

INSPECTION REPORT

SOLENT JUNIOR SCHOOL

Drayton, Portsmouth

LEA area: Portsmouth

Unique reference number: 116193

Headteacher: Julia Knowles

Reporting inspector: Janet Watts
1945

Dates of inspection: 5th – 8th March 2001

Inspection number: 188351

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Solent Road Drayton Portsmouth
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Hense
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd June 1996

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1329	Kevern Oliver	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed?
22118	Elizabeth Fee	Team Inspector	English as an Additional Language, English, Art and Design, Design and Technology	
25074	Joyce Cox	Team Inspector	Equal Opportunities, Special Educational Needs, Science, Information and Communication Technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30864	Corrine Boyce	Team Inspector	Mathematics, History, Music, Religious Education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Solent Junior is a larger than average junior school, situated to the north east of Portsmouth. There are 346 pupils on roll and they are taught in twelve single age group classes. Most of the pupils transfer from the neighbouring infant schools. About a quarter are admitted to the school through parental preference, although these pupils have mainly attended Solent Infant school. Attainment on entry is average. The majority of the pupils are of white European ethnic background. The proportion of pupils who receive free school meals is well below average. Twenty two per cent of the pupils are on the register of Special Educational Needs; this is broadly average. There are three pupils with Statements of special educational need which, at nought point eight per cent, is below average. Four pupils speak English as an additional language and two pupils are at an early stage of English acquisition; this is slightly above average. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with a significant number of very good features. There is a very strong commitment to raising standards, to providing a broad and rich curriculum and ensuring that pupils achieve well. There has been a significant upward trend in standards recently, especially in English. Standards of reading and writing are very high by the time pupils are aged eleven. Teaching is good, especially in English and mathematics. The headteacher provides very effective leadership, increasingly well supported by the senior management team. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Has been particularly successful in improving standards in English and currently in mathematics, as a result of good teaching.
- Has very good systems for promoting the pupils' behaviour and encouraging positive attitudes to school. Support for their independence, their sense of responsibility and initiative is outstanding.
- Makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs so that they make good progress.
- Provides a very safe and secure environment for pupils; relationships at all levels are good. Pupils feel highly valued and this enhances their sense of self worth.
- Provides very good and effective links with parents, who have a high respect for the work of the school.
- Provides an excellent range of extra- curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Standards in science, particularly at Level 5, which are not as high as in the other core subjects.
- The roles and responsibilities of subject managers do not yet focus sufficiently on assessing and moderating standards in their subjects, as part of the school's drive to raise standards.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1996. Improvement overall has been satisfactory; a number of improvements have been implemented recently. Staff are more confident to teach the full range of subjects and appropriate monitoring systems are being developed. Priorities are agreed and are a clear focus for improvement. Curriculum planning is much improved and teachers' short term planning clearly sets out the way tasks, and questions and explanations will meet the needs of all pupils. Curriculum budgeting is now systematic, focused sharply on the school's agreed priorities for improving the quality of education. The quality of teaching has improved overall. Standards in all subjects, with the exception of science, have either improved or been maintained. The school has a good capacity to improve even further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	A	A	B
mathematics	C	B	C	D
science	C	C	D	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils in 2000 attained standards in English that were well above the national average and above those of similar schools. In mathematics, standards were average when compared to schools nationally but below those of similar schools. In science, standards were below average compared to schools nationally but well below similar schools, mainly because the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was low. Inspection findings confirm that in English, standards of reading and writing are very high and well above average by the time pupils are aged eleven; pupils make the best progress in English in Years 5 and 6, as a result of much very good teaching. Standards of speaking and listening are above average across the school. Current standards in mathematics are above average, an improvement since last year; pupils make good progress across the school. Standards in science are currently average; the pupils do not achieve as well in science as they do in English and mathematics. The school plans to focus on science as an area for improvement next year. The general trend in the school's results, in all the core subjects, has been upward, mirroring the national trend, though results in English have improved very rapidly, especially in writing. Across the school pupils achieve well, though sometimes the older pupils are insufficiently challenged in their scientific thinking. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and they are very well supported through the school's provision. Targets set are appropriately challenging and the school's target setting processes are increasingly rigorous. Standards in art, music, history and physical education are good and above those normally expected for eleven year olds. Good quality teaching has a significant and positive impact on pupils' learning in these subjects. Standards in information and communications technology are average, although pupils have limited experience of the control aspect of the subject. Standards in geography, design and technology and religious education are broadly average. Progress in French is good. In the foundation subjects as a whole, pupils' levels of skills and understanding are not always assessed rigorously enough and so are not built upon progressively.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are mature and responsible. They have very positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school. They take great pride in presenting their work well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The behaviour of the older pupils is especially good.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their independence, their sense of initiative and their sense of responsibility. Relationships at all levels are very good and pupils feel highly valued.
Attendance	Well above average. There have been no exclusions during the past year.

The school's promotion of the pupils' sense of initiative and their ability to act as mature, responsible young people is outstanding and a real strength.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	N/a	N/a	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.

Teaching was very good in twenty nine per cent of lessons, good in thirty three per cent of lessons and satisfactory in thirty eight percent of lessons and is therefore good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers have good and often very good knowledge of subjects to teach them well. The exceptions are science and information and communications technology where teachers' expertise and confidence is inconsistent and occasionally underdeveloped. English and mathematics are frequently very well taught. Literacy is very well taught and numeracy is well taught across the school. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods well and plan interesting and often very stimulating lessons, so motivating the pupils to work hard and really learn. The school meets the needs of those pupils with special educational needs very well. Those pupils with above average ability are also well challenged, apart from in science. Pupils with English as an additional language are well taught.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Provision is broad and activities often stimulating. The curriculum is enriched extremely well through residential and other visits and visitors. An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities is provided.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, high quality provision. It is particularly good for those pupils with statements. The support staff are well briefed and give very effective support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good; these pupils are well supported and well integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Pupils' social and moral development is extremely well promoted and provision is very good. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well; this is a real strength of the school. Pupils work and play in a safe and secure environment. There are very good systems for monitoring behaviour and personal development. There are good procedures for monitoring academic performance in English and they are developing well in mathematics. Further development is needed in other subjects.

The school works very closely and effectively in partnership with parents, who have a high respect for the school.

Provision for personal, social and health education is very good indeed. A broad, rich and stimulating curriculum is provided. Residential visits, as well as providing enrichment for physical education, geography and environmental awareness, are also highly effective in supporting pupils' social development. As a school which embraces inclusion, even pupils with learning, physical or emotional difficulties are included in the residential visits. The length of some lessons, especially during the afternoons, is too long and the balance of activities inappropriate; this makes it difficult for pupils to maintain concentration and achieve as much as they should.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher is a very effective leader and manager who is leading the successful implementation of an impressive plan to raise standards. She is well supported through the emerging strengths of the senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The effective governing body is committed to the school and works closely with the headteacher and staff to ensure that the school is making good progress and that targets are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good use is made of assessment data to set targets in English and mathematics. In other subjects, the use of assessment and information about the pupils' performance needs to be strengthened.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of all its resources to maximise the benefits for pupils in the classrooms.

The staffing is very well matched to the needs of the school and the curriculum. Resourcing is good. The school's accommodation is good internally and meets the requirements of the curriculum. Very good and careful application of the principles of best value is applied by the governing body and school, to maximise benefits to pupils in the classrooms.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school, they achieve well and make good progress. • The range and quality of the information the school provides. • The leadership and management of the school. • The teaching is good. • Children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and use of homework.

The inspection team agrees with the parents and carers views. The issue of homework has already been identified by the school, as a result of a recent consultative questionnaire and steps are being taken to rectify the situation.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment of the pupils on entry to school is broadly average in English, mathematics and science, though reading standards are often above average. About three quarters of the pupils transfer from the neighbouring infant schools. About a quarter of the school's intake is admitted as a result of parental preference though mainly these pupils have attended Solent Infants.

2. At the end of Key Stage 2, the results for eleven year olds in the three core subjects has shown a generally upward trend, mirroring the national trend, although attainment in mathematics has been slightly erratic over time. Results in science have also been erratic. There are few significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls in English, mathematics and science. In English this is better than the national picture, as girls continue to out perform boys nationally. The 2000 results for the end of Key Stage 2 show attainment well above the national average in English, in line with the national average in mathematics and below average in science. When compared with similar schools, results in English are good. Improvements in writing have been particularly marked. In mathematics, results were below similar schools and were well below in science. In both mathematics and science, the proportion of pupils attaining the benchmark of Level 4 was in line with similar schools but fewer Solent Junior pupils attained the higher Level 5 than in similar schools. The differences in results in the core subjects are a reflection of the school's decision to make improving writing a priority, so raising standards in English overall. Currently, mathematics is a focus for improvement and inspection findings indicate strongly that this is proving to be successful, as standards are now above average. Science is to be the next focus for improvement

3. In English and mathematics, there has been a clear improvement in standards since the previous inspection. This is most noticeable in the quality of the pupils' writing and their very good understanding of the structure of the English language, by the age of eleven.

4. At the end of Key Stage 2, inspection findings indicate that the current Year 6 pupils are attaining well above average standards in writing and reading. Progress in English is best in Years 5 and 6, as a result of very good teaching. Progress is always satisfactory, and often good, in Years 3 and 4. Speaking and listening skills are above average across the school.

5. At the end of Key Stage 2, the current Year 6 are attaining above average standards in mathematics. Pupils' progress in mathematics is good across the school, as a result of improvements in teaching and teachers' greater confidence in the use of the numeracy strategy.

