

INSPECTION REPORT

MINEHEAD COMMUNITY FIRST SCHOOL

Minehead

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123656

Headteacher: Mr C Riley

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Clarke
25509

Dates of inspection: 22-25 May 2000

Inspection number: 189952

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Townsend Road Minehead Somerset
Postcode	TA24 5RG
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Jackson
Date of previous inspection:	14/10/1996

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Judith Clarke	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
		Design and technology	What should the school do to improve further?
		Physical education	How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements.
			How well is the school led and managed?
Rona Orme	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?
Anne Dancer	Team inspector	The under fives	
		Religious education	How well are the pupils taught?
		Information technology	
Mary Vallis	Team inspector	English	The work of the additional educational needs classes.
		Art	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
		English as an additional language.	
Terence Payne	Team inspector	Science	
		History	
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		Music	

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Minehead First School caters for primary school children from the ages of four to nine. It also has two special educational needs resource bases with 15 pupils on roll; these pupils have complex learning difficulties. The school is situated in the centre of the seaside town of Minehead. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. English is not the first language for two of the children. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils who attend the school has fallen slightly to 328 pupils. The school is bigger than most primary schools. Almost all of the children who join the reception class have had some previous education, often in the playgroup on the school site. The attainment of five-year-olds on entry to the school is average. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 children aged four in the reception classes and 63 five-year-olds who attend full-time. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average and the proportion of pupils who have statements of their special educational need is well above the national average figure. This figure is high because the school has two classes with pupils with complex learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science are high at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the age of nine when the pupils leave this school. The pupils achieve well throughout each year. The pupils are encouraged to work hard and have very good attitudes to their work. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. The excellent relationships pupils have with their teachers and the good teaching they receive have a significant effect on how well they learn. The leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher and the governing body have a shared commitment to the school and aspire to make it even better. The headteacher is helped by an enthusiastic team of teaching and support staff who all work very well together. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are very high.
- Pupils are keen to learn and enthusiastic about all the school has to offer. The school helps the pupils prepare very well for life.
- The school is very well led.
- Teaching is consistently good and the quality of support staff is high.
- The school provides a full and varied curriculum considerably broadened by visits to the locality and visitors to the school.
- Parents make a significant contribution to the life of the school.

What could be improved

- Provision for the pupils with special educational needs in the resource bases is unsatisfactory.
- Information technology is insufficiently used in other subjects of the curriculum and there are no assessment procedures.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- Individual reports do not provide parents with details of achievements and progress made and there are insufficient opportunities for parents to formally discuss their children's work.
- Insufficient time is allocated for the children under the age of five to learn through outdoor play and their progress in some areas is not recorded.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection in October 1996. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have risen considerably. Standards in information technology, which were then unsatisfactory, have improved and are now at the nationally expected levels. Standards in a number of the non-core subjects have also risen. The school has developed a policy for marking. There has been a good focus on learning objectives and pupils' progress. The good quality schemes of work have been implemented and higher-attaining pupils are

generally sufficiently stretched. The senior management team now has an active monitoring role and the subject co-ordinators a clear role in the management and monitoring of their subjects. The school has yet to develop success criteria to measure their effect upon attainment and progress, although it has developed clear strategies for identifying pupils' needs and targeting extra support. The school has a very good capacity for further improvements.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Reading	E	B	A	A	well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E
Writing	E	D	A	A	
Mathematics	E	A	A*	A*	

The school's results for seven-year-olds in the 1999 end of key stage tests showed that the pupils scored well above average for reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are very high and their results place them in the highest five per cent nationally. Pupils' attainments have been improving steadily in recent years to the very high standards achieved in 1999. Standards in science were also very high in 1999. Boys and girls achieve equally well. By the age of nine when the pupils leave this school, standards are judged to remain high. The children who are currently in the reception class have levels of attainment that are above the levels expected. They make good progress in the reception class. The majority of children have had some pre-school experience in the playgroup. The school has high expectations of the pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are keen to take part in all the school has to offer. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are very interested in their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in class and around the school. Pupils consider how their behaviour affects other people and they are caring and thoughtful in their attitudes to others.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They have many opportunities to develop their independence. Pupils' relationships with adults and each other are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory. Lessons start on time.

Pupils show respect for teachers, support staff, mealtime assistants and for each other. They are courteous and talk to visitors with confidence. It is a pleasure to visit the school. The school notes that there have been higher levels of sickness than usual, and pupils have taken term-time holidays.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Overall, teaching is good for the children who are under five and the pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. In 71 per cent of lessons teaching was at least good. In 22 per cent of all lessons it was very good or excellent. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed during the inspection. In this lesson, which had good features but was overall judged unsatisfactory, the teacher had had insufficient training to deal with a pupil who had difficulty behaving appropriately. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good throughout the school. Lessons are clearly focused on the learning objectives and work is well matched to the needs of the pupils, ensuring that the pupils learn well. The teachers have been effective in assimilating the new literacy and numeracy strategies into the existing good quality schemes of work. Learning is well supported throughout the school by good teaching. The strength in teaching is present in almost all subject areas and ensures that the pupils learn well, make consistently good progress and achieve high standards. The pace of learning is good. The pupils with special educational needs are given good support in the classroom. The pupils for whom English is their second language are given good support and helped to achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and considerably enriched. The curriculum for the children under five lacks regular opportunities for the children to experience outdoor play.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for the pupils in mainstream school is good. These pupils are well supported in their learning and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with additional educational needs in the resource bases.	Provision for the pupils in the resource bases is at present unsatisfactory as the pupils do not have full access to all subjects of the National Curriculum. Parents are pleased with the social progress pupils make. The whole-school commitment to social inclusion and regular opportunities for pupils to integrate into mainstream lessons and activities, including residential visits, benefits pupils throughout the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good for the small number of pupils involved. The pupils make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for the pupils' personal development is very good and permeates all aspects of school life, preparing the pupils very well for their transition to the next school. The pupils are well prepared for life in a multi-cultural world.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes careful provision for the welfare and guidance of its pupils. They are prepared very well for the next phase of education.

The school has effective links with parents. Parents make a very good contribution to pupils' learning and the work of the school. Information provided for parents about pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. The pupils' annual reports do not indicate what the pupils have learnt and the progress they have made in all subject areas. The pupils with special educational needs have access to a wide range of activities which helps to prepare them for the wider world. For example, the pupils have opportunities

to visit the local supermarkets, go horse riding and cook. The staff has had insufficient training to deal with pupils who have a wide range of complex and significant needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the school is good overall. The headteacher provides strong, supportive and caring leadership and with the effective support of the senior management team gives a clear direction for the development and improvement of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors give good support to the staff and pupils of the school. They have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They make a good contribution to the effective running of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school employs effective measures to raise the achievements of its pupils. The staff work hard to improve their performance and they take on board new initiatives and strategies well.
The strategic use of resources	The school applies the principles of best value for money in many aspects of its work. Financial administration is efficient and effective.

The headteacher and the governing body have a strong commitment to the school, maintaining the high standards and working hard to improve the school still further. The leadership of the resource units in the school is at present unsatisfactory as there is no one sufficiently qualified to take on this position and provide an overview of its work. There is an appropriate number of teachers on the staff to teach the National Curriculum. Very good numbers of highly committed support staff aid the work of the school. Resources are good. The accommodation is very well maintained and provides effectively for the rich curriculum offered to the pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress the children make in the school. • Children like school. • Teaching in the school is good. • Behaviour is good. • The school is approachable. • The school expects the children to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of parents feel they do not receive sufficient information about the progress their child is making. • A number of parents consider the school does not work closely with them. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection supports the positive views the parents expressed and feels that the parents should receive more information about the achievements and progress their children are making. The school does make good use of the parents' contributions to the pupils' education. The range of activities outside lessons is very good with a large number of pupils taking the opportunity to attend.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class, at the age of four, is broadly average. It is above average at the age of five. The standards achieved at the age of five show that most children make good progress in all areas of learning and very good progress in mental arithmetic and writing. By the age of five, children listen carefully and with interest and speak confidently using a good vocabulary for their age. They know most of the letters of the alphabet by shape and sound, are interested in books, and a few higher-attaining children read stories fluently and with understanding. They write their names without help and are confident in writing on their own, without needing to copy directly from the teacher's writing. Children count to at least twenty and understand and use mathematical language such as "tall", "taller" "more than" and "less than". Most children mentally work out several combinations of addition and subtraction facts to make a given number up to ten. Most children recognise simple two-dimensional shapes and many know three-dimensional shapes, such as cones and spheres. Children recognise coins, and those who are higher attaining give change accurately with toy money.
2. In 1999 at the end of Key Stage 1, results in the National Curriculum tests in reading showed that the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level was above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was well above the national average with 2 out of 5 pupils achieving this higher level. In writing, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level was well above the national average with the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 being above the national average. In mathematics 100 per cent of the pupils achieved the expected level, and this was very high in comparison with the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was very high in comparison with the national average with half of the pupils achieving this level. In science, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level was above the national average with the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 being well above the national average. There was no significant difference between the achievements of the boys and the girls. The trend has been of steady and significant improvement since 1997, when standards were below the national average. In comparison with schools in a similar context the school scores above average in science, well above average in reading and writing and very high in mathematics.
3. The results of national tests and teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the pupils achieve very well in mathematics. The number of pupils that achieve at the higher level 3 is also significant in reading and mathematics. Comparatively the results in writing are not quite so good although still commendable. The school has identified this as an area for improvement and has set up initiatives to strengthen this area of its work. Reading remains a priority in the school and the school has worked hard to ensure it is a continuing strength. In mathematics, the school is beginning to see the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy, especially in the mental strategies of the pupils, and is conscious of maintaining its high standards. The school is careful when analysing new initiatives and pupils' test results and sets challenging targets. In seeking to maintain its strength in reading whilst developing writing skills further, the school shows that its targets are correctly focused. Inspection findings confirm the high standards in the core subjects achieved by the pupils.
4. Inspection indicates that standards at the age of nine when the pupils leave this school remain high in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The teachers in Year 3 and 4 classes work hard to maintain and improve the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 1. The additional focus of the recent government initiatives and the carefully structured work the teachers plan for the pupils ensure that they maintain standards and make further progress in these vital years.

5. In English, by the age of seven pupils listen carefully to each other and to the teacher. They respond politely and their wide vocabulary enables them to hold conversations where they express their views well. Pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy using interesting words. They give reasons for their answers and talk about their tasks and learning. Pupils make quick progress during their reception year in reading so that by Year 1 many pupils are able to read fluently. Pupils in Year 2 select from the contents, glossary or index of books as they need. This progress is maintained during Key Stage 2, with pupils scanning through the text to find relevant information. Pupils write well and employ a wide range of interesting and expressive words. Handwriting practice helps the pupils to develop a cursive script. Pupils check their spelling by using a dictionary. They use punctuation consistently in their writing and write for a range of purposes.
6. In mathematics, by the age of seven pupils build well on their early mathematical skills, counting to 20 and ordering numbers to 100. They count in two's, three's and ten's. Pupils know the names of regular shapes such as triangle, square and circle and name a range of solid shapes. Pupils work with coins to solve money problems. By the age of nine, pupils have a good understanding of place value and use all four number operations to solve problems. They draw the lines of symmetry in regular and irregular shapes. Pupils convert fractions to percentages and decimals. Pupils measure different angles and identify right angles. Pupils record information on tally charts, using the information to draw graphs. The pupils use mathematics in a variety of situations to solve problems.
7. In science, by the age of seven pupils study animals' habitats and investigate the conditions necessary to promote growth in plants. Pupils are beginning to understand that their investigations must be conducted in a fair manner. By the age of nine, pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of a range of habitats. They understand the conditions needed for making their investigations fair and carry out investigative work. They record their findings appropriately. They talk about the differences between living and non-living objects.
8. Pupils' attainment in information technology, by the ages of seven and nine, is in line with the levels expected nationally. The school has received its National Grid for Learning funding and that, together with generous donations from the Parent Teacher Association, ensures that the levels of resources in the computer suite are good and support the pupils' learning well.
9. Pupils by the ages of seven and nine reach standards in art, geography, history and music that are above those normally expected. Standards in design and technology, physical education and religious education are in line with the levels expected nationally.
10. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in line with their peers and in relation to targets on their individual education plans. This progress is brought about by a number of factors. These include early identification of needs, clear target setting with regular reviews of progress and effective teaching and support both within the classroom and in small withdrawal groups. The small number of pupils who have English as an additional language are also making good progress, sometimes with the advice and input of a specialist external teacher.
11. The pupils achieve well in their lessons. They are consistently challenged by good teaching and an exciting and relevant curriculum. Lessons are clearly focused and the pupils are clear about what it is they are learning. Teachers work hard to engage the pupils' interests and pupils are very well motivated. The teachers ensure that the tasks in lessons are matched to the needs of the pupils, enabling them to succeed.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They are enthusiastic to take part in all that the school offers. Parents report that their children like school. Pupils' enthusiasm for their studies means that they work hard and concentrate very well. This makes a significant contribution to the high standards they achieve.
13. Children in the reception class settle quickly into the school's routines and form excellent

relationships with each other and with all the adults who help them in the classroom. They behave very well and are keen to learn, concentrate and make good efforts to complete the tasks they are set. Children work on their own while the teacher is busy with another group, and organise themselves effectively when they are sharing the sand tray, so that the equipment and space is shared fairly. They have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong.

