covers all the desirable areas of learning. There is a good emphasis on practical and play activities, which make a positive contribution to the development of independence skills. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that all children are offered a balance of activities that meet their needs.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and statutory requirements are all met. The baseline assessment process is appropriately used in the identification of these pupils and all staff are familiar with the criteria involved. All identified pupils have clear and suitable individual education plans that are followed well.

29. The National Literacy Strategy is very effectively established. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented effectively and both have contributed significantly to the improvement in standards in English and mathematics. Literacy and numeracy also make good contributions to work in other areas of the curriculum. In design and technology, for example, pupils engage in lively but sensible discussion of their work as they accurately follow written instructions for making model winding gear, while in science they conduct statistical surveys on eye colour and represent their findings pictorially using block graphs. Interesting links are also made between subjects. In science, for example, pupils test the electrical conductivity of Tudor pewter tableware previously studied in a history lesson, and the same artefacts are also used as the subject for careful observational drawing in art. Subjects therefore contribute to each other widely across the curriculum, supporting and enriching pupils' learning.

30. A good range of extra-curricular activities extends the limited local resources. This includes football, catchball, and sports training by outside coaches, often in co-operation with other schools in

the cluster. The school also has its own small outdoor swimming pool which is used in the summer, as well as travelling to an indoor pool by bus.

31. The school's links with the community make a good contribution to pupils' attainment and personal development. They are well used to enrich the curriculum and make it more relevant and meaningful. The music provision, for example, is enhanced by visiting musicians and by trips out of school to concerts. Parents report that the family atmosphere owes much to the community nature of the school – a trip to the local 'pub' for Christmas lunch for all the school is an unusual feature, for example. Interestingly, a recent survey carried out for the village newsletter showed that children feel the community is important enough for them to prefer to work locally. Liaison with other schools in the local small school cluster and with the main destination middle schools is strong and effective.

32. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good overall. It, too, is supported by links with the community, for example with the police and the health service, and particularly by a residential trip for pupils in Key Stage 2. In particular, the school does very well with the opportunities it creates for promoting spiritual, moral and social development. The previous inspection report found opportunities for this development to be 'very sound', and the school has built on this base to reach a position of strength.

33. The very good opportunities for spiritual development are provided through very high quality acts of collective worship and religious education, and an unusually strong cross-curricular approach. During the school day moments are set aside in the classroom for prayer and reflection. Planned activities in lessons provide useful opportunities for pupils to express their inner feelings and broaden their spiritual experience. Teachers are very aware of how lessons in a variety of subjects can be enhanced by the use of visual aids such as candles to support times for reflection. For instance, lighting a candle and turning the lights off very effectively enhanced an introduction to a religious education lesson on patterns in nature for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4.

34. The school develops pupils' moral and social awareness very well. The approach and attitudes of the headteacher and staff provide pupils with very good guidance on right and wrong and all staff act as very good role models. School and class rules are well known by the pupils, and staff show consistently high expectations of behaviour not only in lessons, but also at breaks and lunchtime. Assemblies encourage good behaviour and pupils greatly benefit from the school's emphasis on their welfare, giving them a sense of pride and self-esteem. From beginning school, pupils are encouraged to relate well to each other, to take turns and to share willingly. During the inspection, this was particularly well exemplified and reinforced in assemblies on the theme of respect. Examples of the very good provision elsewhere were seen in the many times that pupils are asked to work in pairs or groups, usually by mixed gender. Class activities encourage independence. Older pupils have a range of responsibilities such as operating tape machines and the overhead projector in assemblies, or ringing the bell at the end of breaks.

35. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. The school is good at promoting local cultures but is not yet effective in the ways it promotes understanding of the multicultural society that exists in Britain. It works hard to broaden the pupils' experiences of the traditions and customs of their own culture. In a history lesson for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4, for instance, Tudor artefacts provided by a parent were drawn against a musical background of taped period music, adding an extra dimension to the learning experience. A very positive step towards widening pupils' appreciation of other cultural backgrounds has been taken through the current work on Japan and its people, with the involvement of a visiting teacher. The school uses this unusual resource very well through high quality displays and artefacts, and specific curriculum work such as Japanese singing and calligraphy lessons. The challenge now is to extend the quality of that work to cover education with a wider multicultural base.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is good and this has been maintained since the last inspection. The school is successful in its aim to promote a friendly, safe and caring atmosphere. Staff are accessible and responsive and give pupils good support, and parents recognise that their children are well looked after in school. The procedures for child

protection and promoting pupils' well being, health and safety are good. Child protection procedures are effective; the health and safety policy is comprehensive and includes safety rules for the pupils. There are good strategies in place to support the policy.

37. The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good. The ethos of the school promotes a climate of good behaviour where praise is more important than censure, and staff are consistent in their high expectations of how pupils will behave. As a result not only is behaviour very good, but pupils are enabled to show enthusiasm, interest and involvement in an atmosphere in which all contributions are respected. Bullying is not an issue.

38. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very well developed. The very good attendance is promoted informally through the close links with parents and formally through clearly communicated procedures to be followed in the case of absence, for instance in the school brochure.

39. Since the last inspection the quality of assessment has improved and is now good. Staff know the pupils well and, because of the relatively small numbers involved, are able to follow their development effectively.

40. Procedures for the identification, assessment and review of pupils with special educational needs are good and fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. Higher attaining pupils are also identified and, where necessary, arrangements are made to accelerate their progress.