6. The basic skills of literacy are very well taught, and numeracy skills are well taught across the school. The pupils achieve well in English and mathematics, and often very well in English in Years 5 and 6.

7. At the end of Key Stage 2, current attainment of the eleven year olds in science is just in line with the national average which is an improvement since last year. In some age groups, for example Year 4, progress in science lessons is often good as a direct result of good teaching, but whilst progress is always at least satisfactory it is not as consistent as in other subjects. Science is to be a focus for development next year, and the school anticipates that more pupils can be challenged to attain the higher levels.

8. In art, history, music and in some aspects of physical education (notably games and dance), standards are higher than those normally expected for pupils of this age and stage. Standards in design and technology, geography, religious education and information and communication technology are broadly average. In information and communication technology, pupils have had few opportunities to explore control technology until recently; there are further planned opportunities, next term, for pupils to have experiences with the use of control technology. Whilst it was not possible to judge the standards of French at the end of the key stage, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 learn and achieve well and make good progress. Since the previous inspection, standards in the foundation subjects and modern foreign languages have either improved or been maintained.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, although most achieve below average standards in literacy and numeracy. Pupils with statements of educational needs achieve well, in terms of adjusting to the class routines, due to sensitive and very effective management by the class teachers. This is as a result of teachers' planning which takes good account of the targets within their individual education plans. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Nearly always, teachers have high expectations of both pupils with learning difficulties and the more able, higher attainers; consequently, these pupils achieve well in most subjects. The good quality of the teaching is reflected in the good progress that all pupils make and that they achieve well. They achieve especially well in English. Standards have improved this year in mathematics due to improvements in the teaching and an increased focus on the subject. Standards in science are not as high as they should be, especially given pupils' levels of attainment in English.

10. Target setting processes are increasingly rigorous; targets set for the next two years are challenging but attainable, given the school's commitment to raising standards. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Solent Junior is a happy community and its pupils enjoy coming to their school. This is confirmed by the ninety eight per cent of the parents, who completed the parents' questionnaire, agreeing with the statement "my child likes school".

12. Pupils' attitudes to their work, which were praised during the previous inspection, are very good. Throughout the day, in the majority of lessons, they work hard either on their own or in pairs and larger groups. In a Year 4 science lesson, for example, pupils conscientiously shared the work and the results of a series of interesting experiments about friction. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson on "mental strategies" pupils enthusiastically responded to the challenge of working to tight time limits. They enjoy organised games and the very wide range of out of school activities such as the dancing, sports and music clubs and trips to Calshot, Little Canada and France.

13. Pupils of all ages thrive on responsibility. They make excellent contributions to the smooth running of the school. Some fetch and carry the attendance registers. Special squads make sure that the grounds are litter free and everyone is involved in keeping classrooms neat and tidy. Pupils normally help their teachers prepare and clear up at the beginning and end of lessons. The members of the elected school council take their roles very seriously. They enjoy representing and mentoring their classmates. In meetings they listen to each other and maturely discuss ideas and problems when, for example, they make constructive suggestions about school improvements. Year 6 pupils who are selected for their positive attitudes, maturity, trustworthiness and interpersonal skills, play an important role in the community. They operate equipment during assemblies, help to look after the

school's reception, supervise the dining hall and control the doorways between buildings and playgrounds.

14. Behaviour is good overall. In the classes with older pupils it is particularly good but lower down the school it is less consistent and occasionally falls below the school's normally high standards. There is a comprehensive code of conduct, which pupils know and accept. Any behavioural problems, which do arise, are dealt with promptly and supportively. No bullying was seen during the course of the inspection and pupils confirmed that it is not a problem at Solent Junior.

15. Pupils have very good attitudes to each other and all the adults who work with them. They are confident and always polite to all the staff and to visitors. They are kind and considerate to each other, paying particular attention to the needs of classmates who have severe problems. They make sure that such pupils are included in day-to-day work and play. Older pupils help to look after younger ones and happily lend a caring hand if anyone gets upset in, for example, the playground. Pupils are pleased to see each other succeed and in merit assemblies the applause for those who are being rewarded for their achievements is long, loud and warm.

16. Punctuality is very good and lessons start on time with pupils settling quickly and quietly to their work. Attendance is well above the national averages. There have been no exclusions in the last school year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good and makes a significant contribution to the school's ethos and the pupils' very positive attitudes to the school. Teaching is very good in twenty nine per cent of lessons, good in thirty three per cent and satisfactory in thirty eight per cent of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. This is a considerable improvement on the previous inspection, when about ten per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Examples of very good teaching were seen in literacy, numeracy, art, music and physical education.

18. The quality of teaching, together with the positive contribution of the well briefed and effective support assistants, has a strong impact on pupils learning across the school. Teachers have a good, and sometimes very good, knowledge of most subjects except science and information and communications technology. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in these two subjects, the quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. The school is aware of this and there are plans in hand to improve teachers' expertise in both science and information technology. The planning for science is currently being revised to bring it more into line with the nationally recommended scheme from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

19. Very good relationships between pupils and adults characterise most lessons. This has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes, which in turn contributes to the positive learning environment within the school. Pupils are usually well managed and teachers have the support of the school's well thought through behaviour policy when there are incidents of misbehaviour. Occasionally, some of the younger pupils lack concentration and do not always listen as well as they might, for example in some science and history lessons. This tends to slow the pace of the learning as the teacher, quite appropriately, has to remind the pupils of the task in hand. Some of the lessons during the afternoon are too long to maintain the pupils' concentration on one subject and, as a consequence, they tend to lose motivation.

20. Teachers use questioning strategies skilfully to involve the pupils in activities and discussions. The activities planned are frequently inspiring and stimulating, especially in English and mathematics, and in music, history, art, French and physical education. Consequently, pupils' levels of understanding improve, they work hard and do their best. Pupils work well in groups and as individuals, often without direct supervision, for example in the literacy and numeracy hours. Pupils use the library regularly as a resource and the older pupils especially are becoming adept and accomplished researchers.

21. Teachers generally plan well to meet the learning objectives of the half term plan and in response to the short term needs of the class or group. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers plan work effectively for groups of pupils with different levels of attainment including those with special educational needs and the higher achievers. This is also helped by the way in which pupils are set in prior attainment groups for mathematics, resulting in smaller teaching groups and pupils receiving much more individual attention. This has had a significant and positive impact on their attainment and progress in mathematics.

22. All teachers are aware of pupils with special educational needs in the class and plan work specifically for these pupils' learning needs. This is particularly successful in literacy and numeracy because of the way in which pupils are placed in attainment groups. Pupils receive very good support from special educational need assistants who are well briefed and efficient. For example, one special educational needs assistant had her own whiteboard to illustrate correct handwriting formation, which she completed alongside pupils to interest and inspire them. A severely hearing impaired pupil receives excellent support from the full time communicator.

23. Pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are at an early stage of English acquisition are well taught and well integrated into the life of the school.

24. The literacy strategy is very well implemented and the numeracy strategy well implemented. Teachers have received the necessary training and are now confident enough to use the strategy flexibly. Basic skills are taught very well. This is having a positive impact in raising standards, for example the use of the National Literacy Strategy framework for writing. This, coupled with the teachers' commitment to helping pupils to become successful writers, has had a demonstrable and direct impact on improving writing. The range of teaching strategies used in literacy and numeracy are now being used in other subjects, often helping to raise the quality of teaching across the school. For example, nearly all lessons are planned with really clear objectives and outcomes, and teachers share these with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson. In English most notably, direct reference is made to the group's objectives or individual targets set; pupils' writing is often self - assessed and marked by the teacher with these targets in mind. As a result, each pupil is really clear about what he or she has done well and what needs to be improved.

25. All teachers provide an interesting range of activities. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson pupils were really challenged by the brisk pace and the teacher expecting very sharp responses to her questioning about the two, three and five times tables. When this led on, sensibly, to the concept of 'division' then the pupils were challenged to complete some recorded work on simple division sums in a very short time. The pupils enjoyed the challenge and responded very well. In a Year 4 lesson, when the pupils were learning traditional English dances, the very clear explanations, instructions and demonstrations from the teacher, very ably assisted by some pupils, resulted in almost every pupil being able to remember and perform the entire sequence correctly by the end of the session. In Year 5, during a literacy lesson, pupils were discussing and evaluating the material in other pupils' project work. This created very good links with science and environmental awareness (work on endangered species). It also supported very well the

pupils' listening and speaking skills, their critical faculties and their inter- personal skills in offering and receiving constructive criticism. In a Year 5 music lesson, the visiting music specialist helped pupils to compose, improvise and perform musical patterns and rhythms to a good standard. The pace was brisk, the pupils very well managed and the teacher demonstrated very good subject expertise.

26. Teachers use resources well in most subjects to enhance and enrich their lessons; this includes the very good use of visits and visitors to enrich and enliven the curriculum. Information and communications technology is being used well in some classes and groups to support other subjects, but is not yet used consistently throughout the school.

27. Teachers know their pupils very well. The assessments of what pupils can do in English is very good; it is developing well in mathematics. Marking is very good in English and clearly helps pupils to improve. There are clear references to agreed targets. In mathematics the pupils' work is marked regularly, but there are few references to agreed targets. In science, whilst teachers do comment on the pupils' work, only rarely does the marking refer to the scientific content or understanding and overall teachers' assessments are inconsistent and insufficiently rigorous. In other subjects, assessments are too dependent on individual teachers; there are few whole school agreements about what constitutes an appropriate level of work and teachers do not come together regularly to moderate their judgements. In science and the foundation subjects, too little assessment information is passed on to the next teacher. Consequently the long term development of skills and understanding in a subject is not always secure for individual pupils, especially as there is a wide range of ability in each year group and pupils who need to work at different levels.

