

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **COURTLANDS SCHOOL**

Plymouth

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113647

Headteacher: Mr G H J Dunkerley

Reporting inspector: Graham Pirt  
No 14563

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 September 2001

Inspection number: 187959

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	4 - 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Widey Lane Crownhill Plymouth Devon
Postcode:	PL6 5JS
Telephone number:	01752 776848
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Stuart Williams
Date of previous inspection:	13 May 1996

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14563	Graham Pirt	Registered inspector	Art and Design Music	What sort of school is it?  The school's results and pupils' achievements  How well are pupils taught?  What should the school do to improve further?
31754	Charlotte Roberson	Lay inspector		How well does the work in partnership with parents?
18461	Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector	Physical Education  Equal Opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well is the school led and managed?
	Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Science  Design and technology	How well does the school care for its pupils?
29960	Wolfgang Hug	Team inspector	Information and communication technology  Religious education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
20536	Sarah Mascall	Team inspector	English  Modern foreign language	
7327	Tony Dunsbee	Team inspector	Geography  History  Special educational needs	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Courtlands School is a maintained community special school situated to the north of the city of Plymouth. The school has decreased in size since the last inspection from 147 pupils to its current roll of 103 pupils, aged between 4 and 12, who have statements of special educational needs for a range of moderate learning difficulties. A number of pupils have additional special needs including a significant number with speech and language or communication difficulties and others with autism, behavioural and physical difficulties. Very few pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The school is representative of the social and cultural background of the area where the pupils live. More than half of the pupils qualify for free school meals. The school has achieved Investors in People status.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a school with many good features. There is strong leadership and the relevant curriculum ensures that pupils are provided with a good range of learning opportunities. Good teaching helps ensure that pupils make good progress in nearly all subjects. Procedures to create a caring school lead to very good behaviour from pupils. Links with parents and the community are good. The headteacher and governors use available resources efficiently to the benefit of all pupils. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is good and as a result pupils make good progress.
- The school promotes very good behaviour in pupils which supports their learning.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership creating a good team spirit.
- There is a good range of learning opportunities and the school promotes moral and social development well.
- There are good opportunities for the inclusion of pupils in mainstream schools.
- The school works well with parents and this is valued by them.
- There are well established links with the community and other establishments.

#### **What could be improved**

- The role of co-ordinators in monitoring, and judging the quality and consistency of teaching, and the work which children do.
- Consistent methods of determining pupils' attainment when they enter school and greater use of assessment to guide planning of pupils' work.
- Greater consistency in, and opportunities for, the teaching of reading and writing.
- Systems that allow the school to compare its work with other similar schools in order to help judge its effectiveness.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in May 1996. Since then there has been good improvement in a number of key areas. The proportion of unsatisfactory or poor teaching and learning has been significantly improved and the level of good and very good teaching is now higher. This has brought about a similar improvement in the overall progress that pupils make. The quality of the learning experiences presented to pupils has improved and is now good. Planning for the work to be covered over time is now fully in place. Although there have been improvements made in the role of the subject co-ordinators this still needs further development. There has been satisfactory improvement in strategies for assessing pupils' progress, although there are inconsistencies in their application and use. Information provided for parents is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 7	Key
speaking and listening	B	very good A
reading	C	good B
writing	C	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

Pupils' achievements are good or better in the majority of lessons. Over time pupils make good progress. In many areas of the curriculum this has resulted in a significant improvement in progress since the previous inspection. The good teaching and the good attitudes that pupils have to their learning, along with very good behaviour, have had a positive impact on the standards that all pupils reach in the school. Overall, pupils' achievements in English are satisfactory. Pupils' skills are well developed in speaking and listening across the school and as a result their achievements are good in this aspect. In reading and writing progress is slower because there is not a consistent whole school approach to teaching these and as a result pupils' achievements are satisfactory rather than good. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and make good progress both in their lessons and over time. Pupils' achievements in science, physical education, music and design and technology are good throughout the school. Pupils make very good progress in information and communication technology.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils have good attitudes to what the school provides, like coming to school and show enthusiasm in lessons, where they are eager to learn. They independently express their liking for their teachers and are polite and welcoming to visitors.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are friendly, care for each other, their teachers, visitors and the school environment. Their behaviour ensures that everybody feels comfortable in the school community. Any incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school staff. During the day the school remains an orderly community.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Pupils respond well to personal development opportunities throughout the school. They attend clubs, have residential experiences and have contact with pupil groups from other schools. Relationships are good, with pupils often helping each other. Opportunities to develop independence are more limited.
Attendance	Good. Levels of attendance across the school are in line with similar special schools. The majority of pupils have consistently good attendance.

Pupils have good attitudes and are enthusiastic in lessons where they come prepared to engage with the subject. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and have good relationships with the staff. In lessons,

around the school and in the playground pupils help each other. They make good developments in their personal development. Occasionally pupils' capacity for acting independently is limited through a dependence on staff. Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are friendly, care for each other, their teachers, visitors and the school environment. Pupils are courteous and this makes the school a pleasant environment. When misbehaviour is reported it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school staff. The school remains an orderly community with hardly any incidents of misbehaviour. The school is very tidy. Pupils do not need to be reminded to place litter in the bins provided. There are good levels of attendance across the school, which are in line with similar special schools. The majority of pupils have consistently good attendance rates.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years Reception – 6	Year 7
Quality of teaching	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.*

During the inspection the amount of teaching and learning judged to be good or better has doubled from one in three lessons to more than half of all lessons when compared with the previous inspection. During the inspection the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. The improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has been brought about by the improvement in the curriculum content and, as a consequence, some increase in teachers' subject knowledge. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies has led to improved methods of teaching. Overall, in English, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers provide good opportunities for speaking and listening which are reflected in pupils' progress. The quality of teaching in mathematics is very good in the classes for pupils aged below 7 years and is good in all other classes because teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, plan their lessons well and apply a good range of teaching methods. In science, physical education, music and design and technology the quality of teaching is good overall and very good in information and communication technology.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum and planning for religious education appropriately reflects the local education authority's agreed syllabus.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good and there have been improvements to the provision made for pupils' spiritual development which is now satisfactory. Opportunities for the development of cultural awareness remain satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school continues to be a very caring community where relationships are good at all levels and where the support and welfare of pupils is given good attention. There are very good procedures for promoting acceptable behaviour. The use of assessment is inconsistent and is not used to help with planning.

The curriculum is good overall. Learning opportunities for the very small number of children in the foundation stage is good. Lessons reflect the needs of young children, with opportunities to participate in activities that prepare them well for the National Curriculum. The learning planned for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is good and meets statutory requirements. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum and planning for religious education appropriately reflects the local education authority's agreed syllabus. The curriculum is satisfactory for pupils in Year 7. It meets statutory requirements but the school does not have specialist facilities for teaching science and design and technology and this limits the range of activities that can be offered. Insufficient time is allocated to a modern foreign language. The school continues to be a very caring community where relationships are good at all levels and where the support

and welfare of pupils is given good attention. The partnership with parents is very positive with some very good aspects, reflected in the confidence and trust shown by many in the school.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides strong leadership. There is a good team spirit which ensures that there is a shared commitment to succeed.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily and is hardworking and supportive of the school. Governors make a good contribution to the school development plan and to the current debate about the school's future. The governors' understanding of the school's work is satisfactory.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. There is a lack of monitoring of teaching, curriculum planning and the consistency of the use of assessment. As a result good practice is not always shared amongst staff.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. New technology is used effectively. The school has satisfactorily planned how to use its finances. Resources are generally used well but staff are not always sent to work where they are needed.

The headteacher's strong leadership has built up a good team spirit that enables the school to successfully fulfil its aims and targets for development. The school's vision is clearly reflected in its aims and the headteacher and senior staff are now rightly extending this vision to meet new challenges. However, developments sometimes take too long to be implemented. The headteacher satisfactorily delegates to other members of staff those tasks that are essential for the smooth running and continued development of the school. However, although the headteacher satisfactorily monitors teaching, there is an unsatisfactory level of monitoring of teaching and learning by those teachers responsible for curriculum subjects in order to promote higher standards of teaching. This restricts the sharing of good practice and results in the variation in quality of teaching. The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily and is hardworking and supportive of the school. There is a sufficient number of teachers and support staff which is an improvement on the situation at the last inspection. Accommodation is good and is well maintained. Resources for subjects are good overall.

#### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The headteacher is easy to talk to</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching</li> <li>• The progress their children make</li> <li>• The good behaviour of pupils</li> <li>• The kindness of the care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased homework opportunities</li> <li>• Increased range of activities outside of lessons</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the parents. The team agrees that there are opportunities to improve homework provision by formalising arrangements. The team feels that the school offers a good range of activities outside of lessons, recognising that there are difficulties in providing activities after school because of transport.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

- 1) Pupils' achievements are good or better in the majority of lessons, an improvement on the previous inspection. Over time pupils make good progress. In many areas of the curriculum this has resulted in a significant improvement in progress since the previous inspection. The good assessment files created by the school include a collection of examples of pupils' work in most subjects and show how well pupils have achieved in relation to national standards. They show that pupils are making satisfactory progress in the time that these files have been in existence. The school collaborates with other local schools to check the findings. The results of each year's assessments provide an effective way of judging each pupil's progress over time. The school sets targets for pupils in a range of subjects, including literacy and numeracy. The good teaching and the good attitudes that pupils have to their learning, along with very good behaviour, have had a positive impact on the standards that all pupils reach in the school. Although assessment procedures help staff to have a clear picture of what pupils know and can do there is inconsistency in their use and this leads to variation in progress. Good progress is made against targets in pupils' individual education plans and pupils make progress over time. Pupils' achievements in personal and social education are good and reflect the importance that the school places upon this aspect of the curriculum. Pupils with additional needs, such as communication difficulties or autism, achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- 2) Pupils respond well when they become involved in the extra curricular activities at lunchtimes. They take opportunities to develop responsibility for instance in choosing to support charity work during a music club. Pupils with additional special needs, such as communication difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders, are able to make the same progress as others because their learning is well supported by the additional help and guidance provided by adults.
- 3) Overall, pupils' achievements in English are satisfactory. Pupils' skills are well developed in speaking and listening and, as a result, their achievements are good in this aspect. They answer questions with confidence and contribute answers in phrases and sentences. By the age of seven a number of pupils are able to recall work and name "contents" page and can give responses in sentences. Teachers and pupils benefit from effective support provided by the speech therapist. By the time pupils are eleven they participate well in discussions. In reading and writing progress is slower because there is not a consistent whole school approach to teaching these aspects and, as a result, pupils' achievements are satisfactory rather than good. Good examples of pupils matching words to word cards take place but too often pupils have trouble with reading and do not have sufficient strategies to help themselves. Writing is often copied from worksheets or the board. By the age of seven pupils are starting to form letters clearly. Writing for different purposes and audiences is limited and consists of single word and short phrase responses. There are examples of good work, for instance, where pupils can construct a sentence about a house and then write it. There is no difference in

progress between pupils of different ages, gender or those with differing special needs.

- 4) Pupils achieve well in mathematics and make good progress both in their lessons and over time. Pupils' achievements and progress are consistently good across all ages. Pupils up to the age of seven recognise and name simple shapes and count and recognise numbers up to 10. Higher attaining pupils are able to sort numbers and add single digits. By the time they are twelve many pupils record and interpret data using lists and charts. They can carry out surveys, recording and analysing data using a computer programme.
- 5) The standards that pupils achieve in science are good. Pupils are able to name and describe common materials, beginning to understand and explain why walls are strong. As pupils get older, they make good progress investigating the strength of building materials, appreciating that it is important to choose correct materials for building.
- 6) The standards pupils achieve in information and communication technology, when working with computers, are almost in line with national expectations and are very good. The achievements of pupils develop from being able to switch on the computer to the older pupils who are able to create graphics and combine these with text they have typed. They use correct language such as 'cut', 'paste' and 'multi-tasking'.
- 7) Pupils' achievement in physical education, music and design and technology are good. In art, history, geography and religious education pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils who are twelve have the opportunity to study a modern foreign language and their progress was good in the small numbers of lessons seen.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 8) Pupils attitudes to what the school provides are good. They like coming to school, show enthusiasm in lessons and are eager to learn. Incidents of disaffection or disenchantment are extremely rare. Pupils come to lessons prepared to engage with the subject, concentrate hard and accept readily when they are corrected. This helps them to achieve well. They independently express their liking for their teachers and are polite and welcoming to visitors. In lessons, around the school and in the playground many unprompted examples of pupils helping each other can be observed. On the rare occasions when conflicts emerge, these can be quickly resolved because of pupils' positive relationships with the school staff.
- 9) Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are friendly towards, and care for, each other, their teachers, visitors and the school environment. They greet people and thank them when given assistance. This ensures that everybody feels comfortable in the school community. Staff deal with any incidents of misbehaviour swiftly and effectively. Pupils respond well to the time given for reflection, designed to improve their future behaviour. At the beginning and end of the school day, when pupils move in groups, to and from their transport, the school remains an orderly community with hardly any incidents of misbehaviour. No evidence of any oppressive behaviour or unacceptable responses related to gender or race were seen during the inspection. The school is very tidy. Pupils do not need to be

reminded to place litter in the bins provided. Relationships in the school are good. Pupils are friendly towards each other and to adults.

- 10) As pupils get older, their personal development and responsibility develops well. However, pupils' capacity for acting independently is limited as they tend to rely on teachers for guidance, although many feel secure within clear limits. They do not develop independence skills sufficiently until later in their school life. 12 year old pupils have a common room in which they can play snooker and video games at break times and contribute ideas to the design and planning of its use. The room is supervised by teachers but pupils clearly benefit from the greater social independence on offer. Girls, who are a small minority of the school's population, have their own weekly girls' club taken by a female teacher and participate in football and other sports. This compensates to some extent for their minority status in the school. Pupils' personal development opportunities throughout the school are good. They attend clubs, have residential experiences and have contact with pupil groups from other schools. Personal independence opportunities, for pupils to make decisions without adult guidance, could be further extended to prepare pupils for a life beyond the close care and supervision of the school.
- 11) There are good levels of attendance. At approximately 93%, these are in line with similar special schools. The majority of pupils have consistently good attendance rates. There is a very small minority of pupils with unauthorised absences. The rate recorded for the last full year was very low at 0.09%. This is a much more favourable picture than in the previous inspection.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

- 12) There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning is now good. During the inspection, in more than half of all lessons, the quality of teaching and learning was judged to be good or better for pupils of all ages. Of these a third were very good or excellent. These lessons are characterised by the very good subject knowledge and the use of very effective methods of teaching, that demonstrate high expectations that pupils will succeed.
- 13) The amount of teaching and learning judged to be good or better has increased from one in three lessons to more than half of all lessons when compared with the previous inspection. During the inspection the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory or better in all but one lesson. This is a good improvement from the last inspection when teaching and learning in 15 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. The improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has been brought about by the improvement in the curriculum content that has led to teachers being more informed about what they need to teach. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies has led to improved methods of teaching.
- 14) Since the last inspection the school has worked well to ensure that pupils have access to improved levels of effective teaching. However, there are still examples of inconsistent practice across the school. This is evident in the variation between the quality of teaching for instance, in English and mathematics. The very good

and sometimes excellent planning and teaching of these subjects, by a small number of teachers, are not sufficiently shared with other staff. In the best of these lessons teachers demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge and how to teach the subject to pupils with special needs. They use a range of methods and provide very effective changes of activities that keep the pupils interested and working well. These lessons meet the varied needs of pupils with additional needs such as autism or communication difficulties.

- 15) In English, teachers have good knowledge of the pupils and this has a positive effect on the teaching along with the effective use of support assistants. However, teachers are not fully confident in using the literacy strategy so at times the teaching does not build on earlier work done in the lesson. There is insufficient use of phonics and structured opportunities to develop reading and writing are not developed to the same level as that for speaking and listening skills. Where teaching is good, the teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils effectively, for instance where pupils are encouraged to talk about their weekend. Some pupils are encouraged to act out parts of a story through enthusiastic teaching. Older pupils are encouraged to contribute in discussions, such as in a Year 6 lesson where pupils' learning was assessed following the watching of a television programme. However, not all teachers have the skills to promote learning. For example, in a Year 4 lesson questioning was not used effectively after a similar TV programme and, as a result, learning and understanding was not checked adequately.
- 16) There is not the same whole school approach, across all subjects, to the teaching of basic skills of reading and writing as there is to speaking and listening. There is an overuse of worksheets which limits pupils' opportunities to write independently and time is wasted when pupils are expected to copy out questions before writing the answers.
- 17) The quality of teaching mathematics is good and for those pupils aged seven or below is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers plan their lessons well and apply a good range of teaching methods based on a good subject knowledge. Where teaching is very good or better teachers use a range of activities that keeps pupils of all abilities fully involved in their learning. For instance in a very well planned lesson for Year 1 pupils, following a lively oral start, the teacher challenging pupils to respond in tasks of counting to 10, such as counting the leaves remaining on a "tree" or the number left in a game of "Ten in the bed". Pupils with additional needs are also fully involved in the lessons and make progress equal to other pupils, for instance when a pupil with autism recognises the position of number 8 in a line of numbers.
- 18) Teaching in science is most successful when good use is made of assessment information to plan suitable work for pupils. This was seen when pupils were challenged well to design electric circuits. Teachers and learning support assistants ask good questions of pupils that help them to think more clearly. However, opportunities to allow pupils to write about their investigations or promote other writing skills are missed. For instance, pupils of all abilities are required to copy information into their books.

- 19) The teaching of computing skills is always at least good, frequently very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers skilfully guide pupils through complex tasks, are aware of individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses and extend pupils in all lessons observed. The pace of lessons is brisk and pupils are challenged. Teacher assessment is used in every lesson, although the description of individual pupils' attainments is not accurate. Teaching in design and technology, music, modern foreign language and physical education is good. In history, geography, art and religious education teaching is satisfactory.
- 20) For pupils of all ages planning is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers follow planning so that they cover work at appropriate times for pupils. There are individual education plans that usually have appropriate, and often good targets. However, targets and the overall aims of lessons are often not linked to the individual pupil targets.
- 21) The training opportunities that staff have engaged in have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers manage behaviour very well and follow the clear behaviour programmes that are in place. As a result disruption to other pupils' learning is kept to a minimum and they are able to learn and make progress in a calm environment.
- 22) The good quality of teaching and learning in the school owes much to the good and often very good support provided by classroom support assistants. These staff are seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning for pupils. As a result the teaching staff have considerable confidence in them and pupils benefit from the effective team approach adopted in classes. Assistants are often responsible for working with small groups or individuals in many subjects. They do this well, following teachers' planning, and showing initiative when required. The quality of teaching and learning is also enhanced by the support provided by visiting professionals, such as the speech and language therapist and the music teacher. Their subject knowledge makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and the progress that they make in individual subjects.
- 23) Teachers use assessment to judge the impact of their teaching on the progress that pupils make. For all pupils questioning is used effectively to test knowledge and obtain opinion and choices. Pupils respond positively to this approach and this helps their personal development and involvement in their own learning. However, there are variable responses by teachers to how they record observations, with some not making any until a summary is completed at the end of the term. Others keep notes to remind them what they have seen. This leads to the inconsistencies in the use of assessment in the setting of further learning targets for pupils when planning their work.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

- 24) The curriculum is good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the quality and range of learning opportunities provided for pupils was

judged to be satisfactory. Learning opportunities for the very small number of children in the foundation stage are good. Their lessons are well planned to reflect the needs of young children and they have opportunities to participate in activities that prepare them well for the National Curriculum.