14. Attitudes to pupils with special educational needs are very good. Pupils in mainstream are very well integrated into classes and fully accepted by their peers. Pupils from the special classes who join lessons and activities are met with kindness, inclusion and understanding.
15. Pupils' behaviour is very good, even when they are not directly supervised. Parents confirm that behaviour is good in the school. There were no exclusions in the last reporting year. Parents and pupils are confident that there is little bullying or oppressive behaviour in the school.
16. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Pupils show respect for teachers, support staff, mealtime assistants and for each other. They are very courteous and talk to visitors with confidence. It is a pleasure to visit the school. Pupils' personal development is very good. They collaborate effectively in a range of groupings and listen carefully to each other. Pupils accommodate other children from the resource base very well. Year 4 pupils act sensitively as "yellow hat" playground monitors; they encourage younger pupils to play games and are aware of those who need company. Each week the "yellow hats" have a meeting with a member of staff. Part of the function of the meeting is to teach the pupils new playground games to share. Pupils reflect sensitively on the impact of their behaviour and on the importance of other people's views and attitudes. A boy in a reception class decided to choose another child, who had been away for some time, to be the day's "special person" because it would make the child happy.
17. Attendance, overall, is unsatisfactory. In the current year, for Key Stages 1 and 2, attendance is 90.1 per cent, which is low. The school indicates that there have been higher levels of sickness than usual, and a number of pupils taken on term-time holidays. Punctuality continues to be good. Registration procedures meet statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and shows a considerable improvement since the last inspection. In 20 per cent of lessons seen, teaching was very good and in one lesson, a school visit, teaching was graded excellent. In 98 per cent of lessons teaching was at least satisfactory. Of these 71 per cent were at least good. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in only one lesson. Good and very good teaching and learning was observed for the under fives, in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2; 80 per cent of teaching for the under fives was at least good. In Key Stage 1, 68 per cent of lessons were at least good, while in Key Stage 2, 79 per cent of teaching was at least good. Teaching in the special educational needs classes was satisfactory overall, although it was unsatisfactory in one lesson, where the behaviour management strategy of the teacher was inconsistent. The strength in teaching is present in almost all subject areas, and enables pupils to make consistently good progress throughout the school and achieve high standards. Teaching in information technology and religious education is overall satisfactory and in these subjects pupils make satisfactory progress.
19. The proportion of teaching that is very good or excellent has increased by 21 per cent since the last inspection, and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching decreased from ten per cent to two per cent. This is a very good improvement and has been mainly due to the effective development of the curriculum, improved lesson planning with clear learning objectives and the higher expectations of teachers. In almost all subjects, there is now a good level of challenge for pupils of all capabilities and sufficient practical experiences to support learning well.
20. The very good and excellent teaching is characterised by lessons that are thoroughly planned and focused and conducted at a brisk pace so that all of the time available is spent moving pupils on in their learning quickly. Questioning challenges pupils' thinking and develops their

understanding, for example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson on measuring, where the pupils learned to distinguish between an approximate estimation and accuracy in measuring. All pupils' answers are valued, giving them the confidence to "have a go" and any incorrect answers are used as the basis for teaching points and further learning. Excellent teaching was observed on a visit to the harbour by pupils in Year 3. The preparation and planning were first class and the very good subject knowledge of the teacher and the interest of the pupils enabled them to concentrate and learn very well outdoors. This was despite the distractions of a breezy day and the presence of members of the community, who were also interested in the lesson! A very good feature of all lessons is the consistent and effective behaviour management of all teachers. In almost all lessons at Key Stages 1 and 2, the lesson planning is of high quality and supports the learning of all pupils effectively.

21. In almost all lessons, the teaching of the basic skills in each subject is very good. Mental arithmetic is taught very well throughout the school and in many classes this is an exciting daily event. Teachers have high expectations and get the pupils to think quickly to develop their skills of mental problem solving. The excellent relationships enable pupils to enjoy the friendly rivalry of being first to work out the correct answer, while also knowing that everyone's best efforts are appreciated and valued. In the good teaching of mental arithmetic in the reception classes, very high standards are achieved by almost all children as they play games and follow familiar routines. These are extended daily to build confidence in explaining their thinking and excitement in discovering different ways of addition and subtraction to achieve a given number. In good teaching in art, activities are challenging, developing the pupils' understanding of techniques and introducing them to the styles of famous artists while allowing them plenty of scope to develop their own creativity. In good practical science lessons, the teachers give clear instructions and helpful demonstrations, as seen, for example, in a Year 4 lesson on food chains, following the maxim "learn, look, think."
22. In other satisfactory teaching, lessons are well prepared and organised, although occasionally the planning is not followed closely, too much time is spent on one aspect of the lesson and it becomes unbalanced. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, too little time was left after a long whole-class session for all pupils to complete their work or review their progress during the lesson. In information technology lessons, where the emphasis is on all children learning a specific skill, planning does not take account of higher-attaining pupils who have learned quickly in previous lessons or those who have already acquired the skill because they have computers at home. The lack of a skills checklist for pupils is keenly felt when planning for information technology lessons and a few pupils are restricted in their learning because of this. Many opportunities are missed by teachers to develop information technology skills in other curriculum areas, using computers in the classroom. For example, no lesson plans were seen that included the computers to support learning in literacy or to develop keyboard skills so that pupils become sufficiently competent to type at a reasonable speed.
23. Literacy and numeracy are well taught in English and mathematics lessons and support learning in other curriculum areas. For example, pupils record their findings in science experiments by accurate measurements and clear report writing.
24. While the overall teaching of the under fives is good, with examples of very good teaching, there are shortcomings in the provision made for their learning. This is because, although planning is detailed and covers all of the required areas of learning, giving a broad curriculum, it is not always balanced or appropriate. There is no recording of attainment and progress in personal and social development, physical and creative development and most aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. This means that learning objectives for groups of children of different capabilities are not always clear and that some aspects of the curriculum, such as physical development, are not fully addressed. Other aspects, such as role-play, are rarely the main focus of learning in a session and are not monitored as closely as they should be. There are no regular planned learning opportunities for outdoor play. There is insufficient teaching to develop skills of climbing, swinging and balancing, building and playing creatively with large blocks, or the social skills learned through negotiating turns and through talk. Formal gymnastics lessons, although well taught, are not appropriate for children who have not had opportunities for developing skills through play.

25. Teachers make good use of all the resources available to them to enhance learning. Learning assistants have very good expertise and are included well in lesson planning so that they can give very good support to individuals and groups of pupils. They have excellent relationships with the pupils, work closely with the teachers and enable pupils to progress well in their learning. Very good use is made of materials to support learning, such as videos and artefacts in religious education, enabling pupils to make connections in their understanding. Visits are used creatively to extend learning in school; for example, the “christening” of a doll in a local church. Visitors to school give pupils the opportunity to prepare questions and interact with other adults, as in Year 4 learning about Pentecost and in Year 2 where pupils were learning about the school building in history.
26. Teachers assess learning in lessons effectively and examples were noted during the inspection of lesson planning having been changed to reflect progress in the previous lesson. Most work is marked and follows the school’s marking code of not writing critical comments that could destroy a pupil’s self-confidence. However, there were a few examples of teachers having indicated that the pupil had not achieved the learning objective for the lesson, and teachers were not using the phrase “check with me” as set out in the marking code. The result is that it is not clear what pupils are to do to improve their work. There is also an over-use in a few Year 4 pupils’ exercise books of the “excellent” stamp for work that is clearly not the best standard that that pupil is capable of. The use of homework is satisfactory, with regular reading to extend learning in school, tables for older pupils to support work in mathematics and occasional research projects. However, teachers do not plan sufficient occasions for older pupils to research independently or in groups in the library or computer room.
27. The teaching of children with special educational needs in mainstream school is good and they make good progress. Learning objectives are clear and pupils are well supported, both in class and in small groups withdrawn from lessons for a special purpose, such as using the computers for listening to “talking books” and developing reading skills. Teachers are aware of pupils’ special needs and target specific questions to develop reading skills and to build confidence through success. The two special needs teachers and the learning support assistants have excellent relationships with pupils and their help and encouragement is valued by the pupils and their parents. The small number of children in the early stages of acquiring English are well taught, both in lessons and by a visiting specialist, and make good progress in their learning. Pupils help by making sure that instructions are clearly understood and giving friendly assistance where it is needed. The quality of instrumental teaching by visiting music teachers is good.
28. Pupils with severe learning difficulties are taught effectively within a small unit class and sometimes in small withdrawal groups. Work is usually well matched to their attainment and closely related to the work of other pupils. Clear explanations and carefully graded questioning help pupils of all abilities to understand instructions and contribute orally. Skilful support staff work in close liaison with teachers to contribute positively to the learning of pupils. Teaching of signing to all pupils in reception classes supports the learning and integration of pupils from special classes and is socially inclusive. Not all staff in the unit and in the school have sufficient knowledge and understanding, however, to cope with the demands placed upon them by pupils with severe learning difficulties. The staff have had training which enables them to manage pupils with some learning difficulties, however, the pupils in the small unit classes have complex and severe difficulties and are in need of expert and specific teaching.

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

29. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the pupils. The quality, range and learning opportunities provided by the school are very good. Religious education is taught according to the locally agreed syllabus. The curriculum for children under five is broad, with the exception of outdoor play, for which there is only weekly provision. Although the curriculum is satisfactory, the planning of learning for children under five is dominated in the mornings by language and literacy and mathematics, leaving little time in the week for independent and group learning through discovery and play.
30. The school has tried hard to retain a broad and relevant curriculum. Subjects such as music,

art and physical education maintain their place securely within the curriculum although the time allocated to each has been cut. The curriculum is enriched by activities, which include instrumental tuition, choral singing and drama productions. Time allocated to subjects such as history and geography are low and that for science has been cut back to allow for additional literacy and numeracy. The policies and schemes of work for all subjects are of good quality and give good guidance to teachers. The whole curriculum will be revised in September, however, when the new National Curriculum is to be implemented. Time allocation and subject policies will then be reviewed. Currently, not all time is well used: some literacy and numeracy sessions are over-long.

31. The school has successfully implemented a revised National Literacy Strategy. This allows for extra time for listening to individual reading and for extended writing. This is in line with the school's aim to raise standards in writing to the already very high standards in other areas of English. It is an initiative which has received good parental support. The Additional Literacy Strategy has been well implemented to improve the skills of a small number of pupils in Key Stage 2 who fall below the national average. This year has seen a heavy focus on numeracy. Skills learned during the numeracy hour are practised across the curriculum. Parents and other family members support the curriculum with help at home and in the classroom and during visits.
32. All statutory requirements of the curriculum are met for pupils in the mainstream school. They are not met for the pupils with severe learning difficulties taught in two special classes: they do not have planned access to the full National Curriculum because of timetabling arrangements. This situation is unsatisfactory and is not in line with the entitlement specified on their statements of special educational need. Other pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language are well supported and are taught the full National Curriculum. Detailed individual education plans, which are usually well matched to pupils' attainment, combined with particularly effective classroom support, aid their work. Special needs teachers from within the school and visiting professionals, such as speech and language therapists, provide the specialist curriculum and programme which a few pupils require. Courses outside school in areas such as music or mathematics sometimes provide the extensions needed for individual pupils who are particularly able. Social inclusion for all pupils is a strength of the school. All staff make strenuous efforts to include pupils of all abilities and backgrounds into every activity.
33. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The sensible policy includes statements on sex and drug education and reflects the caring ethos of the school. Pupils are provided with calm, safe opportunities for them to reflect on their lives and express their feelings in a safe, supportive environment. Outside speakers contribute well to teaching about personal safety and the use of medicine and drugs. Teaching about physical development is incorporated into the science curriculum.
34. Provision for extra-curricular activities, which was good at the time of the last inspection, is now very good. Boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate in an interesting range of activities that support and extend the curriculum. Clubs, which operate at lunchtime as well as after school, are well supported. Parents and staff offer opportunities such as extra art, gym, steel pans and French. Pupils benefit significantly from the very well planned visits that are available to each year group. For example, history in Year 3 is supported by visits to the Tudor mansion at Combe Sydenham, where there are also opportunities for art and drama in period costumes. Pupils in Year 4, staying at Charterhouse in the Mendips, experience outdoor and adventurous activities such as caving, rock climbing and orienteering. They also go pond dipping.
35. Very good links with the community help to cement the good relationships that have been established between the school and the town. One ex-pupil helps with the computer club, another talks to pupils about her time as a pupil and corresponds via e-mail. The harbour-master relates tales of times past before pupils make a visit to the harbour and the park ranger from Exmoor contributes first-hand experiences to enrich geography lessons. Local ministers speak to pupils within school and welcome them to the Church of England, Baptist and Methodist churches. Older pupils extend swimming skills at Aquasplash and the special needs of a few pupils are met through activities such as Riding for the Disabled and visits to local

shops and cafés.