28. Whilst homework is given and sometimes used effectively to support pupils' learning, this is inconsistent and the amount of homework and its use varies from class to class. The school is aware of this as a result of a consultative questionnaire to parents, and is currently being remedied.

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

29. The curriculum is broad, stimulating and very well enriched through the extensive range of residential and other visits and visitors to the school. The planned curriculum caters well for pupils of all abilities, but most especially in English and mathematics; here, pupils' prior levels of attainment and their skills are given proper consideration when lessons are planned. The school provides an excellent and very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including tap, modern, country and line dancing, soccer, tennis, netball, cricket, badminton, swimming, art, recorders, French, and mathematics. Some twenty to thirty pupils attend each extra-curricular activity. The planned residential visits, involving all pupils in each age group, are highly valued by the parents, who also appreciate and support the provision of a broad and rich curriculum. In addition to broadening and enriching the curriculum, the visits give very good support to the pupils' social skills, fostering co-operation, friendship and mutual respect as part of their personal development. The school regularly invites visitors to support and enrich the pupils' curriculum experience; for example, dance and drama workshops and groups to enrich the pupils' creativity, Brazilian musicians and an African drumming group to extend their musical experience and enhance their multi-cultural awareness. Pupils regularly participate in musical events and special 'challenges' are organised for higher attaining pupils.

30. The curriculum satisfactorily meets statutory requirements and includes all the required subjects. The inspection findings are similar to those of the previous report. In

addition to the National Curriculum and religious education, short French lessons are taught regularly and successfully to Years 3, 4, and 5. Year 6 pupils are taught French and German during a dedicated 'block' of time later in the academic year. Older pupils visit France so that they may practice their French conversation skills.

31. Half termly curriculum plans provide good detail of what will be taught, well linked to the National Curriculum requirements. These plans include formative assessment opportunities and make clear the possible links with other subjects. Assessment and evaluation of pupils' work is increasingly rigorous and well established in English and mathematics, but in other subjects there are few systems in place to agree standards or to moderate teachers' assessments of pupils' work. In science, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to develop their scientific thinking through Attainment Target 1. In information and communication technology, pupils use an appropriate range of skills, using word processing and data handling to support their work in some subjects, but there is a lack of opportunities for pupils to use control technology. The school plans to review the time allocations for each subject. Inspection findings indicate that time is well used in English and mathematics. In science and some of the foundation subjects, lessons are at times too long and the balance of activities within them does not always challenge pupils enough. When this happens, they lose concentration and do not achieve as much as they might.

32. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies are firmly established within the school and are having a most positive impact on raising standards; standards in both these subjects are improving. The well stocked library is very well used indeed and the majority of pupils are able to use the library to locate books readily. The older pupils have highly developed study skills and use the library confidently for independent research.

33. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. All pupils receive an exciting and stimulating curriculum. They enjoy full access and entitlement and they participate enthusiastically in all aspects of school life. Individual Education Plans are well written and include specific targets for pupils to achieve. Pupils' access to the curriculum is well supported by the very effective support of the special educational needs assistants.

34. Equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum are good. The curriculum is equally accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language or who are at an early stage of language acquisition are well supported and very well integrated. Occasionally, pupils are withdrawn from lessons for some kind of specialist teaching; this is usually well managed to ensure that these pupils do not regularly miss the same subject.

35. There are good links with neighbouring schools and a well thought through programme of induction and curriculum liaison in place for the infant pupils' transition to Solent Junior, and the eleven year olds prior to transferring to Springfield School. This ensures that the transfer from one school to another is as smooth as possible. The pupils support a number of charities, helping them to appreciate the wider world. There are appropriate links with the community and plans are in hand to extend further links with the community and local businesses, to make a greater contribution to pupils' learning.

36. Provision for personal development includes sex education and learning about the misuse of drugs and is very good overall. The strong emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development and the important part it plays in the school's ethos was particularly noted in the previous inspection. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and fostered well through daily acts of worship and focusing on special events, occasions and special things. Specific lessons, such as those for personal and health education and circle times give pupils good opportunities to talk about their own feelings. This creates a caring and very

secure atmosphere and supports pupils' spiritual development. However, there are too few planned opportunities within lessons in other subjects to support spiritual development further.

37. Provision for pupils' moral development is very strong and permeates the school. It is a strong aspect of the school's ethos. Pupils clearly understand right from wrong as it affects their daily lives. There are very good systems for promoting good behaviour with a merit system to reward good behaviour and good work. Pupils and teachers together drew up the 'Golden Rules' and the 'Solent Charter.' Assemblies are used effectively to explore moral themes.

38. Provision for pupils' social development is also very strong. Pupils throughout the school are given, and undertake with quite exceptional maturity, a great deal of responsibility. The promotion of individuals to become 'Senior Pupils' is based on an application which they must complete. They answer the telephone politely and helpfully, take messages and provide much valued assistance. They act as monitors, looking after and supporting the younger pupils. They frequently use their initiative and, seeing the need for something to be done, will do it unobtrusively without necessarily expecting a reward. The school also has a 'Circle of Friends', to whom pupils who are experiencing difficulties with relationships can turn for advice and support. The School Council, with two elected representatives from each class, meets weekly with the headteacher to contribute their ideas for the school's development. As part of the process, they report back to their classmates on issues raised and decisions taken. Across the school a wide range of tasks are undertaken responsibly by all pupils. It is to their very great credit that they can be so well trusted to discharge these responsibilities to such good effect.

39. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There are very good links with the Chinese community in Portsmouth, who have been involved with the school in artistic, creative and musical events. Pupils study different religions such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, and consider the impact of religious beliefs on people's cultural way of life. Exchanges with French pupils and visits to France help pupils to develop helpful insights into another European culture.

40. Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and continues to be a strength of the school, as recognised in the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. Solent Junior takes very good care of all its pupils. The school is a secure and safe place and pupils are carefully supervised throughout the day. The headteacher, staff and governors pay close attention to all aspects of health and safety and arrangements, including those for risk assessment, are very good. All staff has received basic first aid training and there is always at least one qualified first-aider on site during school hours. Child Protection arrangements are very good and include appropriate links with the local authorities.

42. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting good attendance are very good. Although attendance levels are already well above the national averages the school is committed to further improvement. Classes which consistently achieve one hundred per cent attendance are congratulated at assemblies and governors remind parents that normally pupils should not go on holiday during term time.

43. Pupils' general standard of behaviour is good. They understand what is expected of them. The school's "Golden Rules" are on posters in every class and pupils know and follow

them. A system of rewards and sanctions is used to deal with any bad behaviour, which does occur. Bullying is rare in Solent Junior but in case a problem does come up there are good procedures in place for dealing with such events.

44. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and are well aware of their intellectual, social and emotional needs. They help pupils to learn and develop their self-esteem by rewarding their achievements. In class, for example, pupils routinely are congratulated when they do well. Success over a longer period of time in things such as attendance, behaviour, writing and presentation is recognised with certificates, which are presented at special merit assemblies. These merit assemblies are whole school events at which everyone happily and generously praises the award winners.

45. The previous inspection reported that "statutory requirements for assessment and testing are met" but that the school should "systematically monitor the standards and quality of education throughout the school". Overall the current arrangements for assessment are satisfactory; in English they are very good and they are good in mathematics. In science and the other subjects the arrangements vary and assessment of standards is not as rigorous as it might be. Teachers use the results of the national tests which pupils take in the last year at their infant schools, to act as a baseline to monitor pupils' progress. There are, however, inconsistencies between subjects. English is the most advanced where the results of regular assessment of all aspects of pupils' work are used to monitor and plan for their progress. The same system is being introduced for mathematics and plans are in hand to improve the assessment of science and information and communications technology. Some work in the foundation subjects is assessed, but the results of these assessments are not as yet used sufficiently effectively to plan for the next stages of learning and teaching. There are very good target setting procedures in place in English for groups and individuals. They are developing well in mathematics but are not yet as rigorous as those in English.

46. The school pays particular attention to pupils who have special educational needs. Arrangements to support those who have formal statements of need are excellent. Good procedures are in place for assessing pupils with special educational needs and work is planned carefully to meet their needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator is vigilant when recording the progress of these pupils. There are very good links with support agencies, such as the speech and language service and the school ensures that pupils' needs are assessed regularly by the educational psychologist.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. Parents are very pleased to send their children to Solent Junior. They believe that it is a caring community, which looks after their children and provides them with a good education. They know that their children have to work hard and that they are helped to be mature and responsible. They also appreciate the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which Solent offers their children. They have confidence in the way that the headteacher, staff and governors are moving the school forward.

48. The long established 330 Club is an important link between the school and parents. Run on-site and as an extension of the school activities, it provides an invaluable and inexpensive after school care service for up to forty children. It also organises a very popular holiday club.

49. Parents are keen to help their children learn. There is a home-school agreement and parents are committed to supporting their children's homework. A recent questionnaire from the school showed that parents have worries about the wide variations in the range, quality

and quantity of homework that is set. As result of this consultation the school is revising its homework policy and procedures.

50. A comprehensive system of visits and meetings welcomes new parents and pupils to the school. Formal arrangements for keeping parents in touch with how their children are getting on are very good. At the beginning of each term special bulletins, which give details of what each year-group will be learning, are sent home. Every term there is a meeting at which parents have the opportunity for one-to-one discussions with their children's teachers. The end of year reports are very comprehensive. They include a subject by subject summary of what has been taught during the year, details of progress and new targets for improvement, a contribution from pupils and, where appropriate, the results of national tests in English, mathematics and science.