41. Assessment procedures are good. These include useful charts for ensuring curriculum coverage and individual pupil check sheets that keep close track of progress and achievement. Detailed records are kept to show results in standardised tests in reading and spelling. As a result assessment now regularly influences teachers' planning and pupils are also set challenging individual targets which guide them towards achieving higher standards, although there is still room for it to feed through to fully meet the needs of some higher attaining pupils in Year 4 in mathematics. Portfolios of work have been collected and assessed against National Curriculum levels in co-operation with other local schools. These are used by teachers as a useful resource to compare with their assessment of individual pupils.

42. A range of tests is also used appropriately throughout pupils' time at the school not only to measure attainment and monitor their progress but also to form the basis of information passed to the middle school when they leave. In marking pupils' work teachers comment on progress towards pupils' individual targets, particularly in literacy at Key Stage 1. There is need, however, for wider use of advice in marking at Key Stage 2 which helps pupils to improve their own work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The partnership with parents is very good. The school has maintained the strengths of the last inspection. It has highly effective links supported by sound information for parents, and ensures that they make a good contribution to their children's learning. Overall parents' involvement has a very positive impact on the school's work and the parents themselves are highly satisfied.

44. Parents are kept appropriately informed both about the curriculum and about the school generally. Both the prospectus and the governors' annual report are clear and useful. Newsletters are regular and informal communication is strong. Reports show both strengths and weaknesses, and have a section for pupils to add comments. Whilst parents feel the reports on their own children describe them well as individuals and most feel very well informed about their progress overall, the reports do sometimes lack clear information on progress in individual subjects, and this is a weakness which the school has recognised. Parents are highly satisfied with most of what the school does. All those who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel confident that their child is happy at the school, that behaviour is good, that teaching is good and that the school is well led and managed.

45. Out of the 25 responses to the inspection questionnaire, no more than two expressed any reservation on any individual point. The very large majority feel confident that any questions or problems will be dealt with well and that the school works closely with them. All have now signed the new home-school agreement and many help in school in a variety of ways, either directly or through the well-supported and active Friends of Cutcombe School association, whose membership includes

the local community as well as parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The overall leadership and management of the headteacher are good. The headteacher provides strong and caring leadership and has a clear vision for the development of the school. She has been appointed since the previous inspection and has successfully raised standards, despite a heavy teaching commitment. The previous inspection identified a need to change the focus of the school from curriculum maintenance to raising standards and this has been successfully achieved. All staff share a commitment to raising standards even higher. The headteacher is well supported by the other full time teacher and the part time teacher. All three share in the management of the school, including responsibility for most areas of the curriculum and for pupils with special educational needs. They are a committed team who work well together for the benefit of pupils and parents. Responsibility for information technology and design and technology is successfully undertaken by one teacher, music and art by the headteacher and religious education and collective worship by the part time teacher. All other subjects are managed jointly and teachers have a good understanding of areas for curricular development. This unusual system contributes positively to the good curriculum provided. There are clearly stated aims, values and policies, which are very well reflected in the work of the school. The small number of pupils with special educational needs who are all in Key Stage 1, are very well integrated into the school and the school is committed to equality of opportunity for all.

47. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. They are committed to the school although some are unable to visit regularly due to work commitments. They are very supportive and have a clear view for the school's development. This is because they are kept well informed by the headteacher, the teacher governor and the non-teaching governor who is the classroom assistant. Their daily experiences in the classrooms provide them with a clear insight into strengths and weaknesses in the school and they share this information regularly with the governing body. There is an appropriate range of committees who report efficiently to the full governing body. In most respects they fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and they have been successful in promoting high standards in many aspects of the school. However, the governing body has not ensured that the statutory requirement for the appraisal of the headteacher or that the national requirements for the appraisal of teachers are met and this is a weakness which the school has already recognised. The governors' action plan has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection. Standards have considerably improved and pupils now use their literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills across all areas of the curriculum. There has been good improvement in planning and assessment. The school has retained the high esteem in which it is held by the community. All these improvements contribute positively to the high standards seen during the inspection in many aspects of the school. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection.

48. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is good. The school is not obliged to set specific targets with the local education authority because the cohort of pupils is so small. However, all pupils in Key Stage 2 are on course to at least meet the expected levels by the end of the key stage. The school sets challenging individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics based on an analysis of the baseline assessments, standardised tests and statutory tests. Thorough on-going analysis of assessment data is used to identify specific strengths and weaknesses for individual pupils and to set challenging targets for them which are shared and known by the pupils. This contributes positively to the good progress made and to the well-matched tasks that are offered. The recent monitoring policy allows good opportunities for governors to monitor the work of the school. Recent visits include the monitoring of literacy and numeracy. Governors receive information from the receiving middle schools and they are aware that standards are high in comparison with some schools. They show a commitment to improving standards even higher. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is good. The headteacher works very closely with her colleagues and the size of the school enables her to monitor informally and provide support if necessary. This contributes positively to the consistently high quality of teaching as all teachers share ideas and concerns. Planning is regularly monitored by the headteacher to ensure that pupils develop

their skills steadily and systematically.