36. Relationships with playgroups, including the Opportunity Playgroup, other schools in the area and local colleges are excellent. Liaison with the playgroup, which makes good use of the school's equipment, is particularly beneficial as many children move on to join the reception classes. The school hosts area sports for smaller primary schools. There are substantial links with the middle school before the transfer of the pupils in Year 4. Subject and special needs co-ordinators share knowledge and teaching on occasions. Pupils from feeder schools combine for dance and musical events. Good links with West Somerset Colleges include its use as the venue for joint choir concerts with other schools.
37. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Spiritual development is promoted well through the daily act of worship and religious education. In assemblies and through religious education and personal development lessons, pupils are given many opportunities to reflect on their personal experiences and gain an insight into their own feelings and values and those of others. For example, pupils in Year 4 reflected on their recent experience of team building, after seeing a video about a boy who gained self-confidence through outwitting a bully. Children under five discuss and appreciate the importance of friendship. A clear set of values is well promoted through the work of the school. Local clergy regularly lead assemblies and pupils often visit local churches as part of their curriculum studies. In many subject areas, thought has been given to the promotion of pupils' spiritual development. The many visits in the locality promote a sense of awe and wonder as pupils discover the beauty of their surroundings. Opportunities for pupils to learn about and explore other world faiths are appropriately developed through religious education.
38. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school is a calm, caring community to which pupils respond with interest, confidence and happiness. All adults throughout the school set very good examples and care is taken to promote relationships of very high quality, both in the school and in the community. The school rules are easily understood by pupils and are at the heart of all learning. From the earliest days in school pupils are made to understand the differences between right and wrong. Immediate and clear explanations are given where behaviour is unacceptable and pupils are encouraged to conform to the very high expectations set in each class.
39. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Parents see the social development of pupils as being very strong. Social values are well promoted by adults throughout the school and pupils are encouraged to care and take responsibility for others. For example, pupils in Year 4 take turns to wear yellow hats and be responsible for organising games and befriending pupils who have no one to play with or talk to. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to enable them to develop interests and friendships with pupils in other classes and age groups. Pupils in Year 4 are well prepared for the next stage of education by participation in a pre-Christmas production and a leavers' service in July. The production of the school's newspaper, "The Pressgang", involves many pupils from Year 4 working closely together to represent the views of pupils and adults. Pupils are aware of others less fortunate than themselves and through their own instigation and efforts have raised money for Save the Children, the Honduras Hurricane Appeal and the flood victims of Mozambique. The personal and social education programme encourages open and honest discussion and prepares pupils well for life. The inclusion of pupils from the special educational needs units in lessons in all classes supports pupils' social development well and builds very positive attitudes to pupils with disabilities.
40. The provision for pupils' cultural development is also very good. There are numerous visits to local places of interest including the theatre and various churches in Minehead. Drama projects, instrumental tuition for many pupils, choral singing and artists in residence extend the cultural knowledge of pupils. Support from the community is appreciated and used effectively; for example, in studying the history of the school building and the changes over time. Opportunities to learn about other cultures are effectively promoted through assemblies and religious education, through the wide-ranging art curriculum and the school's close link with the Gambia. Through their studies of the Gambia, pupils in Year 2 learn about the similarities and differences of life in a developing country. The good use of artefacts and videos in religious

education helps pupils to compare and contrast lifestyles from different cultures and prepares them well for life in our multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The school makes effective provision for the welfare and safety of its pupils. There are good arrangements for child protection, with a good level of awareness amongst staff. No health and safety concerns were noted during the inspection. Arrangements for safety in the swimming pool and on a visit to the harbour were exemplary. Pupils are supervised well in the playgrounds. Children starting school are very well supported and quickly made to feel at home through the regular routines, good dialogue with parents at the start and end of the school day and affectionate care by all adults.
42. The assessment procedures for children under five lack balance. Statutory assessments on entry to school give a detailed record of attainment in language and literacy, mathematics and some aspects of personal and social education and these are used effectively to indicate those children with special needs who need additional support. Records are kept to show attainment and progress in language and literacy, mathematics and the scientific aspect of knowledge and understanding of the world. However, no records are kept for creative and physical development. This is unsatisfactory and results in insufficient planned provision and monitoring of progress in these areas.
43. Arrangements for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils are particularly effective in English and mathematics. The National Curriculum tests in Year 2 provide detailed information about attainment in English and mathematics. The school now makes good use of optional test results and sets targets in English and mathematics. Assessment in most other subjects is on-going. In science and the non-core subjects, such as history and geography, formal assessments take place and the attainment of all pupils is recorded. In information technology there are no systems for recording individual pupils' attainment. Subject co-ordinators monitor pupils' work and discuss it with teachers. Pupil portfolios are kept and these give a good guide to the pupils' achievements. On-going assessment in the classroom is thorough and, as a result, the use of assessment to guide curricular planning is appropriate. Assessments in English and mathematics have been revised with the introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. The school plans to revise its assessment systems in line with the introduction of the new curriculum in September 2000.
44. Staff know pupils well and enjoy excellent relationships with them. Pupils receive very good preparation for transfer to the middle school and for life in general. The special educational needs teachers provide good support for the pupils and give specific counselling for pupils who are troubled in any way. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early through early assessments carried out in the reception class and are monitored closely. Pupils who make insufficient progress are placed on the special educational needs register and targets for improvement are recorded on individual education plans. These targets are reviewed regularly. For the pupils in the two special classes there is an inadequate level of monitoring of their performance against the requirements of the National Curriculum subjects. Additional provision such as speech therapy and supported integration is in place and is effective.

45. The school has very effective procedures for promoting good behaviour. Pupils receive appropriate praise and encouragement at every opportunity and sanctions and negative comments are used as little as possible. The active support and positive assistance ensures that the pupils are keen to learn and achieve well. The high standard of behaviour in the school indicates the success of this approach. The school does not keep a central record of incidents involving pupils with specific behavioural difficulties and this is a weakness.
46. The school has a good system in place for recording attendance. However, the decision, along with partner schools and social services, to regard the very low figure of 85 per cent or less attendance by an individual as a cause for concern means that the school does not take action early enough to improve attendance. The school acknowledges that attendance trends need more careful monitoring and that strategies need to be reviewed to reduce the number of pupils who are only in school for 85 to 90 per cent of the time and to improve the overall level of attendance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. Parents, generally, have a positive view of the school. They particularly like the good progress that their children make, the fact that their children are expected to work hard and that the teaching is good. They feel confident about approaching the school with questions or problems. Parents are less satisfied with the amount of information they receive about their children's progress and the limited opportunities offered for formal consultations. The findings of the inspection endorse this view. Some parents do not consider that the school involves them as closely as they would wish. Many parents are actively involved in the work of the school. These parents enjoy the contributions that they make in lesson times and are pleased to give their time to help in the supervision of swimming lessons.
48. The school provides parents with satisfactory general information. The school brochure and annual report of the governing body are attractive and meet statutory requirements. Class teachers provide good information about what topics are to be covered each term and helpful letters explain what is needed for visits or special events. Parents are welcome to discuss any concerns informally with teachers at the beginning and end of the day and many take up this offer. The school does not at present send out celebratory newsletters.
49. The school does not give parents sufficient information about their children's attainment or progress in each subject on their annual reports. The annual school reports do not meet statutory requirements. Parents are offered one consultation with teachers in the autumn but there is no formal occasion to meet teachers to discuss their children's progress and written reports at the end of the year. As a result, a significant proportion of parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress. Partnership between the school and parents of children with special educational needs is good. There is good consultation prior to entry, parents are invited to all reviews and many attend. Their views are welcomed and recorded. Parents are comfortable in school and many support activities such as swimming and reading and this has a positive impact on the progress the pupils make. Parents whose children have severe learning difficulties are acknowledged as experts and consulted as regularly as possible. This is not always easy as such children are drawn from a wide area.
50. Parents make a very effective contribution to the work of the school. A number of parents have joined the SHARE scheme to learn how to help their children at home. Many parents help in classrooms, provide artefacts or expertise, accompany visits and support the work of the Parent Teacher Association. Parents involvement in the work of the school provides extra support for the pupils and helps them to achieve better. A number of parents would welcome closer collaboration with the school with, for example, invitations to attend key stage assemblies.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very strong, sensitive leadership and, with the effective support of the senior management team and the governing body, gives clear direction for the development and improvement of the school. The quality of education throughout the school owes much to his leadership and the very good support of the committed and hard-working staff team along with the help of the governing body. Together they have succeeded in creating a learning environment where all are valued. Relationships are outstanding, pupils are happy and they grow in confidence and strive to work hard. There is a positive ethos, which reflects the school's commitment to achieve the highest educational standards and prepare the pupils well for a life in the wider world.
52. The headteacher maintains a very good balance between the strategic, administrative and monitoring parts of his role. The management structure includes a deputy headteacher and a member of the senior management team from the early years. The headteacher is looking to invite another member of staff to the senior management meetings to widen further its representation. The school lives up to its equal opportunities statement that "all members of the school community should value each other and the work they do." The headteacher has successfully created a climate in which every member of the community feels valued as an individual and where social inclusion is a reality. Where the school has been less successful, however, is in appointing a co-ordinator for special educational needs who could unify the strands of special needs throughout the school. At present there is no one who is specifically trained and has the expertise to take overall responsibility and monitor the work of the two departments. It is particularly necessary for the work of the special educational needs unit which co-ordinates the work of the pupils who have a wide range of complex, specific and demanding learning difficulties. It is inefficient to have two competent part time co-ordinators, both working the same hours, who do not liaise formally with the staff in the special classes. The school spends over and above the funding allocated for special educational needs. The special needs policy is in need of up-dating to ensure that all pupils can have access to the full National Curriculum.
53. The school implemented the National Literacy Strategy well and, after close inspection of the impact of its work in a number of other schools, it was modified on implementation to ensure that it was used to best effect in the school. In this way the school has retained its emphasis on reading and ensured good coverage of writing. The school has made very good provision for the National Numeracy Strategy and the co-ordinator has monitored teaching since its implementation. The curriculum co-ordinators are good managers. All co-ordinators have action plans for their subjects. The good quality schemes of work and assessment procedures are evidence of their commitment. Each co-ordinator is a fund-holder and monitors expenditure in his or her subject area. The monitoring of teaching is in its early stages of development: even so, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the numeracy co-ordinator have all monitored lessons. The curriculum co-ordinators understand that, when their subjects are a foci of the work of the school, monitoring of lessons will be part of their tasks. There is no early years' co-ordinator but the three reception class teachers are very effective as they plan together for the same lessons in each class and monitor and evaluate the success of their teaching through discussion and comparison of the children's work and response to the teaching.
54. The contribution of the governing body to the running of the school is good. The governors take their responsibilities seriously and are committed to improvements in the school. They are kept well informed and the deliberations of the different panels are thorough. The governors have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work hard to look at a range of options and strategies for the different management problems they face. The chair liaises closely with the headteacher and provides good support. The school has made very good improvements since the last inspection, especially in the standards achieved by the pupils in the core subjects. It has addressed the key issues for action; the good quality schemes of work have been implemented and the subject co-ordinators and senior management team, along with the governing body, monitor the work of the school. The school has developed a marking policy and clearly targets extra support to the youngest pupils in the school and those pupils who need extra support. The school has a very good capacity to

succeed further by building on its very good improvements. The governing body meet regularly and are provided with good information to support their meetings. They are at present working on a process of establishing formal cycles of monitoring performance; these will provide a further tool for the governing body to use to shape the school's policy. There are governors with responsibility for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs, and all governors are linked to a class.

55. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have targets set for them by the governing body in the current year which show that the governors have a clear understanding of the position of the school and the direction they would like to see it take. Staff development interviews are used to target specific training and in-service training for the teachers' particular needs. The newly qualified member of staff has had good support from the school and has been given adequate time outside lessons in order to develop her professional competence.
56. The school's handbook is a substantial document, which provides an effective tool for school development. This is at present being restructured to provide a separate school development plan. Targets are set, priorities indicated, costings noted where possible and sensible success criteria applied. The school has a clear set of priorities and common aims and goals, some of which have needed to be changed because of recent government initiatives. The school has only recently received its budget allocation for the coming year and it has been delivered according to a new formula; next year's budget allocation is as yet unclear. This lack of certainty means that the school finds it difficult to plan specific staffing structures and priorities. The school receives specific grants for supporting pupils with special educational needs and these funds are used effectively for their designated purpose.
57. Day-to-day financial control and administration are good. The school secretaries have clearly defined roles that they carry out efficiently. Administrative systems are unobtrusive and support efficient day-to-day organisation. There are satisfactory management systems in place for ensuring that incoming monies are handled efficiently. The most recent auditor's report for the school arrived during the inspection and so its recommendations have yet to be acted upon.
58. The school applies the principles of best value in the use of its resources. The school is active in seeking good value for its money by comparing prices and evaluating the success of its purchases. The school employs new technology satisfactorily. The computer suite is a very good facility but it is seldom occupied other than when classes have lessons. The school secretaries use new technology well and many of the administrative records are computerised.
59. The school has sufficient teachers to teach the National Curriculum and religious education. Two part-time teachers enable staff to have non-contact time and the newly qualified teacher to have appropriate administrative time. The staff have a range of qualifications and experience between them. Overall, there is a reasonable balance of men and women teachers and of staff with more experience and those newer to teaching. Turnover of staff is low and the school has good numbers applying for vacant posts. Applicants are brought in for two days and are seen teaching as part of the appointment process, resulting in high quality appointments. Staff development is well organised and the personnel committee of the governing body has a very good overview of staffing issues. The school has a music specialist and two special educational needs co-ordinators. A significant number of classroom assistants support the pupils very well. These staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. In the two classes for pupils with special educational needs there are three special educational needs assistants and a classroom assistant. This is appropriate. The non-teaching staff, including the two school secretaries, lunchtime staff and caretaking personnel, are valued by the teaching staff. Their hard work makes an important contribution to the life of the school. The caretaker carries out maintenance as part of an arrangement with the local authority. The school is kept to a high standard of cleanliness.
60. Accommodation is very good overall. The school is based upon a very pleasant old building full of character with a number of new buildings that have been added on over the years. Many of the original features remain, helping to create a rich learning environment. There are appropriate spaces for teaching and learning. The buildings are well maintained, most rooms have a generous allocation of space and a large number of small areas provide flexibility for

group work and storage. There is a new computer suite and a large music area. One of the classrooms for the pupils with special educational needs is in need of development to be more suited to their particular needs. There are two halls, one of which is large enough to present large-scale events such as concerts. There is a good-sized, covered swimming pool, which considerably enhances provision in physical education and enables the pupils to have weekly swimming lessons in the summer term, which impacts favourably on their attainment. There is a separate dining area so that teaching is not interrupted by lunch preparation. The quality of display around the school is very good. Outside, there is an adequate grassed and hard space for play and sport. The school has recently redeveloped part of its grounds to provide an adventurous play area and the pupils appreciate this addition.

61. The classrooms for children under five are spacious and well equipped, supporting learning well. There is a secure outdoor playground area for the reception children, with some play equipment and seating. There is a good range of wheeled vehicles, an excellent adventure playground suitable for these young children, balls and hoops and large wooden blocks for creative play. However, these are only used for one session a week. The last report noted a lack of appropriate large outdoor equipment.
62. The quantity and quality of learning resources in the school are good overall and that good provision has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. For areas such as mathematics, information technology, design and technology and physical education, resourcing is good. There are satisfactory resources for English. Some of the library books are in need of renewing. For science, resources are good but there is a need for microscopes to provide the pupils with specific help with their investigations. Some subjects such as religious education make good use of resources from the middle schools to supplement the school's resources. Resources outside the school contribute well. Visits to places of interest enhance the curriculum and help the pupils to attain well. Pupils make good use of the school grounds, pond and local area, especially in history and geography. They visit churches, farms, the beach, harbour and the nearby Combe Sydenham estate. This year a visit to the Millennium Dome is planned.
63. The school seeks best value for money by comparing prices and evaluating the quality of purchases. Parents have been consulted about the effect on reading of the literacy hour and clearly understand their role in supporting the teaching of reading.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection but in order to further improve the quality of education in the school, the headteacher, governing body and staff should:
- Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs in the two special educational needs classes by:
 - appointing a co-ordinator with overall responsibility for special educational needs, (see paragraphs 44, 52 and 72)
 - ensuring that all the pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum, (see paragraphs 32, 44, 52, 70 and 72)
 - ensuring that there is sufficient staff expertise and training to deal with the significant and multiple special educational needs, including the challenging behaviour of some of the pupils, (see paragraphs 18, 28, 66, 68 and 71)
 - up-dating the special educational needs policy, (see paragraphs 52 and 70)
 - reviewing and revising all special educational needs staff timetables to maximise efficient use of time, (see paragraph 52)
 - adapting the accommodation for pupils with special educational needs so that it is better suited to meeting their curricular needs. (see paragraphs 60 and 67)
- Raise pupils' attainment further in information technology by:
 - devising and implementing assessment procedures for information technology, (see paragraphs 43, 133 and 135)
 - using information technology more consistently across the curriculum. (see paragraphs 22, 26, 58, 96, 107, 131, 134, and 139.)
- Increase pupils' rates of attendance at school by:
 - amending the procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. (see paragraphs 17 and 46)
- Enhance the quality of information available to parents by:
 - ensuring inclusion in the pupils' annual reports of information in each subject about children's achievements and the progress they have made, (see paragraph 49)
 - providing further formal opportunities for parents to meet teachers to discuss their children's work, (see paragraph 49)
 - providing more opportunities for the parents to share in the school's celebrations. (see paragraphs 48 and 50)
- In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered by the governors for inclusion in their action plan:
- The lack of opportunities for children under the age of five to learn through outdoor play on a regular basis and improve the weak assessment procedures for these children. (see paragraphs 24,29, 42,61,76,79 and 87.)

Special Educational Needs – Resource Base

64. The school has two special classes catering for the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties who have statements of special educational needs. Pupils are drawn from the whole of the West Somerset area because of lack of local special schools and because many parents welcome social inclusion. The local education authority delegates much of the funding to the school and pays the salaries of special needs staff within the unit. It is ultimately responsible for the unit and its admissions.
65. The needs of pupils are frequently complex. One class consists of five boys and one girl with communication and associated learning difficulties. The other class is made up of nine mixed-age boys with moderate, severe or complex multiple learning difficulties. This poses a considerable challenge for the school.
66. Two teachers, three support assistants and a classroom assistant staff the units. One teacher is trained and experienced in special needs. The other teacher is on a temporary contract for two terms. She has mainstream experience of teaching pupils with special needs but is not trained or experienced in teaching pupils with severe learning difficulties or across such a wide age range in one group. The three support assistants are well trained; one has additional nursery nurse qualifications. Teachers are well supported by colleagues from outside agencies who provide assessment, advice and programmes of work for individuals. Specialists include the educational psychologist, educational social worker, speech and language therapist and the behaviour support team.
67. The teacher in Resource Base 2, which caters mainly for pupils with communication difficulties, attends reception-planning meetings. Good liaison is aided by close proximity of the classrooms. Literacy, numeracy and personal development are planned for using 'P' scales, which measure small areas of progress. Physical education is taught daily using a body awareness programme and there is a weekly physiotherapy session. There are opportunities for swimming and riding. Pupils have the opportunities to cook although the accommodation is not well suited for practical activities. Visits to the local shops and library support cooking and literacy. Children have at least half an hour's integration daily with pupils in mainstream classes. This is not always well planned to good effect. For example, pupils might arrive too late to join in singing with their peers and become restless during more academic parts of the lesson. Staff in this class develop pupils' communication skills through speech and signing. This is reinforced within mainstream reception classes where all pupils are taught signing and through some supported writing through information technology.
68. The second unit class, Resource Base 1, is situated in another part of the school. Staff do not benefit from joint planning and liaison within the unit or with mainstream colleagues. This is unsatisfactory. The teacher has worked hard to cope with the diverse needs of pupils which are beyond her area of expertise. She has wisely divided the group into two key stages so that she shares some of the teaching with a highly competent nursery nurse. This involves too much movement between two rooms, however, and is proving unsettling for pupils. Support staff, but not the teacher, are trained in the use of Somerset Total Communication and Picture Exchange Communication, which is practised in both classes to supplement speech. This means that not all areas of communication are constantly reinforced. Most work planned for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and takes account of pupils' developmental levels as well as age.
69. Parents are pleased with the social progress pupils make. Teacher assessment, annual reviews and observation confirm that for the majority of pupils it is good. The whole-school commitment to social inclusion and regular opportunities for pupils to integrate into mainstream lessons and activities, including residential visits, benefits all pupils. Work is insufficiently challenging for a few of the pupils in literacy and numeracy although pupils are generally making good progress against the targets set on their individual education plans. Regular physiotherapy and additional movement sessions and speech therapy help to meet the physical needs of pupils.

70. Pupils do not have full access to the National Curriculum. This is unsatisfactory and does not meet the requirement of their statements of special educational needs. There is insufficient planning to show how and where all elements of the National Curriculum are being taught to individual pupils, even in the modified form many pupils require. The majority of pupils have good, supported access to some mainstream lessons, where they are making good progress. Access is inconsistent, however, because it does not encompass all subjects. The special educational needs policy is in need of updating. Additional activities such as visits to shops are socially and educationally beneficial. They are not planned sufficiently, however, to support areas of the curriculum such as geography and history.
71. Behaviour management is unsatisfactory. The needs of a small minority of pupils who exhibit very challenging behaviour which is identified as part of their complex difficulties are not being met. There has been good support and advice from the Behaviour Support Service to help the school manage the behaviour of pupils experiencing lesser behaviour difficulties. However, most school staff are insufficiently trained and experienced in coping with the management of severe behavioural problems. Not all incidents are recorded and there is no central recording of serious incidents.
72. The management of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Lack of joint planning within the unit has meant that expertise has not been shared and there is no consistency of approach between the classes. There is no over-view of the curriculum which pupils are receiving. There is no official liaison with the two special educational needs co-ordinators who work in the mainstream school, although relationships are good. Support staff do not all meet together, although some work in the unit and support pupils in integrated lessons.
73. The local education authority commissioned a special educational needs report in October 1998. It was thorough and detailed. It highlighted most of the strengths and weaknesses observed during this inspection and sensible recommendations were made. Action on it has not been taken. Uncertainty about funding for next year has made planning difficult and some staff uncertain as to their future.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

68

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	49	27	2	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	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		328
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		70

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		17
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		41

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	33	29	62

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	32	33
	Girls	28	29	29
	Total	57	61	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (89)	98 (75)	100 (85)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	32	31
	Girls	29	29	29
	Total	61	61	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (89)	98 (96)	97 (82)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	324
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.9
Average class size	30.2

Education support staff: YR– Y4

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	369

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	624,894
Total expenditure	626,329
Expenditure per pupil	1,904
Balance brought forward from previous year	14,126
Balance carried forward to next year	12,691

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	332
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	26	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	35	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	41	6	3	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	33	14	6	3
The teaching is good.	68	31	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	40	12	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	22	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	28	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	40	7	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	62	22	8	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	31	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	43	11	0	8

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

74. Children enter the reception class at the start of the autumn term following their fourth birthday. They attend part-time for several weeks before starting school full-time. Almost all children have previously attended a playgroup in the locality. At the time of the inspection, fourteen of the sixty-three children were under five. There are a small number of children identified as having special educational needs and one child at an early stage of acquiring English. Each class has a learning support assistant. The school has deliberately kept the classes small and given a high level of adult help in line with their policy of giving children a flying start to their education.
75. There is no early years' co-ordinator, but the three teachers work extremely closely and very effectively together. The teachers plan similar learning experiences for their children and adapt future planning suitably as they monitor and evaluate the progress children make in lessons. They have a very good, shared commitment to raise standards and to provide the best possible education for the children within a secure and happy atmosphere and together they make a strong team. Staff know all the children in their small classes extremely well and are aware of individual needs. Teachers work very closely with the learning support assistants, who are experienced and capable, and give very good support to children in their learning, particularly in basic skills for lower-attainers and those with special needs.
76. The three reception classrooms are large and well equipped. There is room to have separate areas for whole-class discussion, tables for working at, an area with a sink and a large table for "messy" activities, provision for sand and water play and a "home corner" for creative play. However, the provision for outdoor play as part of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is a suitable secure area. There are wheeled toys, apparatus for climbing and swinging, large wooden blocks for creative play and bats, balls and skipping ropes. However, these are only used for one session a week. This gap in provision was noted during the last inspection.
77. On entry to the reception classes, children's attainment is broadly average for their age in all areas of learning. During their under-fives education, most children make good progress. By the age of five, almost all children meet, and many exceed, the Desirable Learning Outcomes in the six areas of learning defined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority for young children. The children achieve particularly high standards in writing and skills in mental arithmetic. Children of all capabilities are challenged well through consistently good teaching. By the age of five, children are working within the National Curriculum in many subject areas. Children with special needs make good progress because of the high level of adult support, work that is well matched to their needs and the confidence that they will achieve success. A child in the early stages of acquiring English is making good progress. She is supported well by visits from an outside teacher and in all lessons the teacher and children help her to understand and participate in class activities. Standards in both teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection where they were judged to be sound and promoted good progress.