51. Regular newsletters keep parents up to date with what is going on in the school. Formal documents such as the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are very well produced. The latter has a magazine format, which contains not only official information but also illustrated articles about school life and the roles which the Governors play in it.

52. Solent's governors and teachers value the important role which parents play in pupils' education. Therefore parents are welcome to come into the school. The headteacher can be contacted at almost anytime. Meetings with pupils' class teachers are arranged through a simple appointment system. Some parents and grandparents come in to school to help with reading and support other classroom activities. Other parents give up their own holiday time to help out on school trips and residential visits.

53. The Parent Teacher Association, which was commended for its work in the previous inspection, continues to thrive. It organises social and fund raising events, such as discos and summer fairs for both pupils and parents. The funds are used to provide "extras" such as digital cameras, gazebos for school fairs and sports equipment, "which would not normally be afforded" and contribute to the running costs of the school's minibus.

54. The school keeps good links with those parents who have children with special educational needs. Parents receive notification of their child's needs and are kept informed from stage one of the Code of Practice. Regular meetings are held to ensure that parents are aware of all aspects of their child's needs. For example, individual education plans are shared with parents, increasing their capacity to help at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher, who has been at the school for just over a year, has a very clear vision of what the school needs to do in order to develop and improve. She is determined that pupils will be given every possible opportunity to learn and achieve their very best. She is well supported by the emerging strengths and expertise of her senior management team. The team shares her commitment to raising standards further without jeopardising the aims and values of the school community, which are set out in the Solent Charter. The school's aims are reflected strongly in the everyday life of the school.

56. Solent's governors are led by an experienced chairman. Recent changes in membership of the governing body mean that not all governors are yet fully familiar with their roles and responsibilities. All the governors are however very committed to their school and are making a major contribution to its development. They know the school's strengths and

weaknesses and share the headteacher's and staffs' commitment to the Solent Charter and the raising of standards. Every governor is linked to a class and is expected to make regular visits. Their role in monitoring curriculum provision in areas such as special educational needs is still developing, but plans to sort this out are well advanced. They have committees in place, which have clear terms of reference and willingly contribute their expertise in areas such as recruitment and financial management. Governors are fully involved in the preparation of the school's development plans and budgets. They are all very committed to the school.

57. Planning, which has improved since the previous inspection is good. The headteacher, her management team and the governors are working with all the staff to implement detailed and comprehensive school improvement plans, which have clear objectives, actions, timescales, success criteria and costs. Where necessary advice is sought from experts such as the local education authority's information and communications technology inspectors, before major decisions are taken. By focussing in the first instance, on a limited number of high priority actions such as the improvement of writing standards and the use of assessment in English, good progress is being made and good working practices for building future successes are being established. Current targets include an increase in the number of pupils achieving Level 5 in the national tests in science and further improvements in the provision for more able pupils.

58. Financial management is very good. Record keeping is accurate and up to date. The use of grants and special funds for the provision, for example, of special needs and booster classes, is rigorously monitored to ensure that it is used properly. Present and future needs rather than past precedents inform all spending decisions. The school rigorously applies the principles of best value and hence avoids the pitfalls of always going for the cheapest option. This has a beneficial impact on the teaching, because the result is the best possible match between needs, quality and new resources.

59. The headteacher has redefined the roles of the subject managers and an extensive programme of training and support is helping them develop their expertise further so that they can properly monitor and improve all aspects of teaching and learning in their subjects. English and mathematics subject managers observe teaching and the headteacher monitors all teachers regularly. The headteacher and staff are aware that there is still work to be done in science and the foundation subjects, particularly in assessing and moderating standards across a range of subjects; all are fully committed to doing it. The benefits of the development programme are already being felt in English, mathematics and exposing what needs to be done in science and the rest of the curriculum.

60. There are sufficient teachers to match the needs of the curriculum and maintain pupil teacher ratios at the national average for schools like Solent. There are also well trained learning support assistants and other support staff who work alongside teachers in the classroom. They help pupils, including those with special educational needs, to get the maximum benefit from their lessons. There is amongst the staff a growing sense of confidence in its ability to deliver all aspects of the curriculum.

61. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, have job descriptions. Everyone is provided with the training which they need to keep up to date and cope with changes. Performance management systems are in place and are conscientiously being implemented. The recently recruited newly qualified teacher is well supported by a comprehensive induction programme which involves mentoring from an experienced colleague, time to prepare and observe other teachers, and training from the local education authority.

62. The school's administrators are excellent ambassadors. They are competent and efficient, using a range of up to date computer based systems. The lunchtime supervisors are very experienced and take good care of their charges. The carers who work in the 330 Club are properly qualified and committed to doing their best for the pupils they look after. The caretaker takes real pride in his work and is a very valued member of staff. All of these non-teaching staff enjoy their work and make important contributions to the life and work of the whole school community.

63. All statutory requirements are met. The school places great emphasis on equal opportunities in all aspects of its work with both staff and pupils. It ensures that all pupils, whatever their needs and abilities, are provided with the opportunities which they need in order to learn and develop.

64. The school makes best use of its internal space to teach the curriculum successfully. Some classrooms are slightly crowded but there are no surplus classrooms to spare. The interior condition of the school is good. It is clean and has been decorated in bright, cheerful colours. There is a well-stocked dedicated art and drama room. The hall is light and airy and is big enough for physical education lessons and whole school assemblies. It also doubles up as a well equipped spacious dining hall. The external condition of the buildings is satisfactory and there is a rolling programme to maintain the older parts with, for example, modern units replacing worn out window frames.

65. The outside accommodation is good, although there is no playing field on site. It is organised so that best use is made of the available space. It is clean and tidy with plenty of benches and tables for pupils to sit at. There are two playgrounds. The main one is used for games and normal playtime activities. The other, in a courtyard, is set aside as a quiet space for pupils to meet and chat. There is also a landscaped garden and a large environmental area which includes a pond, a growing area and display space for sculptures.

66. Learning resources, including those to support pupils with special needs, are good. The previous inspection criticised the lack of resources for information and communications technology. This has now improved, with at least two computers in every classroom and in the library. The school has plans to improve provision further and ensure that the use of computers becomes a normal part of all lessons. The library is attractive, well stocked with both fiction and reference books, which are properly catalogued and computer-based research facilities.

67. There is very good management and administration of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator is hard working and dedicated to ensuring that all pupils with special educational needs achieve their full potential. Although she has only recently taken over the management of special educational needs, she understands pupils' special requirements very well. The paperwork complies fully with the requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs and is completed conscientiously and meticulously. The co-ordinator has valuable weekly meetings with the special education assistants to discuss pupils' achievements. The governors for special needs are kept fully informed. They are new to the role and have not yet had the opportunity to visit the school to monitor the special needs provision. There are regular reports to the governing body on the progress and effects of the special need provision, and pupils with special educational needs are discussed at every governing body meeting. Learning resources for pupils with special educational needs, which are predominantly for reading and writing, are good and have improved since the last inspection. Finance for special educational needs is budgeted well and set against clearly demarcated priorities. Additional funding is targeted carefully on those for whom it is intended, for example pupils receiving additional support in literacy and those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

68. Improvement overall since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The school has a good capacity to improve even further.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) Improve standards in science, particularly the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5, by:
 - improving teachers' expertise and confidence to teach the subject;
 - reconsidering the time allocation for science;
 - further developing the revisions to the scheme of work.(Paragraphs: 2, 7, 18, 26, 31, 45, 59, 124, 125, 126, 128, 129)

- (2) Focus the roles and responsibilities of subject managers more sharply on assessing and moderating standards in their subjects by:
 - ensuring that they focus more on monitoring and moderating the standards the pupils attain in the subject;
 - devising a suitable assessment and recording system for the subject that is applied consistently;
 - ensuring that outcomes are used to plan future learning.(Paragraphs: 26, 31, 45, 59, 121, 123, 128, 129, 139, 148, 149, 153, 158, 165, 177, 181, 185)

One other minor issue for governors to consider:

Adjusting the afternoon timetable so that lessons in one subject are of a more suitable length.
(Paragraphs: 31, 127, 157)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	29	33	38	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y3-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	-	346
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y3-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	-	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	-	70

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	41	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	40	40
	Girls	40	32	38
	Total	76	72	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (86)	80 (81)	87 (83)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	32	40	37
	Girls	37	33	35
	Total	69	73	72
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (82)	81 (82)	80 (82)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	341
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3-Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	28.8

Education support staff: Y3-Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	139

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	-
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	-

Total number of education support staff	-
Total aggregate hours worked per week	-

Number of pupils per FTE adult	-
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 / 01
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	£
Total income	717060
Total expenditure	742187
Expenditure per pupil	2145
Balance brought forward from previous year	47051
Balance carried forward to next year	21924

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	346
Number of questionnaires returned	129

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	43	2		1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	53	2		2
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	66			
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	54	17	2	2
The teaching is good.	45	53	2		
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	57	10		1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	41			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	36	1		
The school works closely with parents.	33	63	4		1
The school is well led and managed.	53	47		1	
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	50	2		
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	44	4		2

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents say their children like school, that they achieve well and make good progress. They are mainly pleased with the range and quality of the information the school provides. They consider that the school is well led and managed and that the teaching is good. The school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. Parents would like to see the consistency and use of homework improved. The inspection team agrees with the parents and carers positive views, and inspectors agree that the amount and use of homework is inconsistent across the school. The school had already identified this as an issue, as a result of a recent consultative questionnaire; steps are being taken to rectify the situation.