- 25) The learning planned for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is good and meets statutory requirements. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum and planning for religious education appropriately reflects the local education authority's agreed syllabus. Religious education is now taught, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Although the school is still developing its planning for personal, social and health education (PSHE) it appropriately fosters pupils' awareness of health issues through science and physical education, and their personal development is supported through the experiences they have during the school day. However, the way these learning opportunities are planned is inconsistent. Pupils in Years 1 to 3 and in one of the Year 4 classes have PSHE lessons weekly while other pupils' learning opportunities are provided within subjects and across the school day during assemblies, break and lunchtimes. This makes it difficult to ensure that the quality and range of learning experiences are the same for all pupils.
- 26) The curriculum is satisfactory for pupils in Year 7. It meets statutory requirements but the school does not have specialist facilities for teaching science and design and technology and this limits the range of activities which can be offered. In science pupils do not have opportunities to develop laboratory skills and in design and technology their work with materials such as wood, plastic and metal are restricted. Opportunities to teach personal, social and health education are appropriately timetabled each week and aspects of health education are suitably addressed through science topics. Teachers provide additional opportunities to develop pupils' personal and social skills during activities such as lunchtime clubs and the use of the 'common room'. Lessons in French are taught weekly but the subject has only been allocated half an hour on the timetable and this limits the range of experiences that can be provided.
- 27) The amount of teaching time available during the day matches recommendations for pupils up to the age of 6 and sufficiently reflects the time recommended for pupils up to the age of 11. However, there is not enough teaching time for pupils in Year 7. This means that the school is unable to allocate sufficient time to subjects such as French and pupils' opportunities to make progress are limited. Across the school the amount of time allocated to other subjects is good and there is an appropriate emphasis on time for English and mathematics. The school has also allocated a generous amount of time to physical education so pupils can participate in swimming lessons until they leave school. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in this subject. Overall, there is a suitable emphasis on the different elements of each subject although there is insufficient emphasis on developing reading and writing skills across all subjects. There are also too few opportunities for pupils to learn about data handling as an aspect of mathematics.
- 28) Since the last inspection the school has implemented good subject plans which clearly indicate what it intends to teach to each year group. In almost every subject planning effectively incorporates the Qualifications and Curriculum

Authority's (QCA) modules of work and these provide good guidance for teachers when they plan lessons. The school has developed and implemented satisfactory policies for each subject. However, curriculum improvements generally take too long. The development of policies and their adoption by teachers and the governing body, as well as improvements to subject plans, frequently take more than a year. This means that the school does not always keep up with the current trends in curriculum provision being offered in other similar schools, for example, in its planning for personal, social and health education. The school now has agreed policies for personal, social and health education, including drugs awareness and sex education, which were not in place at the time of the last inspection. These provide for teaching to take place across the curriculum through topic work.

- 29) The subject plans are used effectively by each department to forecast what will be taught each week over a half term. Because this planning is effectively monitored it ensures that each year group receives a good range of opportunities and experiences. However, there are occasionally inconsistencies in the way in which lesson plans are interpreted by each class teacher, due to a lack of monitoring by subject co-ordinators. The school does not have procedures to support the development of subject expertise by sharing good practice. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics.
- 30) The National Literacy Strategy has been appropriately implemented but teachers' skills in using the strategy effectively to promote learning are variable across the school. This is particularly reflected in the difference between pupils' achievements in speaking and listening which are good and in reading and writing which are satisfactory. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented effectively and this makes a good contribution to the progress that pupils make.
- 31) The curriculum provides equal access and opportunity for all pupils. Pupils in Years 4 to 7 are placed in classes of similar ability so that teachers can more effectively address their needs. Learning opportunities for a small number of pupils are enhanced well by opportunities to work alongside children in other special and local mainstream schools. For example, pupils in Year 3 attend the local primary school to join in with a physical education lesson and, where appropriate, more able pupils are effectively supported to integrate for part or all of their learning. These opportunities are good and make a significant contribution to the progress pupils make and to their personal and social development.
- 32) The range of extra-curricular opportunities, although limited by transport arrangements, is good with activities provided at break and lunchtimes for pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7. These include sporting activities such as basketball as well as drama, music and a French homework club. These experiences make a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development and extend opportunities for learning. Pupils in Year 7 also have good opportunities to participate in a residential week on Dartmoor when they take part in a wide range of outdoor pursuit activities. The curriculum is further enriched by an annual art week when pupils have very good opportunities to work with visiting artists and by a biannual science week. These activities effectively extend pupils' learning opportunities.

- 33) The provision made for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was identified as satisfactory overall. Provision for pupils' moral and social development identified as good at the time of the last inspection continues to be effective and there have been improvements to the provision made for pupils' spiritual development. Opportunities for the development of cultural awareness remain satisfactory.
- 34) Pupils have opportunities to participate in carefully planned assemblies that are used effectively to focus on teaching and exploring aspects of personal development. They have a strong moral and social dimension that, on occasions, results in pupils having limited opportunities to appreciate the spiritual aspects of collective worship. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to celebrate the main Christian religious festivals and to develop an appreciation of the richness and diversity of other religions. Religious education lessons, which were not planned for all primary age pupils at the time of the last inspection, assemblies, the end of day prayer, as well as aspects of music and art, provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness. However, teachers do not always identify opportunities for pupils to experience and consider the spiritual aspects of learning when they plan work.
- 35) Assemblies contribute to the effective teaching of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. They are provided with good opportunities to develop this awareness into a clearer understanding of right and wrong because the school consistently promotes acceptable moral behaviour as it fosters fair play. For example, by stressing the need to share and wait your turn as well as caring for and having respect for others. Through discussion at the end of lessons teachers frequently provide pupils with good opportunities to think about moral issues that are directly linked to events or activities that have taken place.
- 36) Social development is also effectively supported through assemblies, where social issues often provide the focus, and also by the way the school uses the community to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils are successfully taught to be polite and helpful to visitors and visits to places such as the local library are used effectively to teach pupils how to behave appropriately and consider other users. In physical education the school provides good opportunities for pupils to work alongside children from other schools and this contributes effectively to the development of social skills. Evidence of activities undertaken during residential experiences confirms that pupils have good opportunities to develop social and personal skills in a variety of settings. The developing citizenship, personal, social and health education programme along with the expectations that teachers have of pupils, and the role models they provide, effectively promotes social development.
- 37) Pupils' personal development is fostered well through the daily life of the school and in many lessons. Older pupils are given the opportunity to undertake jobs around the school and they act sensibly and take their responsibilities seriously, often showing good initiative. However, in lessons where there are high numbers of adults pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop independence. On occasions their needs are too quickly met by staff and they do

not have the opportunity to make and learn from their mistakes or take responsibility for their own learning.

- 38) The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory with an appropriate programme of visits providing pupils with suitable opportunities to develop an awareness of the richness and variety of their own and others' culture. Visits to historical locations as well as visitors to the school promote an interest in local culture, art and drama. However, opportunities to reinforce pupils' cultural awareness through the art and music curriculum are not sufficiently planned and teachers do not always emphasise the cultural aspects of the work pupils are doing. There are few multi-cultural images around the school or in the library books available to pupils.
- 39) There are well-established and continually developing links with the community and with several schools, colleges of further education and a university. Many members of the community regard the school highly and value its work and achievements. The police service is directly involved in talking to pupils to raise awareness of health and safety issues including drugs. Arts groups work regularly with pupils. In turn, pupils make some visits into the community notably to elderly residents and to a nearby church at Christmas time.
- 40) There is close liaison with a number of schools in the area and with a nearby community college where older pupils use library facilities and take part in joint projects. Students from this college raise money for Courtlands School. Secondary age pupils are welcomed for short work placements and there are partnership agreements with the university for students on degree courses to complete longer work placements.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 41) The school provides a high standard of care. There is effective supervision of pupils throughout the day. The school has made good improvements in the assessment procedures to monitor pupils' progress, a key issue in the last inspection report. However, there is an acknowledged need for further development, particularly in using this information to inform planning for pupils to make more progress. Teachers have developed good assessment files and these include a good collection of examples of pupils' work in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. These examples are useful because they show how well pupils have achieved in relation to national standards. The school collaborates very effectively with other local schools to confirm standards of marking. The results of each year's assessments provide an effective way of judging each pupil's progress over time. Although the results show what pupils achieve, the information is not consistently used to plan what pupils should learn next.
- 42) At each pupil's annual review, targets are set for each pupil to learn. Some are good, for instance, to learn to read a given number of words in three months. Since they are measurable, they provide a good basis to judge progress. However, the school is aware that there is inconsistency in the way targets are set. Occasionally targets are too general to be useful. For instance: setting out what will happen in lessons rather than what the pupil needs to learn. This makes

them less useful to judge how much progress pupils have made. There is suitable assessment for the youngest pupils when they enter school and this provides good information to judge how much progress pupils have made since they joined the school. However, although teachers spend time finding out what pupils know, there is no uniform means to determine their knowledge when they enter the school in later years which would help to provide a common basis for monitoring the progress of these pupils.