Personal and social development

78. By the age of five, many children exceed the standards expected in this area of learning. They have very good relationships with each other and with adults. Children care for each other sensitively, showing concern if a child is sick and making sure that when children from the special educational needs unit visit the classroom they are made to feel at home and have friends to play with. Children are independent in personal hygiene and changing for physical education lessons. They look after toys and resources carefully and clear up willingly and efficiently when they have finished their work. The children take turns; for example, when making rubbings of tyres with different tread patterns. They behave very well at all times. When given work to do while the teacher is busy with another group of children, they get on with it without fuss and are keen to finish their task. The children understand the consequences of their actions and are quick to relate new safety instructions to previous learning. When

entering the swimming pool for the first time, and being told to walk carefully on the slippery floor, one girl quoted the school rule “be safe, be happy” and everyone smiled in agreement. Children visibly grow in confidence as they take on the role of “special person” for the day and enjoy sharing the delight of other children when they are chosen. Children respond in a mature way to the special atmosphere created in each aspect of learning; for example, the friendly competition of a mental mathematics lesson, or the calm and reflective mood of class assembly.

79. The quality of teaching and learning in personal and social development is good. The warm and welcoming atmosphere created by all adults in the reception classes combined with the small numbers in each class soon help children to feel confident. Children make good progress as a direct result of the skilled and sensitive teaching that enables each child to feel secure and valued within the class group and the school community. All three teachers skilfully use every opportunity to help each child become confident and caring, supporting the development of excellent relationships through activities such as a “plan, do and review” session, where children choose a friend to work with. High standards of behaviour are expected and achieved. Very positive attitudes to learning are developed through the provision of interesting and relevant activities that closely match the learning needs of the children and the shared celebration of effort and achievement for individuals and groups. Learning is fun. Many activities are more closely directed by the teacher than is usual at this age but the children are encouraged to extend their learning through discussion and there are occasions such as “plan, do and review” times when they can choose their own activities. Teachers know the children very well but there is no recording of attainment in this area from which progress can be measured.

Language and literacy

80. Most children exceed the standards expected by the age of five. Children listen carefully to stories and explanations by adults and are interested in what other children have to say. The children speak confidently and answer questions with a mature vocabulary. They enjoy nursery rhymes and stories involving rhyme and recognise rhyming words such as “frog” and “dog”. Children know most of the letters of the alphabet by shape and sound and utilise their good knowledge of the sounds made by pairs of letters in their reading and writing. They are interested in books and use a mixture of picture and letter cues to tell a story. Children discuss titles, illustrations and authors. A few higher-attaining children are fluent readers, with a good understanding of characters and plot. Children write their names independently, handling upper and lower case letters correctly. The children see themselves as writers and most communicate confidently through a mixture of known words, initial sounds and key words displayed on the classroom wall, leaving spaces between words. Higher-attaining children use middle and final sounds when attempting to write unfamiliar words. The standard of writing overall is very high for the age of the children.
81. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good in teaching writing. Teaching is warm and supportive, develops positive attitudes to learning and ensures good progress for children at all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs. There is a good partnership between teachers, parents and carers in promoting reading, as shown in the praise and enjoyment noted in the home-school diaries as children make good progress. Reading of the “big book” together in the literacy hour is presented as an enjoyable activity to which children respond with pleasure. The daily practice in combining letters to form words, or parts of words, gives children confidence to be independent in both reading and writing. Teachers use the final part of the lesson effectively for children to share their work and to celebrate success. Children read their writing with pride and there is praise from the teacher for those who have written more sentences than before. The other children appreciate the effort involved in this achievement. Assessment and recording procedures are good.

Mathematics

82. Most children exceed the standards expected by the age of five, particularly in number. Children count confidently to at least 20 and those who are higher attaining fill in missing numbers in the spaces of a line of numbers from one to twenty. Children understand the meaning of “more than” and “less than” and most children apply this accurately for numbers up

to ten. A strength of the children's attainment is in the skill and understanding in mental arithmetic of the class, including children with special educational needs. Children are expert in working out mentally the different combinations of addition and subtraction "stories" that make up a given number up to ten, for example, $2+2+1=5$ and $6-1=5$. Higher-attaining children work confidently in this way with numbers to 15. Zero is a concept that is understood and used in calculations and discussions. Most children recognise circles, triangles and rectangles and many are familiar with the solid shapes of sphere, cone and cube. Children identify and continue a simple repeating pattern of shape, size or colour. They recognise coins and those who are higher attaining give change accurately in pretend shopping. Children have a good mathematical vocabulary; for example, understanding and using "tall, taller, tallest" and "holds more" in the correct context.

83. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in mental arithmetic. Every opportunity is taken to develop number awareness, as in the daily creation of a "graph" using towers of named plastic bricks for the numbers of children having school dinner, bringing sandwiches or being absent from school. Through daily discussion, children learn "how many more than" and how to recognise three bricks without needing to count. The skill with which teachers move the whole class on in their learning in mental arithmetic and the effort and concentration of these young children is impressive. Regular routines and games are extended day by day as the children's knowledge increases. The excellent relationships ensure that learning is fun and there is praise and appreciation from the teacher and the rest of the class when children of all capabilities make good progress in their learning. The teacher is very well prepared, the pace of the lessons is swift and resources are always to hand for the next activity. Teachers all have good subject knowledge and the correct mathematical vocabulary is reinforced in other subject areas, as when noting that printed tyre tracks are either curved or straight lines or a combination of both. A wide range of number games, songs and rhymes are taught to reinforce learning. In other aspects of mathematics, such as measurement, children do have opportunities to learn through exploration, for example, using water and sand to develop understanding of capacity, but there are too few opportunities to experiment and explore in play situations, or to solve practical problems and this slows learning. There are good procedures for recording children's attainment and noting progress.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

84. By the age of five, most children exceed the standards expected in this area. The children talk confidently about their homes and families, and know the main landmarks on their journey to school. They describe how to find different parts of the school, such as the hall, secretary's office or music room. Children are aware that time can be considered in terms of past, present and future. The children understand that the penny farthing bicycle they studied was ridden in the past and that the tyres they rubbed with wax crayon to make patterns came from modern bicycles, even though some of the tyres were worn and looked old. Many children name the parts of a plant correctly and know that it needs light and water to grow. Children have a good understanding of forces such as pushes and pulls and distinguish between them confidently during outdoor play as they hit balls with bats, ride wheeled toys and blow corks along a water trough. Children have satisfactory cutting and sticking skills, displayed when cutting a sentence to re-order the words to make sense. They press together the parts of commercial building sets confidently to make wheeled models but there are few examples of other methods of joining to make three-dimensional models. The few children seen working on the computer during the inspection used the arrow keys confidently to guide a screen robot to a chosen letter of the alphabet and the mouse accurately to select objects on the screen.
85. Teaching is good, with the different aspects of this broad area of learning identified and taught separately. Resources and visits are used effectively to support teaching and learning objectives are clearly defined. Questioning in the well-managed class sessions challenges the thinking of children of all capabilities and ensures that children have a suitable vocabulary to discuss their knowledge. Children learn successfully, because of the skill of the teachers and the thoroughly planned lessons, but there are insufficient opportunities to learn about the world around them through independent discovery, play and talk. There are too few opportunities to practise and develop the skills that they have learned; for example, by making models to experiment with joining and fixing skills in different materials and to work on the computer for writing and drawing. The only recording made in this area of learning is in science, to link with

Key Stage 1 records. This is relevant, where older and higher-attaining children are working within the National Curriculum, but other knowledge and skills are not recorded at all. There is a danger of the children being taught a range of unconnected skills and knowledge that might not be entirely relevant to their stage of development, particularly that of the youngest children.

Physical development

86. By the age of five, most children exceed the standards expected in this area. Manipulative skills are generally very good, as demonstrated by the dexterity with which children write and draw with pencils and crayons, place jigsaw pieces confidently and build using construction sets. Children showed very good control of their crayons and held the tyres competently as they made rubbings of tyre patterns. They manipulate play dough with confidence to make imprints of round objects but no other malleable materials were seen during the inspection. In the weekly session of outdoor activities there was a mixed picture of attainment. Most children confidently rode and steered wheeled toys, but two children did not know how to pedal or steer. The children climbed and swung happily on the apparatus in the adventure playground, but the level of competence at catching and throwing balls was not high. When building with large blocks and moving cardboard boxes operating rollers, many pupils needed a high degree of adult support and encouragement. In contrast, children have good skills in gymnastics lessons, where they make good stretched and curled shapes both on the floor and on the apparatus. Children are conscious of safety rules in all physical activities and take care to allow others freedom to move safely.
87. The quality of teaching in the physical activities seen was good overall, and most children learn well. However, it was clear that a few children, particularly those who have not previously attended a playgroup, have not been given sufficient opportunity to play with wheeled toys, to work together to build with large blocks, or to practise at throwing and catching balls. They have gaps in their learning. Teaching is good in gymnastics and the children respond well, but the activities are too structured for many of these young children, who have missed out on the play and experimentation stage of their physical development. No records are kept in this important area of learning and there is only one session of outdoor play per week, despite the high staffing levels, suitable secure outdoor area and good resources.

Creative development

88. By the age of five, most children exceed the standards expected in this area. Their attainment in music lessons is very high. They sing with enjoyment, clear diction and good pitch. Children sing the rhythm of their names accurately and most are confident when singing their name to a well-known sequence of notes, including the girl in the early stages of acquiring English. About half the children use hand signals for the tonic sol-fa notes of "soh" and "me" to compose short phrases and sing the compositions of other children accurately. Children know how to hold and play a range of instruments in time to the music. They know the properties of wet and dry sand for building and the lesson planning shows that they have had experience of a wide range of materials, including wood and clay. Paintings are lively with expressive application of colour. Skills and techniques for painting, printing, collage and many other aspects of picture making are good and high standards are achieved. For example, children dipping a toy car into black paint and rolling the wheels across a large sheet of paper created interesting patterns and designs. One boy worked independently to make an imaginative robot from card with the addition of polystyrene and aluminium foil. This was the only example of independent creative work seen during the inspection week. Few children were seen engaging in role-play and a small group with glove puppets needed a high level of adult support before starting to create a play.
89. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very high expectations in music, which are achieved in the very good progress that the children make and their very high level of effort and skills. The techniques of picture making are well taught, resulting in knowledgeable children with a good range of skills. Learning support assistants are very effective in teaching creative artwork, develop language and discussion skills well and both children and adults enjoy the shared experience. Most activities are tightly structured, however, and there are insufficient planned opportunities for children to experiment, learn through discovery or to practise their skills. In the weekly "plan, do and review" sessions, the children choose activities,

but do not plan what they will do in the chosen area. There are opportunities for developing ideas through role-play, for example, in the home bay, but these are not planned as the main activity for a session and are not closely monitored. The lack of regular outdoor play also restricts children's opportunities to develop their imagination individually and as a group to adapt their environment to reflect their ideas; for example, when playing with large building blocks.