Other issues raised by parents

A number of parents expressed concern about the number of parents who use cars to deliver and collect their child each day, leading to concerns about safety. Inspectors are not allowed to make judgements on aspects concerning road safety, as it is outside their remit.

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

ENGLISH

69. Standards in English are well above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and have improved since the last inspection. At that time, standards were similar to national expectations, with some high standards achieved in speaking and listening and reading but standards in writing were inconsistent. At the end of the key stage, in the 2000 national curriculum tests the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above was well above national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was also well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

70. Pupils' skills in literacy make a good contribution to work in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress; they are very well supported and teaching is well matched to their needs.

71. Standards have risen well in the last three years and the school's particular focus on improving pupils' attainment in writing has been very successful.

72. Above average standards are achieved by pupils in speaking and listening. Pupils are very attentive in lessons - listening well to their teachers and to one another. Their very good listening skills contribute positively to standards achieved in reading and writing because they settle down to tasks promptly and are clear about what they are required to do. In particular, many older pupils are articulate in explaining their ideas and in sharing their opinions and in describing their observations. Pupils respond to questions keenly and answer thoughtfully, often showing a high level of maturity in their responses. They competently use technical terms, associated with different genres of reading and writing, and use correct vocabulary to describe punctuation and grammar features in writing. When working with a partner, pupils' discussion remains focused on the task and responses show effective collaboration of ideas, as for example, when Year 5 pupils discuss, evaluate and report on their project work related to endangered species.

73. Although some good opportunities for speaking and listening arise as part of literacy lessons, in order to extend pupils' experience of speaking for different purposes and audience, teachers should identify in their planning more structured opportunities for making live or recorded presentations, for debate and opportunities to participate in a wide variety of drama, including improvisation, role-play and scripted and unscripted plays.

74. On entry to the school pupils' reading standards are good. The school successfully builds on these and many pupils leave the school with reading skills which are well above national average. Pupils read extensively for interest, pleasure and information. Each half-term pupils read books of different genres as home-reading. This contributes well to extending pupils' knowledge of different types of writing. Pupils write a review of one of the texts and the reviews indicate that pupils are becoming critical and discriminating readers. As part of their literacy work pupils experience a varied range of reading genres and by the end of the key stage they confidently identify and name the key features of different text types. For example, Year 6 pupils studying non-fiction texts which present an argument know that different points of view are presented in a balanced way and they can identify personal opinion. They understand the use of personal and impersonal language and the effects these

have on the reader. Many can read beyond the literal meaning of a text and refer back to the text to give examples to support their views.

75. When reading instructions to make a card, Year 3 pupils can describe the composition and layout of an instructional text and know the difference between this and story or account writing. Pupils can point to features such as bullet-points, numbering, the use of a verb at the beginning of a sentence and illustrations to clarify the text.

76. Older pupils have good strategies for reading and use both phonic and contextual cues to help them read unknown vocabulary. They work out word meanings well from the context and their knowledge of word stems. Younger pupils' phonic skills are less well developed, particularly where the pupils are of average and lower attainment. They have some difficulty in sounding out multi-syllabic words or words which include more complex digraphs. Teachers should extend younger pupils' phonic knowledge to include more complex patterns and irregularities.

77. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress in reading and annual standardised tests provide clear information about pupils' attainment; teachers effectively track pupils' performance in reading. There is, however, no diagnostic assessment of lower-attaining pupils and therefore their specific reading weaknesses, particularly those related to their phonic knowledge, are not identified. Special Educational Needs pupils make very good progress in reading - diagnostic tests are used to assess their learning needs and they are very well supported during lessons by support staff and work is appropriately matched to their needs.

78. Reading records are maintained but these are not always used regularly to promote parental involvement - this is an area for further development. Parents are encouraged to help their child to choose books, to listen to their child read and to talk about books.

79. All pupils have very good skills of information retrieval which they are taught when they join the school. They confidently use the Dewey library classification system and older pupils use the computer to retrieve information. Pupils have very good book knowledge and confidently use indexes and glossaries. Many pupils regularly use their local library as well as the school library. The library is ably managed on a day-to-day basis by a member of the support staff. It is very well organised and attractively presented. Books are accessible and of good quality. The school has satisfactorily increased the number of books to support the teaching of cultural awareness since the previous inspection when it was judged that their were insufficient books in this category.

80. By the time pupils leave the school many attain very good standards in writing. The school identified writing as a priority for improvement and results in national tests last year show that staff have been very successful in their strategies for improvement. In particular, the attainment of more able pupils is much improved. Last year, Solent Junior School was the most improved school in Portsmouth for writing. Standards in writing are stronger in the upper school where pupils orchestrate their literacy skills and knowledge to write for varied purposes and much of their writing is of a high quality. Pupils have a good understanding that different kinds of writing are associated with particular styles and format and choice of vocabulary. They use good descriptive phrases, adventurous vocabulary and more complex sentences and punctuation. For example, they write reflective and sensitive poems about the Blitz. In their written reviews of a modern version of Macbeth, which was staged at the school they fluently express reasons for their personal views.

81. Pupils use the characteristics of different kinds of writing competently and, using models from reading, can arrange their writing to suit the text type. For example, Year 5

pupils read a range of explanatory texts and then complete their own explanatory writing on a chosen theme.

82. Older pupils' handwriting is fluent and joined. More able younger pupils also present their work well using joined handwriting. The handwriting of some younger pupils is less well presented in their exercise books. Most pupils develop very good knowledge of punctuation, grammar and spelling which is applied effectively to their writing. Pupils use their word processing skills confidently as part of the English curriculum.

83. Teaching is good overall. Some very good teaching in English, particularly in Year 6, contributes significantly to the high standards achieved. All teachers use the structure of the literacy hour effectively to engage and motivate pupils. Lessons are well prepared and organised and a varied range of strategies is used to maintain pupils' involvement. There is a good balance between the teaching of punctuation and grammar and the application of these to writing. At times the plenary is not given sufficient time or there are missed opportunities to use pupils' work to reinforce the learning objectives.

84. Throughout the school pupils are taught skills of planning, drafting and improving their writing effectively. Teachers' good questioning skills elicit higher levels of thinking and scaffold pupils' learning so that they make connections between previous learning and the lesson content being introduced. There is very good planning of sequences of lessons and effective links are made between reading and writing. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they give clear explanations and instructions. Spelling and handwriting are taught very well throughout the school but insufficient emphasis is given to the application of handwriting practice to some younger pupils' work in exercise books. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and this encourages pupils to work with effort. Constructive marking clearly identifies how pupils can improve their work.

85. Effective systems are in place to assess pupils' progress and to track progress from year to year. Very clear and precise targets are set for individuals and groups, which help teachers to monitor progress and motivate pupils by providing a clear focus for their work.

86. Pupils enjoy English lessons and respond eagerly to questions, offering their views and ideas confidently. They apply themselves to tasks conscientiously and work with good concentration. The oldest pupils work at a very good pace and are impressively productive during lessons. They have very mature attitudes to their work, responding well to teachers' expectations. They use their literacy skills very well across the curriculum.

87. The subject manager provides strong leadership in English. She monitors teachers' planning, observes their teaching and offers support when requested. She has a clear view of standards and of where further development is needed. The system of target setting for writing which she introduced last September is very helpful in focusing teaching and assessment and provide good evidence of pupils' progress in writing. The subject manager does much to enrich pupils' experience of literacy through organising events such as annual book weeks, book fairs, visits from authors, poets and theatre groups.

MATHEMATICS

88. By the end of Key Stage 2, current attainment in mathematics is above average. Attainment has improved this year as teachers become more confident to use the numeracy strategy framework flexibly and to ensure the level of work set is challenging for the pupils. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. In the National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds in 2000 the proportion of pupils who attained the national target of Level 4 and the proportion attaining the higher Level 5 were close to the national average, although results were below average compared to similar schools. At the time of the last inspection attainment was in line with national expectations. Inspection findings confirm that the attainment of current pupils is now higher. Results over the last three years show an erratic pattern, but the general trend is upwards, which overall mirrors the improving trend nationally. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

89. In all year groups pupils show a good grasp of mathematical language and concepts. Most pupils select the most appropriate mathematical equipment for the given task but limited use is made of information and communication technology. Pupils try different approaches and successfully develop their own strategies for solving problems, checking their answers to see whether they are correct. They make mental estimates of the answers to calculations and check their results. They use and interpret mathematical symbols and diagrams. By the time pupils are eleven they draw simple conclusions of their own and explain their reasoning.

90. Throughout the key stage pupils develop good computational skills. In Year 3, pupils recognise patterns on a hundred number square. They count confidently in tens, hundreds and thousands and recognise that subtraction is the inverse of addition. They understand division as sharing and demonstrate its real life application with Smarties. Year 4 pupils round to the nearest ten and hundred. They add sums of money and give change from five pounds. They multiply by one digit and understand place value to four digits. Pupils in Year 5 halve and double to solve a problem. They order fractions from smallest to largest and add and subtract decimals to two places. Year 6 pupils use percentages, decimals and fractions confidently and recognise the relationship between them. They add and subtract decimals to three places and use them in the context of measurement and money. Most pupils have a clear understanding of fractions and they identify equivalent fractions and reduce a fraction to its lowest term.