- 43) Annual reports give a good indication of academic and personal achievements and help inform parents and pupils about progress. Pupils contribute regularly to assembling a record of their significant achievements during their time in school. These records of achievement contain examples of work and certificates for personal and sporting achievements in school that build up to form a good record of their success in school.
- 44) Procedures for monitoring and promoting personal development are good. Staff provide effective support throughout the day to encourage pupils in their personal development. Annual reviews identify further targets for pupils to improve their personal skills. The best targets reflect a good understanding of pupils' needs. For instance to spend a given time on independent work at specific times of the day such as at break and lunchtime. This makes a good contribution to promoting pupils' personal development.
- 45) There are very good procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. The positive wording of the school rules reflects the preference for promoting good behaviour, through encouragement rather than sanctions, with rules setting out what pupils should do rather than what they should not. Pupils receive a very high level of support throughout the day, during break times and lunch times, with staff providing reinforcement of how they should behave. Consequently, pupils behave very well and value the merits and stickers that they receive for their good behaviour and kind deeds. They value the praise just as much as the rewards they receive for consistent effort. The very high level of supervision of pupils is a positive factor in avoiding any oppressive behaviour. Consequently, there is little evidence of bullying. There are very few serious incidents of bad behaviour. However, the recording of incidents lacks detail of the events or their outcomes.
- 46) The school has participated in inclusion since before the last inspection. There have been good improvements to arrangements leading to success in transferring a significant number of pupils to mainstream schools. The success of the programme for inclusion lies with the careful planning to match the arrangements with each pupil's needs. The school has effective working relationships with other schools to ensure the joint provision of support. There is good partnership with parents so that they can make an informed choice. The school has high expectations to include more pupils within local schools. Already this year, one pupil aged nine is successfully progressing towards moving full time into a local primary school. Fourteen further pupils will spend trial periods of inclusion in mainstream schools with the intention for seven to transfer permanently during the coming year. The very good support provided by a local team of personnel dedicated to inclusion gives effective support to the school's efforts to promote

inclusion. This support is enhanced by the arrangements for a member of staff from Courtlands School to join the local team for part of the week.

- 47) The school meets statutory requirements in making provision for pupils as outlined in their statements of special educational needs. The examination of pupil records shows that individual education plans are drawn up from the educational objectives and other information in pupils' statements and that this process is well established throughout the school. Reports are well prepared by teachers for the annual reviews of statements, containing details both of pupils' progress in learning by subject across the curriculum and towards meeting the specific targets in their individual education plans. Observations in lessons show that where pupils have additional needs these are met in practice by teachers and support staff. However, there are some inconsistencies between teachers in the setting of appropriate targets in individual education plans and these highlight a lack of consistency in checking on pupils' progress overall. Target setting can become less precise as a pupil's needs become more complex, particularly for those pupils in the school with difficulties on the autistic spectrum.
- 48) A number of positive features about the care of pupils were identified in the previous inspection report and the school continues to be a very caring community where relationships are good at all levels and where the support and welfare of pupils is given good attention. Many parents and carers speak very positively of the quality of care and support their children receive and rightly recognise the good standards of care.
- 49) The school is developing its health and safety policy and is beginning to undertake risk assessments, although not yet formally, in some areas of school life. None is completed as yet for school trips and visits out. The governing body takes overall responsibility for health and safety. Recent improvements in for example transport arrangements at the beginning and end of the school day were carried out with the pupils' wellbeing and safety in mind. There are a number of trained first aiders in the school with one named person carefully overseeing the needs of pupils. The medical room is kept clean and includes a small and comfortable bed. It is well organised and the storage and administration of medicine follows clear procedures. Record keeping for first aid is also managed well. Parents and carers are immediately informed of minor accidents or injuries.
- 50) School escorts share information with and give messages to teachers and families, especially for younger pupils. They and learning support assistants are sensitive and patient in ensuring that pupils are well supervised throughout the day. The school works closely with many professionals from health and social services and, in particular, speech therapists who support the varied needs of pupils. Very close links exist with the school nurse and with the education welfare officer who both work with pupils and their families in partnership with the school.
- 51) Attendance procedures are good and fulfil statutory requirements; attendance is closely monitored, both weekly and termly. Pupils are very keen to attend school. School transport generally arrives punctually but parents do report occasional difficulties on a small minority of routes. This is monitored informally and late arrivals are marked in the register. Parents and carers are reminded that it is the authority that is responsible for school transport. Attendance is now fully reported to all parents and carers by the governing body.

- 52) Procedures for child protection are good. The headteacher currently acts as the named responsible person. The school adopts county recommendations and follows procedures closely. The headteacher is also the named person to oversee that “looked after children” are well supported. No racial incidents have been recorded. The school environment is kept clean, tidy and in good order. Overall standards of care are good.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 53) Partnerships, links and communication with parents and carers were all identified as clear strengths of the school in the previous inspection report. Since then there have been further developments and this area is still very positive with some very good aspects. This is reflected in, for example, the confidence and trust shown by many in the school. The headteacher is very committed to continue this partnership and he and staff try in a number of ways to involve as many parents as possible.
- 54) Overall parents’ and carers’ views of the school are very good. A high number of parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and their responses were exceptionally positive about many aspects of the school. They are most pleased with the teaching and the progress their children make, with the leadership and management of the school and with the values and attitudes it promotes. Parents in their written responses to the registered inspector had only good things to say and speak of the warm welcome given to parents and carers and, in particular, the friendly manner of the headteacher. Only a very small number of parents are not so happy with homework or with the range of activities arranged for pupils outside of lessons.
- 55) Information which all parents and carers receive has many strengths, has improved significantly in the last five years and is satisfactory overall. Very regular newsletters, consistently well used home-school books for the very youngest pupils, and detailed annual written reports, which include all statutory requirements, are examples of good sharing of information. A small but appreciative minority attends weekly parent support groups held in the school as well as less frequent parent conferences. The headteacher usually joins this group to discuss amongst other things future plans and school developments. The school has successfully encouraged a very high turnout at annual reviews. Coffee mornings in some departments are enjoyed by many. Targets in pupils’ individual education plans are shared regularly with parents and carers. All these are good examples and demonstrate the school’s commitment in sharing accurate information with as many parents and carers as possible.
- 56) The school prospectus and the annual report from the governing body, although now containing the necessary statutory information, do not do the school justice. In their current form neither gives a clear or positive enough picture of the school. Plans are, however, in hand to review the prospectus to make it much more reader friendly and relevant for parents and carers. Nearly every family has signed the home school agreement.

- 57) There is at present no formal Parent Teacher Association (PTA) but the supportive group of parent governors works hard for the school and arranges some fund raising events, for example jumble sales, which are successful. Very good opportunities exist for younger pupils to take home and share with their family a recently introduced "parent pack". These bags are of very high quality and contain a wealth of exciting jig-saws, books, puzzles and toys which give parents and carers an exceptionally good opportunity to share in their children's learning at home. Homework is not consistently given to older pupils but it is reported that the majority of parents are supportive of their children's learning at school. Parents, many of whom live a fair distance from the school, are encouraged to help in the school but currently none does, although a past parent is a very regular voluntary helper. For those parents who may want to get involved there is a genuine welcome to do so. In the past parents have helped with swimming activities. On balance, the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school and on achievements is an improving picture and is good overall.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

- 58) The headteacher's strong leadership has built up a good team spirit that enables the school to fulfil its aims and targets for development successfully. This has contributed to the good progress that has been made since the last inspection and places the school in a good position to improve further. The school's vision is clearly reflected in its aims and the headteacher and senior staff are now rightly extending this vision to meet new challenges. For example, they clearly see the school continuing to develop its close links with other local schools, to mutual benefit. However, planning about precisely what special educational needs the school will cater for in the future and how it will do it, is not so well developed.
- 59) The headteacher satisfactorily delegates to other members of staff those tasks that are essential for the smooth running and continued development of the school. However, although written job descriptions are provided, all tasks are not carried out effectively. For example, those teachers responsible for co-ordinating curriculum subjects are not provided with time out of lessons to promote higher standards of teaching through lesson observation and involvement in their colleagues' lesson planning. Their role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is not yet fully developed. This restricts the sharing of good practice and results in the variation in quality of teaching across the school seen during the inspection. The governing body has introduced the statutory national scheme to improve the performance of teachers. However, at present, the headteacher, who observes lessons once each year, carries out the whole process. This has a limited effect on the improvement of teaching. The school's procedures to ensure the high quality of teaching are, therefore, unsatisfactory.
- 60) The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily and is hardworking, dedicated and supportive of the school. Governors make a good contribution to the school development plan and to the current debate about the school's future. The governors' understanding of the school's work gained from the reports they receive at their meetings and from their visits to the school is satisfactory. It is limited, however, by weaknesses in the information provided by

the school, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching. There is no governor with responsibility for special educational needs.