49. The school makes good use of resources and funds made available to it. The school development plan is a good, practical, working document, which is appropriately constructed in consultation with staff and governors. It identifies priorities and the finance committee act responsibly in their role as 'critical friend' and fully evaluate spending before making financial commitments. Good information is provided about the budget each month, which keeps the governors well informed. Spending decisions focus on raising standards further in literacy, numeracy and information technology and on improving the building and grounds for the benefit of the pupils and the community. Recent spending on books has contributed to high standards in reading. The strategic role of the governing body in evaluating the success of the school development plan is effective. For example, the governors know that their expenditure on resources gives good value for money because they receive information informally from governors who work at the school. They have evaluated the success of alterations to the building to provide a hall and a larger classroom. These alterations contribute positively to the good quality of education provided. Funds made available from the trust fund are used effectively to enhance the curriculum; for example by funding educational visits and providing music tuition. The school has successfully addressed the minor issues raised in the recent audit report. The administrative staff manage day-to-day accounts and office procedures to a high standard and make good use of information technology.

50. The principles of best value are applied well in the school's use of its resources. The governors are interested in how their school compares with others locally and are justifiably proud of its good standing in the community. The governors meet with governors from other small local schools on training days and compare standards and provision. The governing body invited tenders for grounds maintenance and evaluated the options before returning to the service provided by the local education authority.

51. The small number on roll enables the school to have small classes and this makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning because they are able to have much individual attention from teachers and the classroom assistant. This good ratio of teachers to pupils has a positive impact on standards and the classroom assistant makes a major contribution to the good quality of education provided. The accommodation is attractive and provides a conducive learning environment. The sloping playground inhibits opportunities for outdoor play and there is no grassed area. However, the school uses the village playing field to compensate for this. There is an outdoor swimming pool, which is well used in summer both by the school and the local community and ensures that most pupils are able to swim. Resources are good. The school has suitable resources for all areas of the curriculum and the small number of pupils ensures that all are well used. The good ratio of computers to pupils ensures that all pupils develop their skills in this area of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to continue the good work of the school and to raise standards even higher, the headteacher and the governing body should now address the following in their action plan: (These are indicated in the paragraphs numbered below.)

- (1) Improve the organisation for mathematics lessons to ensure that the needs of higher attaining pupils in Year 4 are met. (paragraphs 12, 22, 41, 69)
- (2) Implement the statutory requirement for the appraisal of the headteacher and the national requirement for the appraisal of teachers. * (paragraph 47)
- (3) Improve the provision for cultural development to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in a multicultural society. (paragraph 35)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Improve the quality of reports to parents by including information on progress in individual subjects.* (paragraph 44)

* The school has already identified these areas as in need of improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	31	58	11	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	29
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0
Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	29
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.6
Average class size	15

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	16.25

Financial information

Financial year	98/99
	£
Total income	98868
Total expenditure	95969
Expenditure per pupil	2823
Balance brought forward from previous year	5135
Balance carried forward to next year	8034

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	30
Number of questionnaires returned	25

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	24	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	52	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	54	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	56	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	32	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	24	8	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	32	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	36	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	60	32	0	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	8	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	6	64	8	0	22

Other issues raised by parents

Parents praised the team spirit evident in the school and the happy, family feeling. Some parents brought their children to the school from outside the immediate area because of its good reputation.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

52. Children start school on a part time basis at the beginning of the year in which they have their fifth birthday. They become full time after their first half term. They are accommodated in a class that also includes pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. Most children have experienced some form of pre-school provision. Evidence from the baseline assessments and inspection evidence shows that children's attainments on entry are broadly average, but most children start school with well-developed personal and social skills. They receive a positive start to school and participate fully in all activities provided. Children make sound progress and, by the time they reach statutory school age, their standards of attainment are in line with what is expected for children of this age in all the areas of learning. During the inspection, the good teaching seen enabled children to make good gains in their learning in all lessons. There has been improvement in the provision for children aged under five since the previous inspection and children are now offered activities that are well matched both to their individual needs and to the early years curriculum.

53. Children have good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through varied opportunities to work and play together both in their small group and with older pupils. The quality of teaching is good. Children co-operate happily when taking turns to write messages 'by Royal Command' when being kings and queens in 'Cutcombe Castle'. On arrival each day, children take responsibility for hanging up their reading bag and choose from activities, which have been prepared for them. The children are secure in class routines and concentrate on their tasks until they are complete. The organisation for these young children, where they sometimes work in the adjoining hall and practical area with the able classroom assistant or other helpers, whilst their teacher works with older pupils, contributes positively to the development of social skills. Good relationships allow children to be secure and confident with all adults. For example, during the inspection, they related well to a Japanese teacher, visiting the school, who helped them to write their initials in Japanese calligraphy. Children are well behaved, even when not under the direct supervision of an adult. For example, they share construction equipment sensibly when their teacher is working with another group. The well-established routines, the consistent expectations of behaviour and the caring attitudes of all adults make a significant contribution to the sense of security felt by the children.

54. The standards attained in language and literacy are in line to meet those expected nationally for five-year-olds. The quality of teaching is good and enables children to improve because activities are well matched to their individual needs. As the class size is small and there are few children aged under five, children receive a significant amount of individual attention and this enables them to make progress. They develop their speaking and listening skills through good opportunities for role-play, both in 'Cutcombe Castle' and when acting out the story of 'Goldilocks' with their teacher. Children practise their writing skills in the role-play area and when writing captions for their paintings, and consequently most can write their names and make letter type shapes. Higher attaining children can write recognisable words. Good emphasis is placed on developing reading skills, supported by parents, who share books that the children take home regularly. Children enjoy stories and try to join in when reading with their teacher. During the inspection, challenging questions enabled children to learn new vocabulary and the teacher skilfully used their responses to help them develop an understanding of rhyme. Most children can tell a story using appropriate 'story language', using the pictures to help them, and some discuss their favourite books at home. They can read simple words from their word tin, which they also practise at home. Good emphasis is placed on teaching literacy skills through games and practical activities and this ensures a firm foundation for the development of reading skills.