ENGLISH

90. Standards by the age of seven are well above the national average. This shows a very good improvement since the previous inspection where standards were judged to be average in all areas of English and some pupils were reported as not listening actively. Attainment at the age of nine when pupils leave this school is well above average in speaking and listening and reading. It is above average in writing. Attainment by the age of nine was judged to be average at the last inspection so this shows good improvement.
91. The school has set realistic targets for improvement. It does not monitor boys and girls separately. It has high expectations and has developed effective strategies for maintaining and improving the very good improvement it has made in raising the standards of all pupils. The school's initial assessment of the children shows that pupils are average on entry to the school so progress is already very good by the age of seven and maintained and developed further by the age of nine. Teachers' assessments of the pupils' work are extremely accurate. The school looks at each cohort of pupils carefully, including those with significant special educational needs. Additional support, which is of a very high quality, is then allocated to work with groups and individuals in the classroom or in small withdrawal classes. This is having a positive effect on learning, with many pupils with special educational needs reaching standards expected nationally.
92. The school has not fully adopted the National Literacy Strategy. The school's version of the literacy hour is proving very effective in raising standards, however, and has been planned with care. After observation of the literacy hour in other schools and extensive consultation with parents, the school has broadly accepted the framework. It uses group reading for the vast majority of pupils but provides a significant number of additional opportunities for individual reading for others. Parents have a clearly defined role in reading, especially in relation to pupils in reception and Year 1. Teachers focus on the learning objectives recommended for guided writing. The school wanted the flexibility to spend more time on writing activities as standards in writing are not as high as in other areas of English. This added time, combined with good opportunities for extended writing, especially in history and religious education, is having a positive effect. Very good opportunities for speaking and listening and reading across all areas of the curriculum are also helping to raise standards in literacy. The emphasis on precise vocabulary and the pleasure shown in language contribute to lively and interesting writing. The school continues to monitor and revise its literacy strategy. The Additional Literacy Strategy has been very well implemented to support pupils who are attaining standards below the national average at the age of seven.
93. By the age of seven, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is very high. Pupils listen actively to each other and to the teacher, responding politely and speaking in full sentences when required. The pupils have a wide vocabulary sufficient to express their views and feelings. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils spoke confidently as they rapidly compiled a list of over 20 living things. Speech is colourful. A pupil contributing to a glossary said "A flower is a grown up sort of plant." Pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy words, justifying answers and engaging in discussion. The pupils respond confidently to adults and adapt their speech to suit the circumstances. Pupils with special educational needs and the very small number for whom English is an additional language attain well with appropriate support where necessary.
94. Attainment in reading at the age of seven is very good. Pupils make swift progress during their reception year so that, by Year 1 reading is a pleasure. They use a range of strategies such as word building and prediction to decipher new words. Discussion of characters and story lines contribute to the enjoyment of sharing books. Pupils in Year 2 confidently find their way around information books, selecting from the contents, glossary or index as required. This progress is maintained during Key Stage 2 although some high-attaining pupils are not reading

a sufficient range of challenging books. Pupils scan through the text to find information they require and skim for meaning, comparing and extracting information from more than one text. They are encouraged to read at home and a few pupils belong to the local library. There is insufficient use of the school library to encourage independence.

95. Attainment in writing is good at the age of seven and at the age of nine when pupils leave this school. The school is involved in a local education authority initiative to improve standards in writing. This has complemented the school's own good emphasis on writing. During reception and Years 1 and 2, most pupils learn enough technical skills to enable them to communicate through the written word. Handwriting practice, which is not over-zealous, helps them develop a cursive script. Building up words phonetically, as well as learning an increasing range of whole words, gives confidence in spelling. Pupils consult dictionaries to check their spelling. Sentence structure becomes increasingly secure and, by the end of Year 2, many pupils are using more sophisticated punctuation in their writing. There are good frameworks in place to support pupils who do not write fluently. Time has been found to enable pupils the satisfaction of writing in depth and experimenting with language. A Year 2 pupil describing a painting by Uccello begins with "There is a thin moon in a dark blue sky." A concentration on story openings was the stimulus for a Year 3 pupil to start with "It must have been quite late when the people in white coats released me from the cage." Parents are right to be pleased with writing. By Year 4, higher-attaining pupils present convincing arguments, write in short paragraphs and summarise. Vocabulary is chosen with precision to good effect.
96. Teaching is generally good. The high majority of teaching in both key stages is good or very good and remains focused on the learning objectives. Good questioning enables pupils of all abilities to contribute orally. There is especially good teaching in Key Stage 1. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons are pleasant experiences where the large numbers of pupils are managed effectively. Relationships are warm and pupils are treated with individual respect. Whilst teaching the basics of reading and writing is good, teachers have not lost sight of the broader picture. For example, a Year 1 teacher used music sensitively to create an atmosphere in which pupils happily shared books and pointed out illustrations to each other without adult intervention. Good opportunities for writing enabled a Year 3 pupil to write that the whale "came towards us like a delicate mountain with a trickling spring." Effective classroom support, which is well managed, is helping to raise standards. The marking of pupils' work is generally supportive. Information technology for the planning, revision and presentation of work is at present under-developed. Time allocated to English lessons is sometimes over-long as basic skills are well reinforced in other areas of the curriculum. Good annotated work is kept which shows progression in writing. Pupils' annual reports do not meet all requirements for informing parents of National Curriculum levels.
97. The headteacher is the co-ordinator. It places a heavy burden on him. This is not through choice but the result of financial constraints. He is doing a very good job and has the knowledge and commitment to carry out the role successfully in the short term. He has received whole-school support for his modification of the National Literacy Strategy and results have justified that decision. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work and is involved in a writing initiative for higher-attaining pupils. Resources are satisfactory and well used. The library is uninviting and the condition of many books does not encourage reading. The subject reinforces the social and cultural development of pupils. There are good opportunities to participate in productions and attend workshops; for example, through community education with pupils from several schools meeting at the Middle School.

MATHEMATICS

98. Standards by the age of seven and nine are very high. During the current inspection, evidence indicates that the high standards achieved in the last two years have been maintained. The previous report indicated that pupils' attainment was broadly in line with the national average, standards have shown a significant improvement since this date. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented in the school and the teachers feel that the additional mental activities are having a further beneficial impact upon the standards of the pupils. Pupils throughout both key stages make good progress in their lessons and they achieve well.
99. By the age of seven, pupils build well on their early mathematical experiences, counting to 20 and they order numbers to 100 securely. They look at patterns in numbers and solve problems using number squares. For example, in the Year 2 class, the pupils' task was to find numbers in an incomplete sequence. The pupils are prepared to work hard with their tasks and are enthusiastic as they sort the numbers and this ensures that they learn well. Younger pupils know the number bonds to 15 and add and subtract numbers to 15. They identify odd and even numbers and calculate half of given numbers. Pupils in Year 2 count in two's, three's and ten's starting from different starting points.
100. Most pupils know the names of regular shapes such as triangle, square and circle and name shapes such as cubes and spheres. They recognise lines of symmetry and count the number of faces on a cuboid. Pupils identify coins using them to solve a variety of problems. The pupils in Year 1 calculate size with non-standard measures working out the length of different pieces of furniture in the classroom. At the end of the lesson the pupils discussed whether their findings were accurate or not. They compared their feet sizes and then looked critically at their results to see if they had worked out the calculations carefully. This ensured that, although the pupils thoroughly enjoyed their task, they clearly understood the teachers' expectation that they must be careful and accurate in their work. In a Year 2 lesson, the pupils measured given lines with a ruler and, when the lines were curved, a piece of string. The pupils then checked a range of angles to see if they were right angles. The pupils recalled that they could find out if an angle was a right angle by folding a piece of paper into four and using the fold as a right angle checker. Pupils with special educational needs and English as a second language are very well supported in their lessons and, through good support and carefully structured lessons achieve well.
101. By the age of nine, pupils continue to make good progress and become increasingly proficient in all aspects of the subject. The quantity, quality and range of their work is good. Pupils have a good understanding of place value and use all four number operations to solve problems. For example in Year 3, the pupils mentally count in three's, five's and ten's. In Year 4 the pupils start their lessons with a range of mental problems. A higher-attaining pupil gave a correct answer, almost instantaneously, to a complex problem set by the teacher. The pupils are neat and accurate in their work. Pupils in Year 3 find the lines of symmetry present in a wide range of regular and irregular shapes. They show good application in their work and are helped to become more proficient as the result of the good activities promoted by the teacher. In lessons they listen to clear instructions given by the teachers and co-operate well with their shared tasks. Most pupils in Year 4, understand the term reflective symmetry and plot the reflections when there are two lines of symmetry. They convert fractions to percentages and decimals and understand that a half and point five are the same.
102. Pupils measure different angles and identify correctly right angles. Most pupils understand and use coordinates and work in the first quadrant, correctly drawing figures from given co-ordinates. In Year 3, the pupils calculate the perimeter of squares, rectangles and irregular shapes, a skill developed in Year 4 where the pupils find the area of shapes by initially estimating the area and then measuring accurately. Pupils record a range of information on tally charts and then draw graphs showing the information in this way. The pupils solve a range of problems and they work with different materials to work out probability. Mathematics is used

well to support other areas of the curriculum, for example, in history the pupils make good use of time lines and in design and technology they measure accurately. Pupils with special educational needs and English as a second language are very well supported in their lessons and make good progress.

103. The quality of teaching throughout the school is generally good with very good lessons observed. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare their lessons well. They teach all aspects of mathematics and all attainment targets are appropriately covered. Teachers make good links with previous work, give distinct explanations and instructions and make effective use of examples and demonstrations. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 4, the teachers' very good subject knowledge and excellent class management kept all the pupils involved in the challenging task. The high expectations, good demonstrations on the board along with the pupils' very good behaviour, concentration and application to work, ensured that they learnt well. Where teaching is most effective teachers make good use of questioning to challenge pupils' thinking. They maintain a good pace to lessons with progressively challenging tasks, focused on learning. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the pupils measured a range of furniture and at the end of the lesson the expectation of accurate measurement was clearly apparent. The teaching of basic mathematical skills is very good with the teachers using the National Numeracy Strategy to give a very good structure to their work. Lesson objectives are shared with the pupils and the pupils know what it is they are learning. The teachers ensure there are a good range of learning experiences to ensure that the pupils are fully involved in their learning and the tasks set are stimulating and engaging. For example, pupils in Year 2 were completely motivated in their work measuring given lines and were active in wanting to succeed with their task.
104. Teachers plan well and use resources well. Support staff are very effective as they support and help the pupils in their work ensuring that the pupils make good gains in their lessons. Teachers plan work that is appropriate for the groups in the class and monitor the work of the pupils well. The teachers place a significant emphasis on talking the pupils through their work and encouraging them to correct errors. In one of the Year 2 classes the pupils have written targets for improving their work. This is not consistent practice throughout the school. Resources are utilised appropriately to support the pupils' tasks. Teachers make on-going assessments and there is a whole-school approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress. Marking of pupils' work is consistently supportive.
105. This subject is very well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop the subject and help prepare the staff for the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. She has monitored the quality of teaching in numeracy lessons and has given constructive feedback to her colleagues. Resources for mathematics are good and are stored appropriately. New equipment has been purchased to facilitate the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy.

SCIENCE

106. Attainment is above the national average at the age of seven and well above the national average by the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine. Standards between 1997 and 1999 have improved from well below the national average to well above. At the time of the previous inspection standards were in line with the national average and so standards have significantly improved since then.
107. By the age of seven, pupils can relate their work to domestic and environmental contexts; for example, in Year 1 studying the habitats of snails or in Year 2 investigating what conditions are necessary for plants to grow. Pupils are beginning to understand how to plan their investigations fairly and know appropriate terminology including the parts of plants. By the age of nine, standards improve further, partly because pupils have more teaching time and, by the time the pupils leave this school, they are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Pupils in Year 3 show a good knowledge and understanding about different habitats; for example, when discussing camouflage. They know how fish breathe. Pupils understand the need for conducting a test fairly and further develop their capacity to predict outcomes, carry out investigative work and record their findings. For example, in work making sequences out of food chains to understand the concepts of consumers and producers. They understand the

differences between living and non-living things and show very good general knowledge of science. Pupils make good use of diagrams but make insufficient use of graphs and information technology to record their findings. They speak confidently when discussing their work.

108. Pupils make very good progress and in lessons there are clear advances in learning; for example, where pupils understood the domestic application of their work on forces or where pupils employ their prior knowledge of the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and drugs. The quality of this learning is good. Pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding systematically. High-attaining pupils are suitably challenged by extended work. Pupils are increasingly aware of scientific issues and use more scientific vocabulary as they progress through the school, for example when pupils discussed making circuits or the functions of parts of the body. Pupils who work more slowly also make good progress supported by teachers, classroom assistants and parent helpers in meeting targets set for them. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour support learning. They enjoy their lessons and are keen to participate and answer questions, follow instructions and sustain their concentration in individual or group work. They work productively, keep on task and work with interest and often enthusiasm. Pupils behave very well and are open and friendly. They treat resources and each other respectfully. Often, they praise others' efforts and work. Relationship between staff and pupils are excellent.
109. All teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory, most teaching throughout Key Stage 1 is good and most teaching in Key Stage 2 is very good. Overall, teachers show good subject knowledge in organised and well-prepared lessons. Planning of lessons is good with good emphasis on the use of scientific vocabulary. The approach and content usually relate well to pupils' needs; objectives are very clear. Class management is very good with skilful use of praise and questioning. Assessment is encouraging and marking is always up to date. The pace of lessons is brisk and expectations are high. Homework is set occasionally.
110. The co-ordinator is experienced, committed and enthusiastic and has clear ideas about the development of the subject. There has been little focus recently on the subject because of the introduction of the literacy and numeracy initiatives but in-service training for staff is planned in the coming year. The curriculum is appropriate and there are strong links with other subjects, including health, and with other schools. Monitoring of teaching is informal as time does not allow for more structured support. The time allocation for science is at present low, information technology is at present under-used. Resources are mainly good and well used with careful attention to safety. Environmental education is a strength and this is supported by the school's own area and easy access to beaches and Exmoor. Science makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education because of the richness of the experiences given to the pupils. They experience the amazement of observing living things. They are taught to care for the environment and are offered good social opportunities, for example in experimental work in groups and cultural opportunities through visits. Work in science is enhanced by talks from the Park Ranger, trips to farms, Bristol and London and the residential experience at Charterhouse. Visits are supported by parents.