- 61) The school's development planning process, though satisfactory, is not as successful as it could be in bringing about school improvement. This is because the numerous tasks presented are not related to clear overall objectives for the school and it is not easy to see how each action contributes to the achievement of the school's aims. There are no subject development plans that set targets based upon strengths and weaknesses identified by assessing pupils' achievements and observing lessons. This means that there is a lack of evidence to suggest that one subject has a higher priority for development than any other, or a need for a greater allocation of funds. Currently, in the absence of this information, funds for curriculum development are not necessarily directed to where they will have the greatest effect upon school improvement. At times, developments take too long to implement.
- 62) The day-to-day management of the school's delegated budget is carried out efficiently, by making good use of information and communication technology for purchasing and paying for goods, keeping financial records and communicating financial and pupil data to local authority and government departments. Sums of money provided by the government for specific projects, particularly the development of information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy, have been well spent.
- 63) Detailed and accurate financial information is provided to help the governing body and senior managers make their decisions. However, the governing body and headteacher have been slow to use this information to respond to the inevitable budget reduction that will follow the falling pupil roll. Financial reserves have been used to continue the existing staffing organisation rather than for more strategic use, for example, to help staff prepare for the approaching changes.
- 64) The school makes satisfactory efforts to ensure that its work represents good value. For example, it consults widely before embarking upon its plans for development and takes steps to make sure that it obtains good value from the major goods and services that it buys. Although it does not check the value of the service it provides for its pupils, by comparing itself with other schools, it has begun to challenge the education that it provides for more able pupils by informal comparison with local mainstream schools. This results in some pupils transferring to those schools for some lessons each week. Good use is made of a grant that makes such arrangements possible.
- 65) There is a sufficient number of teachers and support staff which is an improvement on the situation at the last inspection. However there is an imbalance of class sizes with Years 6 and 7 having 11 and 14 pupils respectively in each class. For younger pupils class sizes vary but are generally smaller. The size of classes has an impact on learning, particularly in subjects such as English where pupils would benefit from smaller groups. All staff now have job descriptions although those of subject co-ordinators are at present being up-dated to incorporate their monitoring role. This is also an improvement since the last inspection. Training arrangements are satisfactory with both teachers and support

staff able to apply to any courses they are interested in. However there is no clear link between the school's development planning and training.

- 66) Accommodation is good and is well maintained. There are a number of specialist rooms including a library and ICT room that are of good quality. The school makes good use of local facilities including the community college library and nearby swimming pool. However, there are no specialist facilities for teaching science and aspects of design and technology such as woodwork and metalwork to meet the needs of the Year 7 curriculum. Resources overall are satisfactory and meet the needs of the curriculum. The school provides good value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 67) In order to raise standards and increase the progress made by pupils the governing body, headteacher and staff of Courtlands School should:
- (1) Improve the role of the co-ordinators in relation to the quality of teaching and the work which children do by:
    - Increasing systems for co-ordinators to monitor the quality of teaching; (Paras 59, 61, 65, 73, 89, 94, 99, 121)
    - Checking the work that is being done by pupils in different groups; (Paras 59, 61, 65)
    - Increasing opportunities for sharing good work of teachers to improve subject knowledge. (Para 59, 73)
  - (2) Establish consistent methods of determining pupils' attainment when they enter school and further improve the use of assessment of pupils' achievements by:
    - Undertaking an initial assessment, within ½ term of entry to the school, whatever the pupils' age; (Para 42)
    - Developing greater consistency in procedures, and quality of content, when assessing and recording pupils' progress in their work; (Paras 23, 42, 75)
    - Utilise outcomes of assessment to plan work and set targets for pupils; (Paras 20,79, 107)
    - Ensuring that all pupils' needs are met. (Paras 42, 44)
  - (3) Improve the teaching of reading and writing by:
    - Increasing opportunities through the literacy strategy, and in other subjects, for the teaching of reading and writing; (Paras 16, 18, 30, 71, 88, 98, 102)
    - Developing and sharing teacher knowledge. (Para 16)
  - (4) Develop systems for the school to judge its effectiveness by:
    - Comparing the quality of education provided against previous findings and with other similar schools . (Para 64)

In addition the governing body, headteacher and staff may choose to include the following minor issues in their action plan:

- Improve the school prospectus and Annual Report to Parents to reflect the school's strengths; (Para 56)
- Improve the recording of serious incidents and the action taken; (Para 45)
- Appoint a governor for special educational needs; (Para 60)
- Improve school development planning by setting more appropriate time scales for developments. (Para 61)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### ***Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection***

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	10	42	25	1	0	0
Percentage	4	12	52	31	1	0	0

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

### ***Information about the school's pupils***

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	103
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	52

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.17

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	.09

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

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

Assessment tests are not undertaken for Key Stage 1 pupils

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	18	12	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	0	0	0
	National	0	1	5

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	National	0	0	2

## ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	102
Any other minority ethnic group	

## ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	3	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

## ***Teachers and classes***

### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y7**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.9
Average class size	9.4

### **Education support staff: YR – Y7**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	286

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	771804
Total expenditure	761740
Expenditure per pupil	6742
Balance brought forward from previous year	19408
Balance carried forward to next year	29472

## ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	117
Number of questionnaires returned	65

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	15	3	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	83	16	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	34	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	28	8	3	8
The teaching is good.	83	12	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	88	11	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	91	6	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	86	14	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	88	13	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	86	9	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	79	19	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	69	19	5	2	6

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

### **ENGLISH**

- 68) Overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils' skills are well developed in speaking and listening across the school and, as a result, their achievements are good in this aspect. Teachers and pupils benefit from effective support provided by the speech therapist. In reading and writing progress is slower because there is not a consistent whole school approach to teaching these and, as a result, pupils' achievements are satisfactory rather than good.
- 69) There has been satisfactory progress in improving pupils' achievements, teaching and learning in English since the last inspection. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced and progress has improved for pupils between the ages of seven and eleven. There have also been improvements in the use of support staff and individual education plans and assessment. However, weaknesses highlighted in the last report still persist, particularly with regards to the teaching of reading and writing.
- 70) There is good encouragement for pupils between the ages of five and seven to contribute in lessons. As a result they make good progress in developing their communication skills. Signing is used effectively and the teacher is well supported by support staff who are clear about their roles. The teacher's good knowledge of the pupils enables her to encourage them to communicate, for example, when they give details of their weekend. Most talk about what they have done using short sentences. Less able pupils use single words or point to symbols to show what they have been doing with their family. Teachers ensure that all pupils are involved. For example, in a lesson based on the "Bear Hunt" pupils were encouraged to act out parts of the story and were keen to join in. Pupils in this age group develop their reading skills at a satisfactory pace. Enthusiastic teaching and lively reading of stories enables them to get involved; they become enthusiastic about the events in the story as they unfold. Pupils are developing a good knowledge of the stories they read as a class because teachers' good use of questioning ensures that they understand what they have read together. They are beginning to recognise the initial sounds of words and a few recognise initial blends such as "ch", "gr" and "th". In writing, pupils' achievements enable them to develop their skills appropriately, moving from tracing words to copy writing. Less able pupils trace over the teacher's words whilst more able copy sentences. Pupils are developing skills in telling stories and, with support, dictate sentences about their activities. Teachers' effective use of symbols helps pupils to share what they have done. More able pupils are developing independent skills and write short sentences such as "Curly get lost in ditch". By the time pupils reach Year 2 they have improved their skills in forming their letters.
- 71) By the age of eleven pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. Pupils are encouraged to contribute in discussions, and have developed good skills in listening. This is very evident when they watch programmes such as "Spywatch". They respond enthusiastically, for example, when Year 6 pupils recognise "ch"

words they shout out the words. Where teaching is most effective pupils are given opportunities to join in discussion, such as in a Year 6 lesson where questioning was used to assess how much knowledge pupils had gained from watching "Spywatch". However, not all teachers have the skills to promote learning. For example, in a Year 4 lesson questioning was not used effectively after a similar TV programme and, as a result, learning and understanding was not checked adequately. Equally, in a Year 3 class the guidelines provided by the teacher to help the pupils make up a story using glove puppets, were confusing and the teacher lacked confidence in developing these skills. As a result most of the class struggled, although by the end of the lesson one pupil was able to recount a short story he had made up. Pupils' achievements in reading are satisfactory but there is often a lack of consistency in teaching the sounds and the names of letters and pupils do not always have the skills to break down a word in order to read it. Sometimes the pace of learning is slow and the targets set in individual education plans do not always provide sufficient challenge to ensure better progress. Where pupils benefit from teachers' skills in using the literacy strategy to teach reading, such as for Year 6 pupils, teaching enables pupils to be involved in a range of activities and there is a good pace to the lessons. For example, pupils show a clear knowledge of the stories they have already read and put forward ideas for rhyming words. The use of ability groups and separate tasks after the class session enables the pupils to make progress at the correct level. The support assistant was used well and worked very effectively with his group. Overall by the time pupils reach Year 6 their reading skills are progressing at a satisfactory pace showing a knowledge of the 100 key words. In writing pupils are developing their confidence. Many are able to write short sentences independently although at times teachers' expectations are low and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write longer sentences. For example in Year 4 pupils were asked to write 3 sentences about 3 words. However, with encouragement, a more able pupil was able to write one long sentence incorporating all three words. Pupils lack confidence in spelling. They have word books but a number of pupils rely on these rather than attempt the word first. Spelling for many pupils is a weakness and by the age of eleven many do not have the confidence to try to spell out words although they can do so when encouraged. Most form their letters well and are aware of the rule concerning capital letters and full stops. Pupils with additional needs, such as autism or communication difficulties make the same progress as other pupils.