91. In shape, space and measures, pupils in Year 3 recognise 2D and 3D shapes, including regular pentagons and hexagons. They understand the terms vertices and symmetrical and write dates in digits and words. Pupils in Year 4 measure length using centimetres and metres and know how to calculate the passing of time using minutes and seconds. They recognise eight points of the compass and are confident with the terms clockwise and anti-clockwise. Pupils in Year 5 measure temperature using positive and negative numbers. They successfully name a range of angles, including acute, obtuse, reflex and right angles and use a protractor to measure them to the nearest degree. In Year 6 pupils use and interpret co-ordinates in the first quadrant and higher attaining pupils confidently produce work involving all four quadrants.

92. Year 3 and 4 pupils collect data in class surveys and produce tally charts and pictograms to identify the frequency that, for example, their favourite food is repeated. Year 5 and 6 pupils collect data on a range of issues and successfully produce a range of graphs to display their findings. They use mode, mean and range to describe sets of data.

93. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan well for lessons and units of work, which are based on the framework provided by the National Numeracy Strategy. They have good subject knowledge and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers

share clear objectives with pupils at the beginning of lessons and are precise about what it is that pupils should learn. Expectations are high and appropriate attention is given to the needs of pupils of different attainment levels by setting throughout the school. Teachers make good use of time. Teachers begin lessons promptly and learning proceeds at a brisk pace. In the best lessons teachers remind pupils how much time they have to complete a task and urge them to get on and work hard. This encourages pupils to make best use of time and helps them to make good progress. Good use is made of mental activities at the beginning of lessons and plenary sessions are used well to reinforce the learning objectives. Tasks set are well-matched to the different needs of ability groups. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress and are well supported by learning support assistants. Limited use is made of information and communication technology to develop pupils' mathematical skills further.

94. Throughout the school teachers mark pupils work regularly but marking in some cases gives pupils too little feedback on their work and how they might improve their performance. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but a tracking system throughout the school has yet to be implemented. Target setting for individuals is used in a way that is helpful to teachers, parents and pupils and encourages appropriate expectations of all pupils.

95. Throughout the school, pupils show good attitudes to learning and many find mathematics exciting. Pupils co-operate very well with each other. They are encouraged to discuss and justify their answers by explaining their strategies. Most pupils listen attentively to their teacher and to each other. They concentrate hard. This promotes successful learning in classes and allows pupils to make good progress. Most pupils know how to set their work out systematically but the presentation in some books is untidy. Pupils use their numeracy skills well across the curriculum.

96. The subject manager is well qualified and has good subject knowledge. He provides sound leadership, some vision and heads a close team, each member of which brings year group experience to shared staff discussions. Monitoring teaching and learning has begun with classroom observations in each year group, focusing on differentiation, as well as work scrutiny and discussions with pupils. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to tighten assessment procedures and track pupils' progress through the school; there has been some improvement since the last inspection. The school's resources for mathematics are good, they are used efficiently and easily accessible. Specific government grants for additional numeracy support are used wisely and small groups of pupils are targeted for additional help. This ensures that all pupils are given every opportunity to reach their own personal best.

SCIENCE

97. The results of the most recent national test for eleven-year-old pupils showed that standards were below average. Pupils' standards were well below those of pupils in similar schools. Results indicate a relative decline in standards compared to the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 is about average but too few pupils attain the higher Level 5. Whilst an increased percentage of pupils gained Level 4 and Level 5 in 2000 (from 83% at Level 4 and 17% at Level 5 in 1999 to 87% at Level 4 and 22% at Level 5 in 2000), the rate of improvement has not been as great as in other schools.

98. Inspection findings indicate that the current Year 6 are achieving standards that are just in line with the national average. This is due to the adoption of a new scheme of work and the beginning of a greater whole school focus on science. However, few pupils achieve beyond this level and this is disappointing when compared to the well above average results achieved in English.

99. Pupils in Year 6 have a satisfactory understanding of how to separate mixtures and use the associated vocabulary appropriately. Work sampling showed that pupils have limited experiences of interpreting and extrapolating data and only limited experiences of extensive scientific investigations. In addition, during the inspection it was evident that some teachers do not always explain specific science vocabulary in sufficient depth, which can lead to misunderstandings and confusion. For instance the word “dissolving” was described as “changing the particles of a solid to a liquid”, which could also apply to “melting”. In addition some higher attaining Year 6 pupils, when discussing fair tests appeared to be aware of more variables than those identified by the teacher.

100. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Science lessons are very long and result in pupils becoming restless and bored on some occasions. However, in Year 4 for example, because of the very skilful teaching, pupils are interested, motivated and completely absorbed for long periods of time. They are challenged to consider what they are trying to discover and how to evaluate and record their scientific investigations, which are consistently practical and meaningful. When presented with a problem they make very good progress by sharing ideas and prompting one another, showing good experience of collaboration. Pupils are expected to think clearly for themselves in these science lessons. This does not continue further up the school though and older pupils are not regularly given sufficient and increasing responsibility for making decisions and planning their own investigations. Work sampling indicated expectations by some teachers that are too low, for instance when pupils are given simple work sheets to colour in when recording sources of light. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not taught to relish the challenge of a scientific investigation. Despite this lack of high expectations, pupils work hard at fairly routine learning experiences.

101. The school has only been using its current scheme of work since September 2000 and this will obviously take some time to become established and familiar to teachers. The science manager is conscientious and hard working and aware of the low standards in science. As yet, there have been no opportunities to monitor pupils’ progress in science learning throughout the school. There is a need to analyse assessment data and other relevant information fairly quickly to identify areas for development. For example, scientific enquiry is not yet completely integral to the scheme of work in some classes.

102. Assessment is not used to plan pupils’ learning and there is currently no recording of pupils’ skills. The school improvement plan identifies science as a priority for improvement next year.

103. Resources are satisfactory. There is sufficient use of information and communication technology to research and record investigations but there are few resources for measuring sensory inputs.

ART AND DESIGN

104. Standards of attainment are above average and have improved since the previous inspection, when standards were reported to be in line with national expectations. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress in art. The school has addressed the previously reported slower progress made by older pupils and pupils in all year groups make good progress. Pupils’ skills now build effectively on previous learning.

105. Rich and varied experiences are planned by teachers for pupils to use a wide range of materials and techniques and to learn about the work of famous artists including those from other cultures.

106. The youngest pupils develop good skills in drawing and printing during a series of lessons leading to polystyrene tile press-printing on paper and fabric. Their initial sketches reflect good observational skills and careful attention to detail. Some are beginning to show skill in shading. From their sketches pupils select one which they draw in preparation for the printing tile. They show skill in enlarging and including appropriate detail. When printing, most handle equipment correctly and follow instructions carefully, applying correct techniques which result in attractive prints.

107. Sketching and drawing is well developed throughout the school; all pupils have sketch books. These skills are used effectively by the teachers to support learning in other subjects. For example, Year 5 pupils draw very good Tudor portraits with careful attention to detail on the costumes. The portraits show good progress in pupils' skill in using tone. Portraits drawn by Year 6 pupils show good progress in observational drawing and skilful use of shading, which adds character and definition to the faces.

108. Year 4 work, inspired by an Alberto Giacometti sculpture, reflects pupils' increasing control and skill in representing body movement using sketching pencils, oil pastels, computer generated art work and 3-D work using pipe cleaners and foil.

109. Displays around the school and photographic evidence reflect a good balance of planned 2-D and 3-D work.

110. Talented and able pupils have been identified to work on specific art projects, such as working with a Chinese artist using textile techniques to design and make banners for a Chinese community centre. Working with other talented and able pupils from a local cluster group of schools, pupils worked with a community artist to design and make a totem-pole as part of a millennium project. During an 'African week' pupils worked with an artist and sculptor and produced some high quality masks. These creative experiences contribute positively to pupils' social and cultural development.

111. Only three art lessons were observed during the inspection but the art portfolio, scrutiny of planning and of displays provide evidence that the teaching overall is good. Pupils receive a broad and well balanced art curriculum and skills and techniques are appropriately taught through teacher modelling, explanation, instruction and discussion. Teachers make effective use of pupils' work to draw attention to good examples of particular skills and techniques which are the focus of the lesson. When planning the curriculum, teachers share their expertise which extends their own subject knowledge and this contributes well to pupils' own understanding. For example, clear explanations are given to pupils on techniques used in 'The Snail' by Matisse, which Year 5 pupils apply successfully to their own work.

112. Teachers assess pupil's work appropriately at the end of each sequence of lessons but the information from assessments is not used to provide management information about overall standards across the school. Good quality art displays around the school celebrate pupils' work and provide a stimulating and attractive working environment.

113. Pupils enjoy art lessons, are mostly sensible and work with concentration. The unsettled behaviour of a few younger pupils adversely affects the ethos and productivity of the class. At the end of each art topic pupils evaluate their own work and this contributes well to their skills of self-reflection and analysis.

114. Art is enthusiastically and effectively led and managed by the subject co-ordinator, who has collected an extensive portfolio of pupils' work and photographs of 3-D work which

represents art coverage in the school. The examples of work do not provide sufficient guidance to support teachers in making judgements about standards in art work.

115. The subject manager runs an art club which further enriches pupils' experience of art. Members of the art club make large clay pots to be fired in the school's recently-purchased kiln. Art club pupils design and make scenery for school productions as well as creating outdoor projects such as the large wall mosaics and seasonal tree mural which greatly enhance the school environment. The art manager maintains an overview of standards by monitoring teachers' planning and sampling pupils' work and has had some opportunity in the past to work alongside teachers.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. Standards of attainment are broadly similar to those achieved nationally. All pupils make satisfactory progress. Teachers take proper account of pupils' special needs and ensure that girls and boys have equal access to the curriculum.