ART

111. By the ages of seven and nine pupils attain standards above those expected nationally. Standards in art have risen since the last inspection, when they were judged to be satisfactory. Parents are pleased with the work. Pupils experience working with a range of media from initial entry to school. Close observation and concentration on discrete skills are reflected in the quality of the work produced. Pupils in reception make sculptures based on Delaunay paintings, draw bicycle wheels and print on fabric. Colour wheels are produced in Year 1 based on mixing the primary colours with white. There is a progression in clay work throughout the school. Pupils in Year 1 join clay with slip, they learn to roll it in Year 2 and in Year 3 they study shells from Barbados, then coil and pinch clay to form their own shells. Pupils in Year 3 develop increasing control of tools and techniques. They combine line, tone and colour for different purposes having looked closely at the work of artists such as Redon, Matisse and Dufy. A sufficient supply of good quality resources including charcoal, conté and powder paint supports their progress. During Year 4, pupils study Van Gogh in depth. They explore ideas orally and artistically and refine their own techniques. Sculptured masks and Aztec borders of quality have supported work in history. Pupils with special educational needs and those with

English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers. This is aided by particularly sensitive support that maximises progress and minimises frustration.

112. High levels of concentration and interest combined with hard work contribute to good progress. Pupils are proud to discuss their work and can spot where it succeeds and where it needs refining. They look carefully at the work of artists from a wide range of cultures. They appreciate the good work of peers and discuss it sensitively.
113. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers work hard and successfully to organise a range of practical activities for such large numbers. Skilful classroom assistants ably assist them. The discrete skills needed are well taught although some of the work is related to other areas of the curriculum, especially history. Teachers demonstrate techniques well. They spend sufficient time in helping pupils observe and they discuss stimuli such as paintings or artefacts in depth. They provide opportunities for the oral and visual expression of feelings provoked by this close observation. Although assessment is not regularly recorded, portfolios of work are kept to show progress. Each year, one piece of observational and one piece of imaginative work are kept. Sketchbooks allow for experimentation and supplement assessment opportunities in Key Stage 2.
114. Leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and thoughtful. She has produced an excellent scheme of work that has supported her colleagues and contributed well to the good progress of pupils. Whilst it is thorough it leaves room for flexibility. The importance the school places on art is reflected in the time, which it still manages to allocate to the subject. The curriculum is broad and relevant. The art program available on the computer enhances the curriculum for older pupils. Very good use is made of the local area. For example, wave formation is studied and sketches are made at the harbour. Landscapes are completed on a residential field trip and architectural features are studied at St. Michael's Church. The art club is over-subscribed and enriches the curriculum, as do shared opportunities with parents and other adults. Very attractive panels representing the creation have been made for the entrance hall to celebrate the Millennium. Very good displays and murals throughout the school enhance the environment and celebrate achievement. Successful work associated with Minehead in Bloom is displayed publicly each year and gives good supportive links with the community.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

115. It was not possible to observe any lessons in the subject during the inspection as none was timetabled. Judgements have been based upon a scrutiny of pupils' work, interviews with pupils and a scrutiny of planning and documentation. By the ages of seven and nine, the pupils attain standards in line with those expected nationally. This is a similar position to that at the time of the previous inspection. The pupils, including those with English as an additional language and special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in their lessons.
116. By the age of seven, pupils work with a variety of different materials including food, thin card, construction kits and recycled materials as they systematically develop their skills of making and handling. In Year 1, the pupils make musical instruments, having initially drawn plans, before selecting the necessary equipment to complete their assignment. On finishing the task, they reflect on what they enjoyed most about the process and what caused the greatest difficulty. The finished products feature in music lessons, being played by the pupils to accompany their singing. When making their instruments, the pupils employ a range of skills involving cutting, sticking and joining. The pupils' thoughtful evaluations emphasise clearly their successes while also highlighting emphatically the problems encountered. In Year 2, the pupils make a selection of greetings cards. Before doing so they examine a number of commercial products and use them as sources from which they evolve their own designs.
117. By the age of nine, pupils develop further their designing, measuring, manipulating and cutting skills. In Year 3, pupils drew plans and made an eggcup from clay. A few of the pupils designed their eggcups on the computer, others on a design sheet. A common feature was the study of a range of eggcups and a recognition that the eggcup must at the end of the task fulfil its intended purpose. The pupils selected their chosen plan and made their eggcups testing them on completion to ensure that they would hold an egg. Pupils in Year 4, drew and made

and decorated Aztec masks. They annotated their designs indicating how they were going to make their mask, the materials they would use and how they were going to set about the task. An evaluation of the finished product indicated where problems arose and how they had been resolved.

118. The pupils interviewed about their work displayed positive attitudes towards the subject. They clearly enjoyed talking about their work and describing the processes they addressed in their lessons.
119. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has produced a thorough scheme of work with assessment procedures built in. She is at present looking at the government's recommended scheme of work to see if the two schemes can be developed together to give even more support and guidance to teachers.

GEOGRAPHY

120. It was only possible to see one lesson during the inspection; judgements are based upon the work of most classes in files and on display and discussions were held with pupils and teachers. By the ages of seven and nine pupils achieve standards that are above average. This is an improved position from the time of the previous inspection, where standards were judged to be average.
121. Pupils in Year 2 use appropriate terminology, as when describing their route to school or talking about Minehead. Work on the Gambia is well organised; pupils draw maps and label main features. They show a good knowledge of what it is like to live there and make comparisons with their own locality. By the age of nine, pupils comment on geographical features and follow directions. Pupils show an appreciation of environmental issues. Mapping skills are developing well and most pupils understand how environments change. Work is presented in a variety of ways and makes good use of pictures. In Year 4, pupils show a clear understanding of how caves are formed, following their field trip. They understand technical vocabulary such as water table and limestone. They show very good general geographical knowledge of the United Kingdom, Europe and the wider world, for example, of continents, countries, capitals, rivers and mountains. Pupils show impressive wider knowledge, which they relate to current events. For example, knowing about the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Pupils are beginning to use information technology to select information by accessing the Internet using home computers. They use geographical knowledge to support their work in other subjects such as history, which shares time with geography.
122. Pupils' learning is good; high-attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged by extended tasks and pupils who find work more difficult are supported by work well matched to their needs and often by classroom assistants and helping parents. There is clear evidence of advances in learning in lessons and across time. Pupils are increasingly aware of geographical issues, record evidence in investigative work and draw upon more sophisticated vocabulary as they grow older. Links with distant places, such as the one being developed with Barbados, strengthen learning. Pupils develop appropriate basic skills and knowledge but the lack of time to teach the subject narrows the range of topics pupils cover in depth. Pupils show very good attitudes and enjoy their lessons. The pupils respond well to questioning, follow instructions and sustain their concentration in individual or group sessions. They stay on task and treat resources respectfully. Pupils enjoy chances to make choices for themselves in investigative and extended topic work; they work well collaboratively, enjoy talking about their tasks and contributing to discussion in lessons.
123. In the lesson seen in Year 4, the quality of teaching was very good and the scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils and teachers indicate that teaching is good overall with some very good teaching. Teachers show very good knowledge and teachers have visited the Gambia and the Caribbean and bring first-hand experience to the lessons. Lessons are effectively planned to match the needs of the pupils, well organised and utilise an appropriate range of resources; for example, in a lesson seen on caves. Objectives are clear, so pupils know what they are doing. Class management is very good and there is good use of praise and questioning to encourage, support and challenge pupils; relationships are very good. The pace of lessons is suitably brisk so that pupils are well motivated.

124. The subject is very well led by the enthusiastic, experienced and well-organised co-ordinator. Monitoring of teaching is informal. There are appropriate schemes for assessing pupils' work and these will be revised when schemes are revised with the introduction of the new curriculum from September 2000. There are very strong links with other schools in the area. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils examine the beliefs of the various countries they study. For example, they study the religion of the people of the Gambia; they discuss moral issues in relation to the environment and current affairs such as foreign aid. They collect for charities such as Mozambique flood relief and acquire a broad knowledge of the wider world. Good use is made of the school grounds, the area around the school, the local train line and the harbour, beach and Wimbleball reservoir. There is a residential field trip to Charterhouse for pupils in Year 4. These visits are well organised and used effectively to promote learning; they are a strength of the subject.

HISTORY

125. It was only possible to observe a small number of lessons during the inspection but samples of pupils' work in files and on display from most classes were examined and discussions held with pupils and teachers. By the age of seven and nine standards are above the levels expected nationally. This is an improved position from the time of the previous inspection, where standards were judged average.
126. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are beginning to develop an appropriate sense of chronology. They develop further understanding of time and are increasingly able to understand the reasons for historical development, for example, in the study Year 2 undertake using the school building. In Key Stage 2, pupils further their understanding of the importance of sources in historical enquiry and they speak confidently when describing life in Tudor times. In Year 4 pupils show very good knowledge of the Aztecs and speak with confidence about the periods, characters, such as Montezuma and Cortes, dates, some of the reasons for the success of the invasion and some of the effects on the wider world. Pupils' oral work is stronger than written work, topic work is of a high standard. The school recently received an award for pupils' work using historical evidence (the school building) as an entry in a national competition.
127. The quality of pupils' learning is good in both key stages but the time allocated to the subject is restricted because of the recent focus on literacy and numeracy. Pupils make good progress because they are given work to match their prior attainment, which stretches pupils who work faster and is within reach of pupils who need more help. The pupils show increasing historical awareness and collect and record evidence in investigative work and use a more sophisticated vocabulary as they mature. This was seen when pupils visited the harbour, where they made comparisons between the harbour now and in the past, as seen in photographs or documents. Those pupils with special educational needs make good progress in reaching targets set for them supported by classroom assistants. The pupils show positive attitudes at all levels that support learning. They enjoy history and are responsive to questioning. Pupils behave well and follow instructions carefully sustaining their efforts in individual or group work. They are friendly, open and work with interest, treating resources carefully. They enjoy discussing their work, willingly contribute opinions in debate and answer enthusiastically. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work, especially work on display. Enjoyment in working together is evident and they do so productively.
128. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages. In an excellent session in the form a visit to the harbour was observed. This was well organised, supported by parents and there was full attention paid to pupils' safety. Teachers show very good history subject knowledge and the lessons use a wide range of well-prepared resources and imaginative approaches. Lessons support basic skills, have clear objectives and proceed at a good pace. Teaching is clear and confident. Content within the scheme of work is appropriate, though the lack of time has resulted in history and geography sharing time. Class management is very good and relationships are excellent. Teachers use praise to motivate pupils and skilful questioning encourages them.