55. Attainment in mathematics is in line to meet the standards expected at five years old. Children develop their skills well. Most children count and use numbers to 10. They develop their mathematical skills well through their play in the sand tray when they understand whether objects are full or empty and when making repeating patterns on pegboard. They develop their understanding of mathematical language when they put their finger under the title of their reading book or point to the bottom of the page. The teacher encourages children to notice the page numbers when they share books and this contributes positively to the development of numeracy skills. Children learn to count, sort and match using a range of objects. They know a wide variety of number rhymes, which they

often sing spontaneously, such as 'One, two buckle my shoe' and recognise circles, triangles and squares when printing their own patterns. They develop an understanding of 'more' and 'less' by making a graph of their favourite drinks. Effective use is made of resources to reinforce mathematical concepts. For example, wall displays and number lines are used at every opportunity to develop understanding. Due to the short length of the inspection, it was not possible to observe any teaching in this area of learning.

56. The children's physical development is in line to meet the standards expected at five years old and they develop their skills well. The quality of teaching is good and the teacher's enthusiasm and encouragement ensures that all children are keen to join in. Children gain confidence in using space through regular opportunities to join in physical activities in the hall with pupils in Year 1. During a dance lesson, using a recorded programme, children learned to move their arms rhythmically by copying the energetic movements of their teacher. They skip, jog and use space well. They also develop their physical skills when working with the well-prepared classroom assistant in their own group. For example, during the inspection, children set out a roadway with large bricks and steered a tricycle between them showing reasonable accuracy. This lesson also contributed positively to children's mathematical development, as they were required to turn left or right at the end of the roadway. Children handle small toys and scissors regularly to develop their manipulative skills. For example, they use scissors confidently to cut round fish shapes and build structures with construction toys.

57. The children's creative development is in line to meet the standards expected at five years old. The quality of teaching is good and enables children to improve their skills. Effective discussion and explanation ensured that children painted clay fruits in the appropriate colour and individual attention enabled them to develop control of their paintbrushes. Children develop their skills in using a range of materials when making crowns to wear in 'Cutcombe Castle'. They show developing hand control when painting their initial in Japanese calligraphy. Self-portraits show that children improve their observational skills by including eyelashes and eyebrows. Children know a range of songs by heart and often sing spontaneously. For example, they sang 'Old MacDonald had a Farm' tunefully whilst waiting to go into the hall for physical education. Photographic evidence shows that they play a range of musical instruments.

58. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is in line to meet the standards expected at five years old. It was not possible to see any lessons in this area of learning due to the short length of the inspection. However, photographic evidence shows that children are provided with activities to help them develop an understanding of the world around them. For example, children learn what seeds need in order to grow by planting cress and sunflowers. They learn simple properties of electricity by making simple circuits. Most children talk confidently about where they live and their families. They identify buildings in their village from photographs and know the differences between tiled and thatched roofs. They use construction toys and small world toys well to develop their own ideas and their manipulative skills. They experiment with sand and water and learn about the differences. Children use a tape recorder successfully to listen to stories. They use the basic keys on a computer and use the 'mouse' to move the cursor around the screen.

59. The quality of teaching is good and lessons are well planned to ensure that all children have equal access to the curriculum. The teacher and the classroom assistant have good understanding of the needs of children aged under five and the teacher is skilled in organising activities which are well matched to their needs in a class which includes older pupils. The classroom assistant makes a positive contribution to the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. A strong feature is the effective use of challenging questions, which extend learning. For example, children were asked what a cat uses to scratch and their responses were used effectively to teach rhyming words such as 'claws' and 'paws'. Children are very well managed and the teacher makes very good use of time and resources. The good organisation of the classroom enables the teacher and classroom assistant to work in a close partnership.

ENGLISH

60. Overall, standards in English are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and pupils maintain these high standards by the time they leave the school. Given the very small and differing number of pupils in each year group, too much emphasis should not be placed on any one year's National Curriculum test results. The results of National Curriculum data for 1999 for pupils at the end of Key

Stage 1, show that, compared with all schools, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level from a very small cohort, was above average in reading and writing. All pupils attained the expected level, one pupil exceeded it in reading and no pupils exceeded it in writing. Results for 1998 show similar high standards and represent a considerable improvement since 1997 where standards were well below average. When compared to similar schools, the results were average for reading and writing. However, the very small number of pupils distort the figures and because all pupils easily reached the expected level in reading and almost all did so in writing, pupils are achieving very well. There are considerable imbalances in gender between year groups so too much emphasis should not be placed on test results which suggest that boys do less well than girls in reading. There was no significant evidence of this during the inspection. The previous inspection report indicated that the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 achieved standards were in line with national standards in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 4 attained average standards in reading and below average standards in writing. The school has made significant improvement since the previous inspection.

61. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 1, standards are above national expectations in reading, writing and speaking and listening. These high standards are sustained by the end of Year 4. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in developing their skills. The school has implemented several new initiatives to raise standards even higher. A new reading scheme has been introduced and there is now a structured focus to the teaching of writing. This includes dedicated times within the literacy hour to teach writing skills, such as how to plan a story, and, for Key Stage 2, a specific focus on poetry. These initiatives contribute positively to the high standards attained throughout the school. The successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the very good teaching are other factors leading to high standards. All pupils have their own individual targets, which teachers refer to in their marking, particularly at Key Stage 1.