117. The school has in part addressed the weakness identified in the previous inspection, related to insufficiently challenging design and make activities for older pupils. This has been achieved through carefully planned tasks for each year group in which there is a systematic build-up of pupils' increasing skills and knowledge. However, there are still limited opportunities to include electrical components into planned activities.

118. Resources have improved and there is now an adequate supply of good quality materials and tools to carry out design and make activities. The limited range of construction kits however, restricts the range of materials from which artefacts can be constructed.

119. Pupils acquire satisfactory design skills, taking account of purpose and audience. For example, Year 4 pupils learn about the use of levers through the design and construction of a puppet which has pivoting arms and legs. In a subsequent lesson they apply this knowledge to designing and making a puppet head with moving parts, which can be used as a prop to tell a story to younger children. Pupils demonstrate accurate cutting skills and most use a hole-punch correctly. There are some missed opportunities for measuring and problem-solving as the levers were prepared by class teachers. However, pupils are beginning to develop a basic understanding of principles of levers and their application.

120. Year 6 pupils investigate different types of shelters and record this information in preparation for designing and constructing their own shelters. At the end of each assignment pupils complete an evaluation sheet. Samples of these evaluations indicate that pupils ably identify strengths and weaknesses in their artefacts and suggest how they might be improved.

121. Only two design and technology lessons were observed, within the same year group, and so a judgement on teaching cannot be made. Evidence from teachers' planning and from pupils' design and technology work suggest that the national curriculum is covered satisfactorily apart from the inclusion of electrical components. An appropriate range of activities is planned to give pupils experience of using materials and tools. Design and make assignments are carefully structured to include practical tasks through which pupils practise skills and where they investigate products before designing and making their own. Evidence from work samples indicate that pupils are taught to record a sequence of actions for a design and make task in a variety of ways, such as annotated diagrams, mapping diagrams and sets of instructions. Teachers assess pupils' progress at the end of each assignment and these assessments inform annual reports to parents. Assessment does not yet focus

sufficiently on standards or the pupils' level of skills across the school. In the lessons observed, pupils listened attentively and followed instructions well. They share resources fairly and help one another. They enjoy the lessons and are well behaved.

122. Since the last inspection the subject manager has made a good start in ensuring an improved programme in the development of pupils' skills and knowledge, so as to meet a deficiency identified in the previous inspection. Monitoring of standards however is limited and the subject manager does not have a clear view about the quality of teaching throughout the school.

GEOGRAPHY

123. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected for eleven year olds. The previous inspection reported similar standards.

124. Year 3 pupils are knowledgeable about the local area through their study of Drayton. They are developing mapping skills at an appropriate standard and they can use a key confidently. Year 4 pupils undertake a series of village and river studies when visiting the River Itchen and Cheriton, developing their skills and understanding of physical geography and the environment. Year 5 pupils have just started a topic on water, in which they are considering the use of water, exploring the potential for wasting water unnecessarily and understanding the importance of location in providing and distributing water. They are also considering the environmental issues related to this as a part of their study of the topic. The introductory session included a contribution from a member of the governing body who is an employee of Portsmouth Water. This is a good example of the way in which the school uses outside expertise and visitors to enrich the curriculum. Year 6 pupils have a sound knowledge of countries outside the United Kingdom and are able to locate countries and cities on a world map. The residential visit to the Isle of Wight enhances their knowledge of physical geography and the environment. Information and communications technology is used appropriately; good use is made of spreadsheets and pupils use their skills of data collection well to support their geographical understanding.

125. It was not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching as there were few geography lessons available to be observed. Discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their completed work are, though, indicative of their enthusiasm for the subject.

126. Planning for geography has been revised and is much improved since the previous inspection when it was highlighted as unsatisfactory. The subject manager has only just taken on responsibility for the subject but has a sensible view of how the subject should be developed. Geographical content is planned for appropriately but, as yet, the school is insufficiently rigorous in assessing the quality of pupils' work and the level of their geographical skills. There is no effective system in place for moderating teachers' judgements about the level that each pupil has reached. Consequently, the next stage of planning does not always recognise the need to plan some activities with a greater or lesser level of challenge, based on pupils' assessed standards of work.

HISTORY

127. Standards in history are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. These have been maintained since the last inspection. Progress throughout the school is sound and pupils' enquiry skills have improved, which is an improvement on the previous report.

128. Pupils have a sound understanding of chronology within and across the periods they study. By the time pupils are eleven, they know about life in Britain since 1930, the effects of the Second World War on people and more specifically the effects of bombing on Portsmouth. They empathise with evacuees and understand the reasons for rationing. They consider evidence from a variety of sources and identify some of the different ways the past is represented. They design a history questionnaire as a source of information. In Year 5 pupils learn about the Tudors and examine many aspects of the period. They look at the work of Tudor painters and how powerful people are represented and make portraits with themselves as the subject. Year 4 pupils study the Anglo-Saxons and understand the terms “invade” and “settle”. They identify sources of information about the past such as archaeology and are beginning to make simple inferences from evidence found at Sutton Hoo. In Year 3 pupils learn about the Romans, their lives and contribution to Britain. They examine the reasons for the Roman invasion of Britain and empathise with the invaded and the invaders. In the work examined, pupils show developing research skills and a good knowledge base. Some good use is made of information and communication technology in history. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and make good progress, and a scrutiny of work throughout the school indicates that higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately.

129. Overall the teaching of history is good. Teachers plan their work well and the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met with a cycle of topics. Good links are made with other subjects, such as English, when pupils create poems about the Blitz and in art, when they draw portraits of themselves as Tudors. Good use is made of displays and time-lines in classrooms, which provide a stimulus for pupils and sometimes pose questions for them to answer. Differentiation in tasks for all ability groups is satisfactory and largely by the teachers’ expectation of the outcome. Assessment procedures are underdeveloped and need addressing so that more attention is paid to the progressive development of historical skills.

130. Pupils show good attitudes and behaviour in history but the length of the afternoon sessions means that some pupils, particularly in the younger classes, begin to tire and lose interest at the end of the school day. Pupils listen well to each other’s comments and contributions and respond well to the activities set. They take pride in their work and produce attractive folders particularly in Years 5 and 6.

131. Resources are good and consist of a box of artefacts and books for each study unit. These are tidily stored and augmented by the use of the library and museum support services. Very good use is made of local historical sites such as Fishbourne Roman Villa and Southsea Castle, and there are close links with Portsmouth Museum. The co-ordinator is well qualified, committed and enthusiastic. He keeps up to date with new developments in the subject by his participation in a local history group, considers staff professional needs to develop the curriculum and has a good overview of the subject. Monitoring teaching and learning in history is still at an early stage and consists of examining teachers’ planning, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils. Monitoring of teaching through lesson observations is not yet in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

132. At the time of the previous inspection, there was too little work seen to make a secure judgement about standards in information and communication technology (ICT). There have been considerable improvements in the provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection. For instance, the school now has many more computers and all pupils have access to the Internet. The curriculum is now taught more effectively and

pupils have regular opportunities to practise their skills in many subjects. The co-ordinator has raised the profile of the subject within the school, because of his own expertise and enthusiasm. However, some of the staff are not confident when using information and communication technology, and there is a recognition that some staff need additional training. The school is very sensibly building on the knowledge and skills of certain staff to spearhead this training. An information and communication team has been established, which is determined to raise standards and confidence amongst staff and pupils.

133. On the evidence of the few taught lessons seen, Year 6 pupils are just achieving average standards, and making satisfactory progress in acquiring computer skills; the standards they are likely to achieve in the near future should rise.

134. Pupils now have regular access to computers in all classes. Pupils are learning to log on and off, to access the program they want, to save and retrieve their work, and to print out a hard copy of what they have produced. They create pictures and learn to use tool bars, to manipulate the various tools through the mouse, and to change colours, style and tints. They learn to alter the font size and type. Pupils are being introduced to the Internet and are learning about search engines and web sites as sources of information. Good use of the Internet for research was seen during a Year 4 science lesson when pupils discovered new facts about Newton as part of their work on friction. Information technology is used satisfactorily to support learning in other subjects.

135. At the age of eleven, many pupils work with confidence and independence. Higher attaining pupils achieve high standards in combining text and pictures when word processing. Many pupils have good experience of using information and communication technology to enter, sort and classify data. For instance, higher attaining Year 5 pupils produced a pie chart depicting various food categories. Pupils have an adequate perception of how information and communication technology devices in the home and the wider world are used.

136. The school is currently developing the teaching of control technology. Opportunities to use information and communication technology to record external events, such as changes in temperature using sensors have until recently been taught infrequently; the revised scheme of work provides further planned and appropriately resourced opportunities for these experiences during the summer term.

137. Teaching and learning in the few lessons seen was good overall, especially in Year 4. However, evidence and discussions with teachers indicate that the quality of teaching is inconsistent. A new emphasis on the direct teaching of skills and the ability to allow immediate "hands on" experience, coupled with very good use of lunchtime and breaks to practise skills, contributes significantly to pupils' learning and to their attitudes to the subject. Almost all pupils strive to achieve the desired outcome and interact well with each other and with staff. There is productive co-operation and behaviour is mature and responsible, even when pupils' work unsupervised at lunchtimes. Pupils clearly enjoy working with computers and the school is harnessing these positive attitudes extremely well.