- 72) Year 7 pupils clearly enjoy opportunities for speaking and listening and teachers extend pupils well. Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to respond to teachers' questions. Opportunities to develop their skills in other subjects are good, such as in history when discussing the ancient Egyptians. They listen well to each other and respect others' points of view. In reading achievements are satisfactory. Pupils are developing their knowledge of key words but expectations vary about what pupils can achieve. There are examples of higher expectations for more able pupils in individual education plans, for example, that a pupil should use an index, but this is not consistent. Where the literacy strategy is used well, the tasks are varied, pupils are divided into groups and the work is matched to their ability. However, not all teachers are confident in their knowledge. For example, a lesson on questions omitted any reference to question marks. At times tasks are often the same and on occasions where worksheets are used lower ability pupils

struggle to read the questions and need a lot of support to complete the work. Opportunities for developing writing skills are varied and pupils are still not confident in spelling words. They write short passages but many use short sentences and the content is brief. It is inappropriate that pupils of this age still write in pencil.

- 73) The strengths of teaching and learning lie in teachers' good knowledge of the pupils, the effective use of support assistants and in developing speech and language. However, there is not a whole school approach to developing pupils' skills in reading and writing. Teachers are not fully confident in using the literacy strategy. For example, the teacher of a Year 4 group taught a good session on initial sounds that enabled words to rhyme but the group work that followed was unrelated to this initial session. There is not sufficient focus on developing reading skills throughout the school. There are still pupils in Years 6 and 7 who are struggling to read but as yet there is no system for developing their skills in a more concentrated way on a one to one basis. Equally, while teachers concentrate on pupils reading together as a class this is not always effective especially with the larger groups because, often, not all pupils join in. The school library and local community college library are used well for encouraging pupils' enjoyment of books.
- 74) There is not the same whole school approach to the teaching of basic skills across all subjects as there is to speaking and listening. There is, in a few subjects, an overuse of worksheets which limits pupils' opportunities to write independently and time is wasted when pupils are expected to copy out questions before writing the answers.
- 75) The management of the subject is satisfactory. However, the school does not have an overview of how much progress pupils are making. There is no system for testing pupils when they arrive after Year 1 and, as a result, teachers do not have a clear idea of what these pupils know, understand and can do for some time. Equally there is no clear system, other than through the individual education plans, of checking how pupils' skills are progressing in reading and writing except through the use of the key skill words list. Because planning takes place in department groups it is not possible to ensure that there is progression in developing pupils' skills as they move through the school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 76) Pupils achieve well in mathematics and make good progress both in their lessons and over time, at all ages. This is because of the good quality of teaching and the confidence teachers have gained in their subject knowledge from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers now plan their lessons well and make good use of oral introductions and plenary sessions to maintain a pace that holds the interest of pupils.
- 77) Since the previous inspection there have been improvements in both the achievements and progress of pupils, which are now more consistently good across all ages. This reflects a similar improvement in the quality of teaching, with no unsatisfactory lessons being seen during the inspection. Also, a plan of work to

be covered is now in place, that provides for pupils' individual development to take place within a planned series of topics that covers all aspects of mathematics across the whole school.

- 78) The quality of teaching mathematics is good and for those pupils aged seven or below is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, plan their lessons well and apply a good range of teaching methods. Where teaching is very good or better teachers use a range of activities that keeps pupils of all abilities fully involved in their learning. For instance in a very well planned lesson for Year 1 pupils there is a lively oral start with the teacher challenging pupils to respond in tasks of counting to 10, such as counting the leaves that are left when others have "blown down". Pupils with additional needs are also fully involved in the lessons and make progress equal to other pupils. For instance, when a Year 1 pupil with autistic needs had become interested in the line holding the number 8, the teacher re-directed his attention so that he recognised where the number belonged.
- 79) Although the assessment of pupils' achievements is satisfactory, there are some differences between classes in the quality of its use. Formal assessment is carried out regularly by grading examples of pupils' work. Informal ongoing assessment, based on the good use of questions and timely marking of pupils' work, is also used successfully to find out what pupils have learned. Teachers differ, however, in the level of precision with which they use information from these assessments to set individual learning targets for pupils and how these targets are used as the basis for setting individual work in lessons. In a few lessons for pupils aged seven and over, teachers underestimate the ability of their pupils and provide them with tasks that are not sufficiently challenging. In some lessons, work is pitched at an average level for groups of pupils. This particularly limits the achievements of more able pupils.
- 80) Pupils make good progress in lessons. By the age of seven they have all developed knowledge of shapes and number and higher attaining pupils are able to sort numbers and add single digits. Their teachers motivate them to learn by providing stimulating activities that catch their interest. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils count from 1 to 5 while singing the song "One brown Teddy went out one day", and then count toy bears. By the age of eleven, higher attaining pupils are capable of independent working. Year 6 pupils, for example, are able to undertake addition and subtraction using tens and units with the minimum of assistance. Other pupils of the same age are able to apply their skills to help them manage money, working out change from purchases they make from purses that hold a variety of coins. Pupils aged between seven and twelve are able to record and interpret data using lists and charts. Younger pupils are able to carry out simple surveys, for example of how many counting blocks or plastic bears they each can hold in one hand. By age eleven pupils can record such surveys using lists and tables. The oldest pupils in the school, aged twelve, carry out surveys such as preferences for different fruits, record data using tables, generate bar charts using a computer programme, then interpret the charts to answer a range of questions.

- 81) Pupils enjoy mathematics, and are particularly engaged by the lively pace of the oral activities at the start of lessons. They behave well, are enthusiastic, and concentrate for long periods on their work. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good and pupils are very tolerant of each other's mistakes. They are given confidence by the constant use of praise and encouragement by the staff.
- 82) The teaching of mathematics benefits from the strong leadership of the subject co-ordinator who has excellent subject knowledge and provides a high level of support and guidance to her colleagues. The subject is well-resourced. Pupils make good use of computer programmes to support their learning in mathematics when using the specialist information and communications technology suite, though the use of appropriate programmes is less evident in classrooms.

## **SCIENCE**

- 83) Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. They make good progress in lessons. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection. Although the quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory, it is good overall. The youngest pupils make good progress. They learn to name common materials that they see around them and begin to describe them in terms of appearance and texture. Teachers plan effectively to provide a good range of materials for pupils to explore, to help them to recognise differences. Pupils handle bricks and stone before they look for similar materials in the school grounds. They begin to understand that the walls are strong because the teacher shows how 'Barnaby Bear' can sit on each wall, and photographs remind them when they discuss their investigation later in class. Pupils with communication and autistic needs make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- 84) As pupils get older, they consider the properties of a wider range of materials. They make good progress, for instance, investigating the strength of building materials in a lesson following the story of 'The Three Pigs'. Pupils know that the house of bricks is strong and that it is difficult to blow down. They are very interested when the teacher tries to blow the other houses down. Since they are familiar with the story they understand that the house of straw would blow away and this helps them to appreciate that it is important to choose correct materials for building.
- 85) Pupils receive good opportunities to experiment and investigate. For instance, those aged nine find the best packaging to send a fragile object through the post. They systematically test different wrapping materials for properties such as strength. They note, for instance, if paper or plastic film could lift a heavy weight. The teacher and learning support assistant provide effective support, reinforcing the need for pupils to treat each material the same way. Consequently, pupils are developing an understanding of the importance of research and the need to conduct a fair test. As the lesson progresses, one pupil makes an excellent suggestion that they work as teams to share tasks in the investigation.
- 86) By the age of twelve pupils can investigate further properties of materials. During a lesson to explore changes, they confidently mix their chosen material such as flour or sand in water to find out if it dissolves. The teacher has high expectations

for pupils to learn and ensures that they use scientific language. This is having a very positive effect upon the way that pupils talk about their work. One pupil was pleased to share that he had heard that all materials were made of atoms and another remembered that materials could be solids, liquids and gasses. The teacher focused well on the need to treat all the mixtures in the same way, questioning each pupil to ensure that they understood. Consequently, pupils demonstrated a growing understanding that it was important for the test to be fair.

- 87) Teaching is good. It is most successful when there is effective planning to make good use of assessment information to plan suitable work for each pupil to make measurable progress in science. This was very effective in a lesson for the oldest pupils when they designed electric circuits. The work stretched all pupils because they were required to complete their own design. It was commendable how pupils could find out answers for themselves by referring to their past work for inspiration. The teacher and learning support assistant provided good support for pupils, asking carefully chosen questions to encourage pupils to find answers for themselves. Pupils in turn understood that it was important to ask staff questions to clarify their thinking. The activity was very suitable preparation for pupils aged twelve to prepare them for transfer to secondary school next year. Although there is effective planning to provide a good range of experiments, the range is not as wide as it could be. This is because there is not a specialist room and consequently the range of resources is limited that pupils aged twelve would expect to encounter.
- 88) Pupils make good progress overall, although opportunities to allow pupils to write about their investigation are missed. For instance, pupils of all abilities are required to copy information into their books. On occasions, less able pupils are unable to complete the work and more able pupils lack opportunities to record in their own way to show how much they have learned or promote their writing skills.
- 89) The subject co-ordinator has led development well since the previous inspection ensuring good improvements to the information provided to help teachers plan lessons. However, the co-ordinator has insufficient involvement in monitoring what other teachers are doing in science lessons in order to ensure the progress that pupils are making is maintained.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- 90) Pupils' achievement is satisfactory over time although there are examples of good and very good work on display in the school. Only a small number of lessons were seen and in these, pupils make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school and this represents a maintenance of standards since the previous inspection. Teachers plan lessons well based on the content for the work to be covered. This planning ensures that small group work effectively enables pupils to create art using different materials, such as collage, printing, and three dimensional work as well as different ways of drawing and painting. There are very good examples of three dimensional ceramic works, made by pupils, on display in the school.
- 91) Pupils up to the age of seven make satisfactory progress as they learn basic drawing and painting skills. They start to explore pattern and texture as they create collages and simple prints. Children are given opportunities to express emotional aspects through their work. This is seen as an important part of the

subject by the school and leads to satisfactory and occasionally good, pieces of work.