62. Standards in speaking and listening are above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are articulate when asking questions. For example, during a drama lesson about the Three Bears, they composed sensible questions, using a good vocabulary, to ask their teacher, who was in role as Goldilocks, why she was in their house. The very good role model provided by the teacher enabled a higher attaining pupil to respond in role as Mummy Bear asking 'Why did you break my son's chair?' This lesson also contributed positively to pupils' spiritual development as pupils were encouraged to reflect on how Goldilocks might make amends. Pupils of all ages listen carefully in a range of situations; for example, during the literacy hour, when they explain their work to others. Older pupils confidently discuss the techniques and designs for Japanese wallpaper in art lessons and the origins of Tudor artefacts in history. Opportunities for speaking and listening were identified as a weakness in the previous inspection and the school has successfully developed this area of the curriculum.

63. The attainment of pupils in reading is above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. The literacy hour is being used effectively to raise standards even higher and to introduce pupils to a wide range of texts, both fiction and non-fiction. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils read texts fluently and accurately and correct themselves when they make an error. They recognise a good number of common words out of context and have a good knowledge of letter sounds to help them decipher unknown words. They are familiar with dictionaries and know that the word 'octopus' is near the middle. They talk confidently about books that they have read and can predict what will happen next. Higher attaining pupils read unfamiliar poems confidently and discuss their preferences. Lower attaining pupils read simple text, using initial sounds to help them and predict what may happen next. Older pupils in Year 4 read confidently and expressively, paying attention to punctuation. They use the skills of inference and deduction and locate information using an index. The school's focus is now appropriately on teaching reading through the literacy hour, but it also ensures that individual readers are regularly heard by teachers and the classroom assistant and this contributes positively to the high standards. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and records identify clearly what pupils can do. Parents give valuable help with reading at home; they are assisted by a good contact book which gives useful information about whether their child is expected to read their book alone, together or if the parent should read it to their child. Useful ideas about how to help with reading at home also contribute to the high standards. Pupils use their good reading skills to support other areas of the curriculum - for example, to research information in history and geography and when reading words to new songs in music.

64. Standards in writing are also above expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. Pupils develop their skills well as they move through the school. Pupils in Year 2 write

stories, showing a secure understanding of punctuation and spelling that is usually correct. The range of writing is good and includes poems, stories, play scripts, letters and accounts. Good emphasis is placed on correct spelling and pupils learn spellings for homework. Older pupils have a good understanding of the importance of story structure and redraft their work to include increasingly interesting vocabulary. Good emphasis is placed on handwriting and pupils practice their skills regularly. This contributes to the good standards of presentation seen during the inspection. The school has successfully addressed the weakness identified in the previous inspection concerning the application of cross-curricular skills, particularly at Key Stage 2. Good emphasis is placed on writing across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 4 write instructions for making a pyramid in design and technology and write character studies of Guy Fawkes in history. Attractive books prepared by pupils in Key Stage 2 show high standards in writing. For example, their well-presented booklet about keeping healthy to support their work in science includes questionnaires, word searches, lists, jokes, measurement charts and recipes. Other books include Roman recipes to support studies in history and class prayers in religious education. Younger pupils record their findings in science. During the inspection, pupils used their developing writing skills effectively in an assembly where they wrote their own labels to illustrate the meaning of respect. Information technology is used to support literacy and this enables pupils to learn new skills. Pupils in Key Stage 1 use word processors to write sentences using simple punctuation and to write accounts of their village. Older pupils write letters to Father Christmas and use the Internet to send them. All these opportunities contribute positively to the high standards attained.

65. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and behave very well. They are very attentive and respond well to the teachers' high expectations. They are willing to persevere and share ideas. This promotes their learning positively. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 show particularly commendable behaviour when they are engaged in quiet reading whilst the teacher is working with the youngest children. Pupils of all ages are keen to join in reading the text during the literacy hour. They work well in groups and willingly share resources. Relationships between the pupils themselves and with their teachers and other adults are very good and this contributes positively to the good progress made. Pupils are confident to try, knowing that their efforts are valued. Older pupils take care of younger ones. All pupils handle books carefully and know the routines of the literacy hour well.

66. The quality of teaching is very good overall and enables pupils to make good gains in their learning. All lessons for pupils in Key Stage 1 were very good and all those for pupils in Key Stage 2 were good. The very good teaching in Key Stage 1 is characterised by very good understanding of how pupils learn and particularly skilful teaching of literacy. For example, correct terms such as 'definition' are used when pupils are learning how to use a dictionary and pupils are encouraged to clap the syllables when learning about compound words. Very effective use of resources and challenging activities contribute positively to learning. For example, pupils were expected to clap the three syllables to words shown on cards such as 'butterfly' before identifying the two compound words within it. This very challenging task enabled pupils to make significant progress by the end of the lesson. Lessons are very well planned to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Assessment is used well and activities are offered to address individual difficulties as they occur. In Key Stage 2, good teaching is typified by high expectations, where pupils are expected to identify whether apostrophes are possessives or contractions at a brisk pace and clear explanations which enable all pupils to improve their skills. The very small class enables the teacher to give pupils individual attention and this contributes to the good standards achieved. Resources are well used, particularly the overhead projector during the literacy hour. Strengths in the teaching of English lie particularly in the skilful use of questions which allow pupils to make progress. Very good management of pupils, where good behaviour is noticed and praised, ensures that no time is wasted managing bad behaviour and this enables all lesson time to be used productively.