138. The subject manager is enthusiastic, and is committed to raising standards and confidence in the subject. The scheme of work and assessment are recent developments and the benefits have yet to be felt. However, given the amount of progress made in a fairly short space of time there is every indication that standards will rise quickly as both staff and pupils gain confidence with new equipment and work their way through the planned scheme. Monitoring of teaching and learning is crucial to driving developments in information and communication technology and to raising standards. The school is considering whether to have a computer suite, or to focus on classroom use and this is wise, given the constraints of the accommodation.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

139. The school has maintained its provision for French and pupils make good progress, as indicated at the time of the previous inspection. It was not possible to make a judgement on standards at the end of the key stage as the Year 6 pupils receive their French lessons during the summer term. The current subject manager provides excellent leadership, as she is enthusiastic, dedicated and committed to raising standards of attainment. Her tremendous hard work in continually monitoring and evaluating French both formally and informally is paying huge dividends. She supports colleagues very well and leads by example with her own very good teaching.

140. All these factors mean that pupils receive an exciting, stimulating and challenging French curriculum guaranteed to raise standards and accelerate learning.

141. French is very effectively taught to all pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 for short periods on most days of the week. Pupils' competence and confidence in speaking French is very good and meets the aims and objectives identified in the scheme of work. Pupils can ask and answer questions, in French, about a range of topics such as their age, interests and families. Pupils in Year 3 learn to name colours and to count in French. Year 5 pupils have many opportunities to practise their conversational French when they write letters and enjoy exchange visits with pupils in Caen.

142. Teaching and learning in French is very good. Most teachers speak French fluently and deliver lively and exciting lessons. Pupils are interested and very keen to learn another language. They work hard to achieve the correct pronunciation and listen very carefully to their teachers and fellow pupils. Pupils are expected to use French at all times during the lessons, and the teachers move very skilfully from French to English and back again.

143. French and German are taught to Year 6 pupils after they have completed the national tests in the summer term.

144. The subject manager has many plans to develop and improve French even more and is currently looking at the possibility of introducing more written French into the curriculum.

MUSIC

145. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in music are above average and this is an improvement since the last inspection, when they were judged to be in line with national expectations. The school has appropriately focused on improving pupils' composing and appraising skills, which were highlighted as weaker in the previous report and this aspect of music is now good.

146. Pupils enjoy music and are developing an understanding of musical terms such as phrase and rhythm. They create their own music individually, in small groups and as a whole class. In Year 5 pupils use the term tutti when performing a musical passage in unison. They improvise repeated patterns maintaining a steady beat and discuss how they might improve their performance. Year 6 pupils learn the characteristics of the blues. They listen attentively to a recording of a blues song and can describe its effect on them. They maintain the blues rhythm pattern in a group and show an awareness of the need to achieve an overall effect. Whole school singing lessons are enjoyable and pupils sing enthusiastically and tunefully. The school choir is well supported and sings on many different occasions. The tuition

provided by visiting specialist teachers is very good and there are opportunities for pupils to learn a wide range of musical instruments, including guitar, keyboard, woodwind and recorder and more than a third of the school take up these extra curricular opportunities. An equal number of boys and girls learn a musical instrument. The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped in music at present.

147. Pupils are given many enriching experiences in music and groups of pupils regularly perform in public. They take part, for example, in productions of Alice and Snow White, sing carols at Christmas in the local community and performed the "Portsmouth Song" for the Millennium Project, with lyrics written by the pupils and set to music by a visiting teacher. Pupils take part in African drumming, and Brazilian street percussion workshops, Asian music linked to the Thengapali Project and the music of the Orissa region of India. These contribute very positively to pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of a range of cultures and traditions. All pupils are given opportunities to listen to live music with visiting groups performing in school, including some of the strings section of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and a woodwind ensemble.

148. The teaching of music is good. Planning is good and the pace of lessons brisk. Teachers are supported by a very effective and knowledgeable visiting specialist teacher, who teaches composition to all year groups on a termly rota basis. This makes a significant contribution to the good progress which pupils make and the good standards achieved. It has also helped teachers develop personal skills to teach the subject more effectively and this has successfully addressed the issues highlighted in the last inspection. Lessons are planned well with clear objectives and teachers use a range of interesting activities for pupils to learn about different elements that help produce the sounds they do. Resources for music are very good. They are well maintained and neatly stored in a small music room. There is a wide range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, keyboards and guitars as well as a good selection of instruments from other cultures such as a djembe, agogo bells and a steel drum. These provide opportunities for pupils to experience music from a range of cultures and contribute well to their cultural development. Discussions with pupils reveal that instruments are used regularly in class lessons.

149. Pupils enjoy their music lessons, showing enthusiasm and a high degree of motivation. They listen courteously to the efforts of others and suggest improvements to their work and that of others in their group. They perform confidently, trying to achieve their own personal best.

150. The subject manager is well qualified, has much enthusiasm and good subject knowledge. He has good vision and provides many exciting opportunities to enrich the pupils' musical experiences. He has successfully tackled the issue of standards in composing and appraising and improving the subject knowledge and confidence of class teachers, which were highlighted in the previous inspection, but he has yet to track pupils' progress through the school with effective and manageable assessment procedures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

151. By the end of Key Stage 2 many of the pupils attain standards above those expected for pupils aged eleven. This is an improvement on the standards reported in the previous inspection. There are particular strengths in games and in dance.

152. In dance, Year 3 pupils frequently make good progress in developing and remembering the patterns of steps and sequences when learning traditional country dances. They are able to do slip steps, 'cast on' and 'cast off' singly and in pairs with considerable

confidence and they are developing a good sense of rhythm. Year 4 pupils can remember and put together the whole of a dance sequence, remembering steps and changes in the pattern and movements. They work with a very good level of concentration. Year 6 pupils make good progress with their understanding and skills during games lessons. When learning rugby skills, both boys and girls work hard at improving their dodging and footwork skills. They also remember to handle and pass the ball correctly, with many pupils achieving a good level of skill. They are learning about the rules of the game and demonstrate considerable maturity in their understanding of how a team must co-operate well to compete and be successful. Nearly all pupils are able to swim by the time they are aged eleven.

153. As a direct result of the teaching, much of which is very good, pupils develop good concentration and understand the need to keep healthy and work their bodies hard. They have learned the correct vocabulary associated with physical education and use it confidently.

154. The quality of teaching is good overall; nearly a half of the teaching is very good. Most teachers have good subject expertise and plan lessons with a clear structure. Although the physical education curriculum is sensibly planned, and pupils are able to evaluate the quality of their work through the judicious use of video, there are few effective systems for ensuring that all pupils' work is assessed and only rarely do teachers make written assessments of pupils' skills levels. Consequently, the sequential development of skills is not always recognised and planned for sufficiently in each age group.

155. The subject manager has good subject knowledge though only rarely observes and monitors lessons directly. Pupils are offered the full range of the physical education curriculum and the lack of playing field facilities has little noticeable impact on their level of skills. Extra-curricular sporting activities make a significant and very positive contribution to standards in physical education. The school's residential visits, for example the visit to the Calshot activity centre, are especially successful in enriching and extending the pupils' physical skills. The school is involved in sporting events with other local schools. Such visits also make a major contribution to the pupils' social skills and their personal development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

156. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards in religious education are in line with those of the locally agreed syllabus and have been maintained since the previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in learning about the major religions. Parents are informed of their right to withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship.

157. By the age of eleven, pupils recall the main symbols of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In Year 6 pupils discuss communities and belonging. They learn the differences between 'desire' and 'need' and examine the issues of poverty, pollution, recycling and peace in making the world a better place for all. They analyse the different versions of the Christmas story in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. They understand the origins, usage and purpose of the chalice and patten in Christian worship. In Year 5, pupils explore the different aspects of a supreme being and the attributes of Allah. They know the story of Rama and Sita and its significance to Hindus. Year 4 pupils visit an Anglican church, to learn about Church furniture and why stained glass windows are found in churches. They study Judaism and understand the importance of rituals inside the synagogue and why the Shabbat meal is special to Jews. They explore the Ten Commandments and their relevance to modern life. Year 3 pupils know some of the Bible stories and that they are special to Christians. They explore the Christmas story from different perspectives, such as the reactions of the shepherds and inn-keeper.

Pupils throughout the school show good insight and thoughtfully analyse feelings and beliefs, which has a significant impact on their spiritual development.

158. Teaching is sound overall and this has been maintained since the previous inspection. Planning is good, well structured, based on the locally agreed syllabus and clearly identifies learning objectives. Teachers often combine religious education with moral, social and personal education activities and pupils are encouraged to consider how decisions are made about how we live and act. Tasks are well focused and challenging questioning leads pupils to deeper insights, such as in Year 6, when exploring the significance of the Last Supper. Attractive and stimulating displays on the major religions are found in many classrooms. Teachers do not consistently assess pupils' attainment formally, but relevant learning targets in lessons meet the needs of all ability groups.

159. Resources are well used and appropriate. They are stored mainly in year groups with some stored centrally, and include artefacts from the major religions. There is a good selection of books on the major religions as well as on issues such as bullying and racism. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Local places of worship, such as Portsmouth Synagogue and an Anglican church are visited and enhances the quality of the curriculum. An assembly takes place each day and the local vicar assists with worship regularly. Collective worship meets statutory requirements.

160. Pupils behave well in lessons and collective worship and respond with interest in discussions. By Year 6 many pupils talk maturely on several aspects of religious life and beliefs. They mostly present their work neatly.

161. At the present time the subject manager is the caretaker of the subject until a new manager is appointed. She has not monitored the teaching and learning herself but the previous co-ordinator had begun a programme of lesson observations in one class per year group. The subject contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and personal development by giving opportunities for pupils to learn about their own culture and the diversity in the wider community. It has a solid base on which new leadership can successfully build.