- 92) Older pupils develop their skills further as they learn more about colour, tone and line. Pupils have undertaken three dimensional work, mainly in ceramics. There is a small amount of learning related to the work of known artists. For instance, when some pupils are drawing self portraits they are provided with examples of work by Renoir, Morrisot and Manet. They observe their own features, such as the position of the facial features and create a pencil drawing in sketchbooks. All pupils with additional special needs achieve appropriately in the subject.
- 93) Teachers manage to retain pupils' interest through the good pace of the lesson and the provision of opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of activities. In a lesson involving observational drawing pupils make satisfactory progress. The teacher provides a range of resources, including examples of work by other artists as reference material. However, teachers have limited subject knowledge and this restricts the learning by pupils. At times, similar lessons are taught differently because of the variation in teachers' knowledge.
- 94) The co-ordinator responsible for the subject leads the subject well and has ensured that provision for pupils to learn has been sustained from the previous inspection. She provides advice and support for other staff, including running and organising training events. However, she does not check the planning or have the opportunity to visit teachers to monitor the delivery of the subject. This leads to different levels of knowledge by teachers creating different outcomes for the pupils. Resources for the subject are satisfactory for the work being undertaken

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 95) Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. This represents good progress since the last inspection.
- 96) The youngest pupils make good progress designing and making model houses. There is good emphasis upon pupils developing skills in cutting and assembling as they construct their houses. Consequently, pupils made good attempts to use scissors or tear paper to stick features such as doors and windows on to their models. The teacher plans very well to provide individual support. For instance, the learning support assistant takes responsibility for supervising a group. This was evident when pupils designed and made a fruit salad. The shared commitment to promote literacy and numeracy ensured constant encouragement for pupils to talk about their work, naming kitchen equipment and counting fruit.
- 97) Pupils up to the age of eleven follow lessons on the topic of homes. Those aged nine make good progress predicting the strength of materials when they draw designs in their sketchbooks for arched doorways for their model gardens. The teacher uses good questions to encourage pupils to predict the strength of their design. The learning support assistant shares the high expectations for the pupils to develop independence in working. The effective support for pupils who require extra help ensures that they make progress. Pupils develop skills in designing and

making, together with a growing vocabulary to describe their work, because of the good support they receive. Since pupils also investigate the properties of materials in science then this deepens their understanding. Pupils aged eleven make good progress creating textiles designs. They follow the teacher's and learning support assistant's good guidance to make good progress in learning how to apply threads to hessian in preparation for creating their own design.

- 98) The oldest pupils make very good progress identifying the essential features of torches in preparation for designing their own. The teacher's enthusiastic approach encourages pupils to develop a strong interest in their work, to persevere and behave well. Pupils participate well, watching a video about torch design and taking part in discussions. They respond to the teacher's very good questions to demonstrate that they understood how to complete a circuit to connect a battery and a bulb. They remember the vocabulary from their work on circuits in science and this helps them to explain their answers. Pupils begin to work with some independence to complete their worksheets. However, the work sheets do not take account of the pupils' different ability to record their work, and this misses the opportunity to extend the writing skills, particularly for pupils with higher ability. Although teachers plan imaginatively for pupils to follow a range of suitable tasks, the range is not as wide as it could be. Although there is a good food technology room there is not a workshop and this limits opportunities for designing and making, using materials suitable for pupils of their age.
- 99) The co-ordinator manages the subject satisfactorily and although this has led to pupils following a good range of tasks, to promote their designing and making skills, there is insufficient monitoring of teachers' planning, teaching and learning to promote the best practice. Although reports provide a good account of what pupils learn, there is limited assessment of pupils' skills in design and technology to guide future planning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 100) Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning because the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 7. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, when the quality of a small amount of teaching was unsatisfactory.
- 101) Geography is taught through a topic approach but not to all year groups at any one time. Because of these timetable constraints, it was not possible to observe the teaching of geography in Years 5 and 6. A scrutiny of teachers' plans and work recently completed by pupils shows that pupils have in Year 4, for example, developed a satisfactory knowledge of Dartmoor and where it is in Great Britain. They can talk about the weather and some of its effects, such as the damage that results from severe storms. They know that maps can be used to find out where places are and that maps have keys to explain the symbols showing important features. Pupils in Year 1 are beginning to know how their own surroundings are divided up into spaces, whether in the classroom or at home. Older pupils in the primary department of the school are studying a range of topics, including homes in other lands and aspects of their local environment. Other pupils are learning about maps and how to use them to plan the routes of journeys. The pupils

worked co-operatively and confidently to achieve this successfully. In the secondary department, pupils in Year 7 continue to develop their understanding and knowledge by finding out more about different ways of representing local geographical features.

- 102) Teaching in the subject is satisfactory, for instance, when a teacher used questioning to encourage pupils in year 2 to name the different rooms in a house correctly and to name the pieces of furniture they would expect to find in them. The teacher used a doll's house effectively to help them do this. Pupils visit the local library and the teacher takes photographs with a digital camera of key features they passed along the way. This is then followed up in the classroom as the teacher questions the pupils using the photographs well to test the pupils' learning, having them sort the pictures into the right order and to talk about each one as they do so. The teacher helps them to make good progress by thorough lesson planning and setting a task that appropriately extends their prior knowledge. However, there is an often an over-reliance on worksheets or simple drawing tasks, with much of pupils' work being recorded in this way, including those pupils with additional special needs. This offers insufficient challenge and confines teacher assessment to basic issues of presentation rather than gains in knowledge and understanding. The teacher makes effective use of aerial photographs of the school, large-scale local maps and information and communication technology to help pupils learn about the relationship between pictures and maps of the area. The activities in the lesson were well planned to match the individual pupils, including those with additional needs. One group uses a computer programme related to the work in the class.
- 103) Sound plans of what is to be taught have been produced for pupils throughout the school, cross-referenced to National Curriculum requirements. The co-ordinator has reviewed the school's geography policy and teaching resources for the subject throughout the school. However, the co-ordinator does not yet undertake more formal and regular consultation with all staff teaching the subject to help to extend their subject knowledge and ensure a more consistent approach to the assessment of pupils' progress and how it is used.

## **HISTORY**

- 104) Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. This is a result of satisfactory and, on occasions, good teaching. Standards overall have improved since the previous inspection, when the quality of some teaching was unsatisfactory.
- 105) History is taught through a topic approach but not to all year groups at any one time. It was only possible to observe the teaching of history in Years 5, 6 and 7. A scrutiny of teachers' planning and work recently completed by pupils in other year groups shows a satisfactory knowledge of aspects of the past. For example, they have learnt in Year 4 about how Dartmoor has been affected by human settlement over time. Pupils now in Year 7 have previously learnt about life in Ancient Egypt, Roman Britain and during the Norman Conquest. However, there is an over-reliance on worksheets and copying of teachers' writing, with much of pupils' work being recorded in this way which offers pupils insufficient challenge. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are developing their knowledge of the impact of the Second World War on Plymouth and finding out about how children at that time were evacuated

to safety. In another lesson in Year 5, in discussion with the teacher, a few pupils were able to demonstrate the success of their previous learning by correctly naming Winston Churchill as the Prime Minister, and being able to explain why Plymouth was a target for bombing raids.

- 106) Where teaching is good in the secondary department, pupils in Year 7 benefit from the teacher's good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and ability to select appropriate teaching resources. In a lesson about aspects of life in Ancient Egypt, the teacher led a well paced discussion with pupils about hieroglyphics as a form of communication. This built on the pupils' prior knowledge from an earlier lesson, which they recalled accurately and confidently. Excerpts from a video about the making of papyrus were then used to extend the pupils' learning with some using the computer to access relevant information from a CD-ROM.
- 107) There are now sound plans for work to be taught for pupils throughout the school, cross-referenced to National Curriculum requirements. There is an inconsistent use of assessment to guide planning. The time allocation for the subject for years 3 and 4 is below that available to other year groups and this restricts opportunities for these pupils to make progress in this subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 108) The standards pupils achieve when working with computers are almost in line with national expectations. They are high when the ability of the pupils is considered. At the age of 7, pupils can switch on the computer, use a mouse to move the pointer across the screen, use programmes such as 'Text Ease' and 'clip art' to create different shapes. They become familiar with the language of computers and use words like 'tool bar' and 'task bar'. By the age of 12, they can save and retrieve information using different drives on the computer. They can create graphics and combine these with text they have typed. They recall computer language such as 'cut', 'paste' and 'multi-tasking'.
- 109) Pupils react enthusiastically in computer lessons. They concentrate for long periods, listen carefully to instructions and remember skills taught in previous lessons. They readily help each other with their tasks. They make good, sometimes very good or excellent progress in lessons. They improve their self-esteem through success in these lessons and learn skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as mathematics, which improves their learning in other lessons. Many of the pupils with additional needs react well to using computers and this helps their achievement.
- 110) The teaching of computing skills is always at least good, frequently very good and sometimes excellent. A comprehensive plan of work ensures that pupils make progress as they move through the school. Teachers skilfully guide pupils through complex tasks, are aware of individual pupils' strength and weaknesses and extend pupils in all lessons observed. The pace of lessons is high and pupils are challenged. Teacher assessment is used in every lesson, although the description of individual pupils' attainments is not always consistent. Pupils' self-assessment is not formally recorded. The teaching of computer skills benefits from an excellent and comprehensive development plan. This plan is linked to the whole school development plan, aims to further improve the skills of classroom teachers and

involves parents and the local community. The coordinator for this subject also has regular meetings with similar post-holders in other Plymouth special schools.