67. All teachers share responsibility for the management of English and the subject is well managed. They work closely together to plan the curriculum and are committed to raising standards. They have been successful in implementing the National Literacy Strategy and the headteacher monitors standards effectively through analysis of standardised tests and through shared planning. Individual targets are set which are sufficiently challenging and are regularly reviewed. All pupils in Key Stage 2 are expected to reach the level expected by the local education authority by the end of the key stage and the school is not expected to set other targets as the number of pupils is so small. There is a good range of books, which are generally of good quality.

MATHEMATICS

68. Overall standards in mathematics are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. Results in the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 1999 were well above the national average. Because of the small number of pupils involved it is difficult to give an accurate picture of trends. However, since 1997 when results were very low there has been a good rate of improvement. Also because of small numbers and imbalances between boys and girls it is difficult to identify any significant differences between the standards attained by boys and girls. Standards in mathematics have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

69. Inspection evidence shows that attainment of most pupils is generally above national expectations. However, there are some higher attaining pupils in Year 4 who are not making as much progress as they should. This is due to the arrangements for teaching the subject, when pupils from Year 2 join the Key Stage 2 class for mathematics, which makes for too broad an age range and leads to higher attaining pupils consolidating their skills, particularly in mental arithmetic sessions. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the close attention they receive in small classes and the intimate knowledge that teachers have of their needs.

70. By the age of seven, pupils add and subtract, often using games that broaden their knowledge of place value and introduce them to the idea of negative numbers. Younger pupils practise shopping and giving change using real money, discussing what they are doing in mathematical language. In Year 3 there is development of multiplication skills and simple division, including fractions, and by Year 4 pupils work with metric units of measurement showing increased confidence with decimal notation. There is no difference in standards across the four attainment targets.

71. Pupils' attitudes are good and they demonstrate high levels of concentration. They are attentive and keen to make progress, responding well to their teachers and co-operating eagerly but sensibly with each other.

72. The quality of teaching is good overall. All lessons seen for pupils in Year R and Year 1 were judged to be very good and the rest were good. Very good teaching is characterised by the good use of resources and equipment and very carefully planned lessons with clear learning objectives. As a result little time is wasted and because teachers know their pupils well and keep careful track of their progress, work is provided which challenges them well. A particularly good feature of this is clear, careful questioning which is probing and challenging, thereby making valuable assessment of pupils' understanding and knowledge before moving on to the next step. Where teaching is less successful, higher attaining pupils in Year 4 are not always sufficiently challenged, particularly in mental arithmetic, because the range of ability is too wide.

73. The National Numeracy Strategy has been fully and successfully implemented and has had a great impact on the work of the school. Staff have received training as part of the national arrangements and have also benefited from visits from local authority advisory staff and meetings of local schools.

74. Pupils use their mathematical skills well across the curriculum. For example, in science they conduct surveys about eye colour and use block graphs to record their results. Page numbers are used effectively in literacy lessons to reinforce ordinal numbers. In information technology, pupils throw a dice and program a toy to move to the appropriate square on a number grid.

75. Management of the subject is good and the provision of further teaching resources is part of the school development plan. There are no formal arrangements for monitoring the work of teachers but this is compensated for by the close and co-operative working relationship enjoyed by the staff which results in good teaching and learning.

SCIENCE

76. No science teaching was seen during the inspection. However, pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers show that most pupils achieve well and make good progress. Teachers' assessments, at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, show that the attainment of most pupils was well above average. The significance of teacher assessments depends upon the number of pupils in a year group. Given the very small numbers of pupils in each year group, too much emphasis should not be placed upon any one year's results.

77. Inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve above average standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and that these high standards are maintained until the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils discuss and assess the suitability of materials for purposes, such as metal for saucepans, and begin to consider the importance of their different properties. They record their conclusions pictorially in simple tables and charts. By Year 4, however, they sort materials according to their properties and investigate their characteristics. This involves experiments to test the solubility of different substances and the use of more sophisticated recording and evaluation methods. These activities contribute successfully to pupils' numeracy skills. Writing up of investigations helps in the growth of writing skills, especially when the relevant terminology is used to communicate scientific findings; this makes a sound contribution to the development of literacy. Information technology is also usefully employed to research, store and present information.

78. The school has adopted the nationally available scheme of work and has modified it to provide a two-year rolling programme, which takes account of the mixed age composition of classes. Teachers' lesson planning in science is thorough with clear objectives, and useful records of pupils' progress are kept. The provision, storage and deployment of resources and equipment are satisfactory. There are interesting plans to further develop the environmental area behind the school to include a cultivated area. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the close personal knowledge that teachers have of them and because of planning which takes account of the requirements of individual education plans. Pupils are clearly interested and enthusiastic and the quality of their work reflects the good quality of their attitudes and a sharp, keen sense of curiosity. They work productively in groups or pairs and there are good relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers.

ART

79. As was identified in the previous inspection, the display of pupils' work celebrates their achievements and enhances the learning environment. Standards in art meet those expected for pupils of their age. In Key Stage 1, pupils experience a good range of art activities. They develop their printing skills by making leaf prints and print attractive patterns using natural items. They experiment with texture using a variety of pencils, using the works of Van Gogh, Escher and Hockney as a stimulus. From early experiments in colour mixing, for example mixing shades of yellow to paint sunflowers, pupils progress to using colour effectively when they produce leaves in autumn colours. Pupils develop good control of brushes when they paint their initial in Japanese calligraphy. Three-dimensional skills are developed through the use of clay to make fruits and plaques and constructional equipment to make large sculptures. By Year 4, pupils have developed their skills to include effective collages of swans using newspaper. They evaluate shapes and patterns in Japanese wallpaper and show good observational skills when they draw Tudor artefacts, showing good attention to detail.

80. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching as few lessons were seen during the inspection. Art is used appropriately in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in history, observational drawings of Tudor artefacts enabled pupils to make suggestions about their origins because they had examined them so closely. Art is also used to illustrate topic work. Pupils respond positively to art and show pride in their work.

81. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is appropriately underpinned by a sound policy, which ensures that pupils develop their skills steadily and systematically, following a two-year rolling programme as they move through the school. The curriculum is enriched by visiting artists and a member of the local community has enhanced the entrance to the school. The school motif is a monkey-puzzle tree because a large one once stood in the grounds. When the tree fell down a large part of the trunk was saved and has been beautifully carved to represent a monkey with a puzzle. This large sculpture with its varied textures contributes positively to pupils' artistic and spiritual development as they marvel at it every time they enter the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

82. Too few lessons were observed during the inspection to make a judgement about the quality of teaching. However, evidence of progress across the school was gathered through a scrutiny of pupils'

work and notebooks, photographs of past activities and achievements, teachers' planning documents and discussions with staff and pupils. This shows that progress is satisfactory in both key stages and that standards meet those expected for pupils of their age. In Year 2, pupils follow explicit written instructions for making winding gear, discussing what needs to be done, helping each other sensibly and using tools and materials with care and suitable consideration for safety. In Year 4, they design games and pop-up cards for younger children, making trial models for evaluation and discussion with their clients before redesigning and then producing final versions. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Boys and girls use a range of descriptive and evaluative writing during their investigations and projects. In group discussions they listen well and use subject-specific vocabulary. They measure and cut accurately and understand simple ideas of scale in designing and building their models.

83. Pupils enjoy the subject and co-operate well. They persevere with challenging tasks over long periods and share materials and ideas fairly. A satisfactory range of tools and other resources is available. These are suitably and safely stored and appropriate plans have been made for updating, repair and replacement as necessary. There is a sound scheme of work based upon national guidance that meets all requirements and teachers' planning is secure with an appropriate emphasis on the full range of activities.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

84. Few geography and history lessons were observed during the inspection, so it is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. A judgement on the quality of work and progress made, however, was gained through examination of completed and progressing work, discussion with pupils and interviews with teachers. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages and their attainment meets the standards expected for their age. In geography, in Year 2, for example, they consider the characteristics of life in hot and cold places. In Year 4 some are able to explain that some parts of the world are hotter than others because of the angle of the sun, and that this is caused by the tilt of the Earth. In history, pupils in Year 2 learn about life within living memory from senior members of the community who visit the school to show them their childhood toys. In Year 4, they develop a sense of chronology by studying periods further back in the past such as Roman Britain and Tudor England. Both subjects make worthwhile contributions to literacy. In geography in Year 2, for example, pupils write good explanations and descriptions of local features to enable Horace the Hedgehog - a visitor to the area, to understand the locality. In history in Year 4 they record answers to questions about Tudor life stimulated by detailed examination of original artefacts

85. Pupils' attitudes to the subjects are good. In geography they have a sense of curiosity about where they live and other places and enjoy finding out about them, while in history they show interest in the past and relish the opportunity to learn about it. They try hard both individually and co-operatively as members of a group and respond well to their teachers.

86. Good use is made of information technology, with pupils in Year 4 using CD Roms in geography in their work on weather and searching the Internet in history for information on the ancient Egyptians. Since September 1999, the school has used the nationally available schemes of work as the basis for its work, usefully adapted to ensure suitable coverage in its mixed age classes. It has also designed check sheets to record pupils' attainment and progress over time. Resources in both subjects are adequate, but plans have been made to update them to fully satisfy the requirements of the new schemes.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

87. Standards in information technology are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. This is a similar picture to the findings of the previous inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils use the 'mouse' to move the cursor around the screen, and type sentences using simple punctuation. They load, save and print their work with some support. Pupils use graphics programs confidently to design attractive pictures. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 use Paul Klee's work effectively as a stimulus for their own designs. These pupils use word processors appropriately to write lists, stories and labels. For example, pupils in Year 2 write stories about a bat showing confident use of the computer. Pupils use simulation programs appropriately to explore imaginary situations. They send a programmable toy to a square on a grid according to the

number thrown on a dice. They know how to program the toy to move forwards, backwards, left and right, combining these into an appropriate sequence.

88. Older pupils use word processors confidently and independently to make captions for their work, to write stories and poems. They develop their skills through varied opportunities to use word processors. Samples seen during the inspection included an informative newspaper about the Christmas story, a book about the Millennium and an attractive calendar. Drawing programs are also used effectively to enhance their work. Pupils use music programs to produce and print their own music. Discussions with pupils in Year 4 confirm that all strands of the curriculum are appropriately covered and that the school has kept pace with recent developments in information technology. For example, pupils use the Internet in history to research Tutankhamun and use CD Roms in geography to find out about the weather. Last term they e-mailed their letters to Father Christmas and received his reply. They are familiar with websites and often send e-mails to their teachers. They also use mathematical programs to support their work on quadrilaterals. The previous inspection identified the cross-curricular use of information technology as a weakness and the school has successfully addressed this.

89. Pupils learn to develop their skills satisfactorily as they move through the school because there is a very good ratio of pupils to computers, which allows good access for all. Skills are taught systematically and records are kept to ensure that pupils build on what they can already do. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. However, in the one lesson seen in Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching was good. This lesson was well organised to ensure that all three year groups in the class were offered challenging activities. For example, pupils in Year 2 developed their programming skills when working in the hall with the Japanese teacher, children aged under five listened to stories independently on the tape recorder and pupils in Year 1 learned how to use a talking word processing program. By the end of the lesson, all pupils had learned new skills due to the teacher's high expectations.

90. Pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject. They work very well in pairs and treat the equipment carefully. They take turns willingly and help each other. The talking word processing program fascinated pupils in Year 1 and this motivated them to persevere with their task. Older pupils take responsibility for switching on the computers each day.

91. One teacher has responsibility for the co-ordination of the subject and she fulfils her management role well. The curriculum is planned using the local education authority's scheme of work, which includes recent national guidance. Good assessment procedures include logbooks which identify which skills have been learned and 'I can do' books are being introduced to replace these. Pupils in Year 4 have their own file on the hard disk on which to save their work and the school plans to extend this to pupils in Year 3 shortly. This provides a useful record to show progress. The school has been linked to the Internet for two years, funded by the 'Collaboration Amongst Small Schools' project and new machines are due shortly to improve provision further. The school is committed to the use of information technology and plans to give Internet access to the local community outside school hours. There are a good number of computers but some are old and unreliable. The school has appropriately set aside some surplus funding to improve provision over the next two years. Statutory requirements are fully met.

MUSIC

92. Music plays an important part in the life of the school and pupils often sing spontaneously when waiting for others to change for physical education or when moving around the school. Pupils in Key Stage 1 often sing 'Here I am' or 'She's not here' to answer the register. Provision for music has considerably improved since the previous inspection, when there was no hall. All pupils develop their skills steadily as they move through the school and the standards attained meet those expected for their age.

93. It was only possible to observe one music lesson and a short recorder lesson, both for pupils in Key Stage 2, during the inspection. Judgements are based on these and from listening to pupils sing in assemblies. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 clap syncopated rhythms in response to the teacher's demonstrations. They learned to do this competently because the teacher suggested appropriate phrases for them to chant to help them keep in time. They play a range of instruments effectively to create a tune using the pentatonic scale and a rhythmical percussion accompaniment. The small number of pupils enables all to have wide experience of playing different instruments and this

contributes positively to their learning. They sing with good diction, following their teacher's example. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn the recorder and most can play simple tunes and show a good understanding of musical terms.

94. Music contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. For example, the visiting Japanese teacher taught pupils in Key Stage 2 to sing in Japanese and the class teacher successfully adapted this song for pupils to play on the recorder. Songs such as 'Food, glorious food' are used to encourage pupils to reflect on being hungry. Acts of collective worship begin and end calmly as pupils enter and leave the hall listening to music. The quality of singing in acts of collective worship is good. The small number of pupils sing tunefully and with confidence. Social development is enhanced through musical concerts involving pupils from other neighbouring schools.

95. Pupils respond very well to music and attitudes are very good. In the lessons seen, they were willing to listen to the performance of others and worked well together. There was insufficient evidence to judge the quality of teaching. However, in the lessons seen the quality of teaching was good. The teacher has good musical knowledge and successfully shares her enthusiasm with the pupils. Her effective demonstrations encourage all pupils to persevere.

96. Information technology is used effectively to support music. Pupils write their own music and print it successfully. They have good opportunities to access CD Roms to search for information about instruments on display. The curriculum is appropriately planned using the school's own scheme of work, pending new national guidance. Resources are sound and include a range of instruments from other cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

97. Provision for physical education has been improved since the previous inspection through the addition of a hall. Pupils in Year 2 join pupils in Key Stage 2 for physical education lessons because of the imbalance in class sizes. The two lessons seen during the inspection were for these pupils. Standards in physical education meet those expected for pupils of their age.

98. In gymnastics pupils use the space well in the hall and listen attentively. They demonstrate sound control over their bodily movements when performing jumps, turns, balances and landings. They perform stretched and curled movements using the apparatus safely and well. Most pupils can balance on two, three or four body parts according to their teacher's instructions. They can throw and catch quoits using both over and underarm movements. Higher attaining pupils run whilst throwing and catching. The school has its own swimming pool, which is managed by parents and all pupils learn to swim during the summer. The school also uses a neighbouring indoor pool when the weather is inclement.

99. Pupils dress appropriately and most change quickly for their lessons. The singing of their peers encourages slower ones and younger pupils are challenged to beat the egg timer. All are keen and eager to participate in physical education. They enjoy their lessons and listen and respond well to instructions. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones. For example, when throwing and catching in threes, pupils in Year 4 adjusted their throwing to ensure that pupils in Year 2 could take part fully.

100. There was insufficient evidence to judge the quality of teaching. However, in the lessons seen, pupils developed their skills because lessons were well planned and matched to the needs of all pupils. Pupils were given some opportunities to demonstrate their skills, but opportunities to evaluate the work of others were sometimes missed. Pupils are effectively taught to get out and put away the large apparatus.

101. The subject is satisfactorily managed jointly by all teachers. Resources are satisfactory. The playground is on a slope, which limits some physical activities, but the school has access to the village playing field in summer. There is a lunch time football club which contributes positively to the development of skills. Pupils are able to borrow bags to take home, which contain equipment for physical activities.