- 111) All classes from the age of 7 have weekly lessons in the computer room. These classes are taken by 2 specialist teachers who often have class teachers supporting them. By taking part in the computer lessons, class teachers extend their own skills and are encouraged to use the computers in their classrooms.
- 112) The subject is well managed and has developed well since the previous inspection. There is a computer in every classroom and a special computer room with 12 networked PCs as well as 2 laptops. These computers are also linked to the PCs used for administration. Class teachers use computers occasionally in other lessons to let pupils present their work, record music and find information. Not all teachers use computers often enough but there has been progress in this since the last inspection.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

- 113) It is not possible to make judgements on the achievements of pupils over time because there was no evidence available of pupils' previous work as it had not been retained. There are only two lessons a week for Year 7 pupils and these were observed during the inspection. Evidence for judgements is based on these observations and discussions with the co-ordinator.
- 114) In the small number of lessons seen teaching and learning were good. Pupils clearly benefit from the enthusiastic approach of the teacher and since the beginning of term have developed an understanding of "Bonjour" and "Au revoir". They have opportunities to practise these throughout the week whenever they meet the co-ordinator in school. Pupils are developing confidence in speaking in French and are uninhibited in repeating words. They introduce themselves using "Je m'appelle..". During a lesson they displayed a great deal of maturity in moving around the class and introducing themselves to each other and shaking hands. By the end of the lesson pupils had learnt to count to six with confidence. The animated teaching and lively presentation ensured pupils enjoyed the lessons and had confidence in responding. The teacher's knowledge is satisfactory and the use of both French and English ensures that pupils develop an understanding of the French language.
- 115) There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection with pupils now behaving well and working hard. The content of the lessons is appropriate and teaching has improved.
- 116) There is now a co-ordinator for the subject and the subject is managed appropriately with a suitable curriculum. However, there is limited time allocated to teaching the subject which reduces the amount of progress that can be made. At present there is no portfolio kept of pupils' work which limits how the school

monitors the progress of these pupils. Resources are used well to support learning.

## **MUSIC**

- 117) Pupils' achievement in music is good. They make good progress in lessons throughout the school. This maintains the quality of provision seen at the previous inspection when progress was judged to be a strength of the school. A number of the staff are competent musicians and this ensures that the quality of teaching is good. This often comes to the fore in some of the extra-curricular opportunities such as recording a track for Children in Need or in the percussion groups in the playground using waste containers.
- 118) Pupils participate well in music activities from when they enter school. In lessons they learn to sing with accuracy keeping a good sense of pitch and timing. Pupils in year 5 apply rhythms to various words and phrases. These are often related to the topics that are being followed in the school. For example, pupils beat rhythms to the phrases "terraced house" and "bungalow". Older pupils have produced a CD using computers to help generate and record their compositions. Pupils are well behaved in lessons and enjoy themselves, supporting each other, for instance when one pupil chose to dance during the playing of a music track and others responded to him by clapping and waving at him.
- 119) Teaching in the lessons seen was consistently good. Teachers plan lessons well and keep pupils' attention through interesting changes in activities. The provision is helped by the appointment of a music teaching assistant who works with teachers in lessons. However, at times this leads to an unnecessary surplus of staff in the room. There are times when the full value of her knowledge is not fully used by teachers and opportunities for raising subject knowledge are missed.
- 120) There is a plan of work for the subject that takes pupils through a development of musical skills and knowledge from the exploration of sounds and rhythm through to composition. Although there is the opportunity for appreciation of musical types and styles there is insufficient opportunity taken to involve spiritual aspects of the subject to help with this area of pupils' development.
- 121) The co-ordinator manages the subject very effectively and is supported by staff who show an interest in music. Pupils have good opportunities to experience a wide range of music, which during the inspection led to them listening to mediaeval music. However, too little emphasis was given to the cultural background of the music. Resources are good for the subject having been recently enhanced along with the provision of a good music room. The co-ordinator does not have time to monitor the teaching of music, although she is helped in this by the consistency of the music teaching assistant working with staff and, therefore, the delivery of the subject is consistent.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 122) Pupils of all ages achieve well and make good progress in physical education because there is good planning to support teachers when they prepare lessons

and because teachers are confident and have good subject knowledge. Pupils make very good progress in swimming because they are able to continue with swimming lessons until they leave school. Standards of achievement in all areas of physical education have been maintained since the last inspection.

- 123) In all lessons a significant number of pupils achieve broadly in line with national expectations for their age and this is particularly evident in swimming and in games which involve ball skills such as football and basket-ball. Pupils' opportunities to achieve and develop good skills are a result of well focused and successful opportunities to practice their ball skills. In addition the school has developed effective links with a local college who provide a qualified coach to teach pupils once a week and this further enhances their opportunities to make progress. Because of the wide range of opportunities pupils are given they have a very good understanding of how to play team games which makes a significant contribution to their social development. Pupils in a Year 6 dance lesson make good progress because they effectively develop the simple routine they have learned in the previous week's lesson into a more complex sequence of steps.
- 124) Teaching identified as satisfactory overall at the time of the last inspection has improved and is now good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Subject planning is good and has been developed from the local education authority's 'model'. This provides clear guidance for teachers when they plan lessons and contributes to the effective way in which teachers plan activities that so that pupils acquire and develop skills. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of pupils and are able to provide sufficient challenge to keep them interested in lessons. There is a good emphasis on warm up activities that are used effectively by teachers to gain pupils' attention. Pupils in Year 6 watch the teacher carefully and follow her demonstration accurately; they concentrate well and listen carefully to instructions and this helps them to participate and be successful. Teachers effectively use these warm up elements to talk about healthy lifestyles and there is a good emphasis on correct posture and the reasons for exercise. There is also an appropriate emphasis on cool down activities and the youngest pupils walk slowly and quietly around the hall to the song 'London Bridge' whilst pupils in Year 4 are appropriately encouraged to stretch and curl after a gymnastics lesson. Examples of very good teaching were seen for pupils in Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 in swimming and Year 7 in basketball. Excellent teaching was seen for the youngest pupils during an apparatus lesson. All pupils are effectively supported to achieve and each week there is an additional lesson for pupils identified by teachers as having problems with co-ordination or mobility. This focuses on a specific area of need and is very effective in ensuring that all pupils have the same opportunities to make progress.
- 125) Teachers ensure that there is a good emphasis on health and safety. Pupils are taught how to get out and put away apparatus safely. These opportunities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Because pupils are aware of the need for safety they behave appropriately when running and dancing, taking care not to knock into each other.
- 126) The effective use of ongoing assessment such as asking questions and the evaluation of performance during lessons ensures that teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to achieve and make progress. Teachers make good use of the information they gain to plan activities. Pupils are given good opportunities

to talk about what they have learned and to watch and evaluate others' performance. There is currently no written assessment of pupils' achievement and this was identified as an area for development at the time of the last inspection. There is, however, good assessment in swimming where pupils' achievement is measured against the Amateur Swimming Association's award scheme. Because teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to watch each other they are learning to evaluate each others' performance well.

- 127) Pupils have opportunities to take part in a good range of outdoor education such as moorland activities on Dartmoor. Opportunities are further enhanced by well planned opportunities for pupils to work alongside children from other special and local primary schools and good links with the local teacher training college enables pupils to use some of the facilities and receive instruction from third year students.
- 128) The subject is well led and managed within the responsibilities allocated. The co-ordinator's work with pupils across the school during club activities, the additional lesson for pupils with co-ordination and mobility problems and when teachers in Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 work together during swimming sessions provides useful, but limited, information about pupils' achievement and the effectiveness of teaching.
- 129) Resources are good although the grass pitch becomes waterlogged in winter. The school has a good size hall but the use of the perimeter for storing large pieces of apparatus and dining furniture is a safety concern.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

- 130) The provision of religious education has improved since the last inspection. There is now a comprehensive plan of work in place and lesson plans for all classes have been produced by the co-ordinator for this subject.
- 131) By the age of 5 pupils know about prayers in Christianity. They connect harvest time with sharing and caring for each other. By the age of 12, they can distinguish between major faiths, name 'holy' books for some major religions and recall some facts about religious celebrations. They can talk about the 'creation' and speak about God as the 'creator'. Some can voice their own opinions and explain their beliefs. There is, though, little attention paid to the spiritual component of religious beliefs.
- 132) The teaching of religious education is satisfactory, with a small number of lessons that are good, including those taught by the subject co-ordinator. Lessons build on previous learning, although pupils' recall of what they learned previously is often poor. When teaching is good, teachers are aware of individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses and skilfully guide pupils' learning. In most lessons taken by class teachers, the teaching of religious education is satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is weak and some of the lesson activities are not matched to a few pupils' needs. For instance, in a few lessons, lower ability pupils cannot read the writing on work sheets.
- 133) The subject co-ordinator does not monitor the quality of teaching by class teachers. Materials and lesson plans are provided to every teacher but the

conduct of lessons remains unchecked. This leads to unevenness in provision. There is no subject development plan.