129. The subject is well led. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, well organised and has clear ideas about the future of the subject. There is an appropriate assessment scheme that will be updated with the introduction of the new curriculum from September 2000. There are good links with other schools. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education through a rich range of experiences. These experiences include the close observation and realisation of the age of objects, discussing moral issues and group work. Visits to extend the experience of the pupils and increase their knowledge of their rich cultural heritage include trips to the locality, the harbour, local churches and Combe Sydenham. Visitors to school provide a valuable source of reference materials; recent visitors include the former harbour master and former pupils of the school when it was run by an order of nuns.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

130. Standards in information technology are in line with levels expected nationally at the age of seven and nine. Since the last inspection, when attainment was unsatisfactory, pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills have improved well throughout the school as a result of weekly lessons in the computer suite, which was installed two years ago.
131. By the age of seven, pupils are confident with the computers and know the function of the three buttons on the 'mouse' to load programs, and to save and retrieve their own work. They know the sequence of routines needed to access a file containing pictures and drawings, and how to select a chosen image and import it into their own worksheet. Pupils re-size and re-position the image accurately and add text to create headed notepaper. These are good skills for their age but many pupils have slow typing skills. Pupils are unsure of the position of the letters on the keyboard, because of a lack of practice. They know how to input information and access a range of graphs to interpret their findings but have had little practice in applying this skill to work in mathematics or science. The pupils control a programmable toy by giving a series of instructions, and are competent to switch on and off tape recorders as they listen to story tapes in literacy lessons.
132. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, most pupils follow complex instructions to use a new program easily. They write simple programs to control a screen "turtle" to make complex shapes and patterns. Pupils change the size, colour and style of text with ease. They develop spelling competence through regular practice on the computer and are confident to explore new programs, such as a complex mathematics program at different levels, to discover what it contains. Pupils utilise a drawing program competently in design and technology lessons to design an eggcup and then add written labels to explain their planning. Pupils attending computer club produce a school magazine of good quality, incorporating their own pictures, and also adding images using a scanner and digital camera.
133. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The school has concentrated on raising standards by developing the computer suite to teach specific skills for each age group and this has been effective. Teachers have good management skills. They make the lessons interesting, with the large teaching screen being effective in introducing and reinforcing skills. Teachers then ensure that pupils understand what they are doing through skilful questioning of individuals or pairs of pupils. There is a clear learning objective for each lesson, which is shared with the pupils and achieved during the lesson. The pupils work hard and support each other well until they have achieved success. As a result, pupils are competent and confident users of computers and pupils make overall satisfactory progress. The pupils in Year 4 who attend computer club apply their skills well and gain independence as they plan and write the school magazine. However, with this exception, very little provision is made for higher-attaining pupils of all ages who learn quickly, or those who have computers at home and already have some of the skills that are being taught. These pupils do not learn as well as they should. Teachers do not keep systematic records to show what skills their pupils have and so lesson planning does not include work at a higher level for those who need it. In contrast, pupils with special educational needs have additional reading help from learning support assistants with a program linked with the school reading scheme. This gives them additional practice at using the computer and good confidence in class sessions, and they make good progress.

134. Some of the skills that pupils learn are developed well to support work in other subjects, such as the story and information books about themselves written by the younger pupils. However, teachers do not use information technology adequately to support work in other curriculum areas, and this does not give pupils sufficient opportunities to practise and apply their skills, to work at a level that matches their skills and to develop independent research to support learning. This was particularly evident in literacy, where no pupils were seen using the computer during the literacy hour and no work was seen where the pupils had drafted and re-drafted, or written extended pieces on the computer.
135. The co-ordinator has been successful in setting up and developing the computer suite, supporting teachers who lack confidence and developing detailed planning to ensure that the pupils are taught the skills necessary to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is at present no whole-school system to record pupils' skills, so that all pupils can be given work at the right level for them to make better progress. There is insufficient planning for the subject to support other curriculum areas, particularly literacy, or for pupils to use the class computers to practise and apply their skills. Resources are good, but are not fully utilised, with the computer suite rarely being used outside the time allocated to classes and special needs groups.

MUSIC

136. By the age of seven and nine, standards in music are above the nationally expected levels. This is an improved position from the time of the previous inspection when standards were average. When pupils enter the school, there are wide differences in attainment between them but most arrive with average musical experience. At all levels, pupils sing well in class, in assembly and in the choir. They sing tunefully, with ample volume, clear diction, enthusiasm as they communicate a sense of enjoyment. Pupils maintain their parts when they sing in two discrete sections. In Key Stage 1, most pupils play tuned percussion or untuned percussion in instrumental work and pupils show good control and knowledge of the instruments. This is further developed in Key Stage 2. Pupils who play instruments and receive tuition can name given notes or recognise common signs. Most pupils are making a good start in understanding notation. In composing, younger pupils make up a suitable accompaniment when singing and pupils in Year 4 produce effective and imaginative pieces using the pentatonic scale. At all levels, pupils listen most carefully to each other and to recordings. They appraise sensibly showing an appropriate vocabulary and a satisfactory general musical knowledge of, for example, instruments, artists, forms, styles, repertoire and composers.
137. The quality of learning is good; in a few lessons it is very good because the school has a specialist teacher who takes classes when teachers exchange groups. High-attaining pupils, who are instrumentalists and read music, make the best progress, building on their experience and their personal interests. These pupils are sufficiently stretched. At both key stages, pupils with special needs make similar progress to other pupils; they are very well integrated. Pupils' positive attitudes and very good behaviour support achievement; music is a popular subject. Pupils are friendly, open, responsive, and respectful towards staff and each other, use equipment sensibly and work well in groups. They show initiative and willingly enjoy taking responsibility; for example, when composing in groups. Older pupils recognise that music contributes significantly to their social, cultural and personal development.
138. In classroom work, teaching is good overall at both key stages. Teaching is confident and explanations are clear so pupils know what to do. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are appropriately high. Organisation is good and lessons are well matched to the needs of the pupils. Discipline and relationships are very good at all levels and often excellent. Within lessons, a range of musical instruments and recordings is available and pupils make good use of their own instruments in classroom work. Good teaching places an emphasis on developing pupils' technical musical vocabulary. Lessons proceed at a lively pace. Assessment is supportive and helps pupils improve. Praise is employed well to encourage pupils.
139. The new hardworking and enthusiastic co-ordinator has made great strides in developing music over the last year. She has clear ideas about the future of the subject. Assessment systems are informal (and each class has tape recordings of their achievements) and are due

for review when new schemes are adopted in September 2000. Links with other schools within the area, including the middle school, are well developed. Music accommodation is excellent; the large music area makes a big impact on learning.

140. Three visiting teachers provide a wide range of instrumental lessons involving a number of boys and girls. In these lessons pupils' attitudes are very good and the quality of teaching and learning is good; very good teaching was observed in string and recorder tuition. Standards are well above the levels expected nationally. In extra-curricular work, there is a forty-strong choir that sings competently in parts; there is a new steel pan group with instruments brought by teachers from the Caribbean. In these groups, the enthusiastic pupils are well taught. The different groups perform at school concerts and in the local community; for example, at the local hospital at Christmas, at the Spring fair or on Key West Radio. The very good links with other schools enable pupils to share events such as samba workshops or Spaceship Earth. Music makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education; pupils experience spirituality through improvising and taking turns in negotiating when composing. They enjoy the social interaction in group work and listening to music from many parts of the world. The developing activities reflect the dedication of staff, the support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians, whose performances and successes bring credit to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

141. By the age of seven and nine, pupils attain standards in line with those expected nationally. This is a similar position to that at the time of the previous inspection. The pupils, including those with English as an additional language and special educational needs, make good progress in their lessons. In swimming the pupils make good progress as they have regular access in the summer term to lessons in the school pool; with the older pupils building on these earlier skills and developing their techniques at a local pool.
142. By the age of seven, pupils listen carefully to instructions and try hard to follow them, taking turns and paying particular attention to safety factors. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and warm up and relaxation at the beginning and end of sessions are seen as important. In the Year 2 lessons in the school hall, the classteachers gave clear instructions to the pupils. The lessons were structured to ensure that not only did the pupils extend and develop their ball control skills but also evaluated which of the balls were best suited to each different activity. The pupils experimented with a range of bats and decided which ball was best. They went on to investigate the effects of dribbling small balls, using their hockey sticks to see which were most effective for control. The teachers were clear that they sought not only to improve the pupils' ball skills but also for the pupils to understand which balls are best suited to which purpose. In swimming the pupils are all confident in the water and try hard to develop their strokes. In the lessons in the school pool, the teachers are aided by the large number of parents and adults who volunteer to help. This extra support ensures that all safety issues are fully and comprehensively addressed. The relatively small groups of pupils in each lesson enables focused work for each individual and the pupils make good progress.

143. By the age of nine, the pupils understand the beneficial effects of prolonged physical activity upon their health and general well-being. The pupils are at present receiving expert tennis tuition. This good teaching, and the good quality and quantity of resources that have been sponsored by a national charity, are helping the pupils develop their tennis skills well. The pupils are participating in a course of lessons at the local tennis club and, when the weather is wet, in the school hall. The pupils are learning how to strike the tennis ball using a forehand and backhand stroke and how to keep a rally going with their partners. The lesson observed was the first of their sessions and as a result of good coaching, enthusiastic participation and hard work the pupils were making good progress.
144. The pupils show evident enjoyment and enthusiasm. They work hard and try to succeed in their tasks. They show good sportsmanship as they comment on how well others are doing. The pupils listen carefully to instructions and behaviour is very good. In the swimming pool the pupils behave very well, they clearly understand the safety rules and adhere to them carefully. The pupils put out their own equipment and tidy away at the end of the lessons.
145. Teaching is consistently good across the school. Lessons are effectively planned and the teachers seek to include in the lessons evaluation of equipment as well as teaching specific skills. Teachers make clear teaching points and work effectively to ensure that the pupils improve. Good demonstrations and the effective use of pupils to illustrate good practice helps the pupils to improve their skills and make good progress. The teachers have good subject knowledge and this is evident particularly in their swimming lessons, which show a clear progression of skills between each year group and between the groups of pupils. There is a good level of management and the pupils respond to this and behave very well. Teaching provided by outside agencies is of good quality and the active and brisk pace of these lessons ensures that the pupils are clearly focused on their task.
146. The policy and scheme of work are good and give clear guidance and support for all teachers. The scheme ensures thorough coverage of all elements of the National Curriculum. Physical education is at present being co-ordinated by the headteacher. Extra-curricular activities and participation of adventurous activities at a residential centre all add to the wide range of opportunities available for the pupils. The accommodation is very good with good outdoor provision, a large hall and an indoor heated swimming pool. The swimming pool is maintained by the school caretaker, with the Parent Teacher Association paying for its upkeep.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

147. Standards are in line with the expectations stated in the locally agreed syllabus. The standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity and are familiar with Judaism. They understand that religions have a variety of special occasions and they appreciate the importance of the bar mitzvah to Jewish boys, and of the christening service to Christians. Pupils know the importance of times such as Christmas and Easter for Christians and Shavout for Jews. They are aware of the importance of "special things" and have identified some items which are important to themselves, as well as some which are special to Jews, such as the Torah, and they know some Christian symbols, such as the cross. Pupils recognise the importance of friendship. They describe confidently what makes a "good friend", and understand that many of their friendships are found within their own families.
148. By the end of Year 4, when pupils leave the school, pupils have increased their knowledge of Christianity, have a satisfactory knowledge of Sikhism and a limited knowledge of Islam. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity is mature, as shown by their imaginative writing of the excitement and wonder of Pentecost. Pupils successfully identify and discuss similarities and differences between religions, such as in clothing and lifestyles. They know that different religions have their own places of worship, such as the church, gurdwara and mosque, and their own important books, such as the Bible, the Guru Granth Sahib and the Qur'an. Pupils are confident in discussing a variety of issues, such as the importance of finding out about the lifestyles and beliefs of other people, even though this is difficult in the predominantly white, Christian community in which they live. Pupils are aware of the need for caring and tolerance in their dealings with other people and they speak confidently about Florence Nightingale and

Mother Theresa as examples to follow. Pupils recognise the importance of prayer in religion. They write their own prayers for class assembly and appreciate the opportunities given for personal reflection during these times.

149. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall at both key stages. First-hand experiences such as visits, visitors to school, and the use of artefacts and videos enrich the curriculum and consolidate learning. In a Year 2 class the pupils described how they had taken a doll to church to be christened, how they had chosen her names and what happened at the service. In a lesson seen in Year 4, the quality of teaching was good. The sequence of lessons about Pentecost was well planned and engaged the interest of the pupils. In the previous lesson, pupils had interviewed one of the governors, in his role as local pastor, about what happened at Pentecost. A tape recording of the interview was used effectively to review the answers and to set the scene for the pupils to write eyewitness accounts. The interest and good understanding of the pupils was shown in the speed with which most of them produced a wide range of vivid descriptions and they were fascinated to hear what others had written. Interesting and thought-provoking experiences are provided to encourage pupils' personal development, such as in a lesson in Year 4. The pupils had just had their first experience of a team-building exercise when on a residential visit and were able to empathise and discuss their own feelings when shown a video where a boy found confidence and overcame bullying through solving problems set for his team. The satisfactory lessons seen and the written work studied from pupils in other classes indicate that teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge, and that satisfactory teaching enables most pupils to make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress because of the high level of adult support and the sensitivity of the teachers to ensure that they understand and achieve well. However, two Year 4 pupils from the special educational needs unit found the discussion and work on Pentecost too difficult and this restricted their learning, despite the best efforts of their learning support assistant. Teachers always mark pupils' books, but the "excellent" stamp is used too frequently for work that could be improved.
150. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and gives good support to subject development through the detailed planning and frequent discussions with teachers about their lesson planning. She monitors learning by collecting samples of work from all pupils in each class. Planning identifies assessment opportunities but there is no recording of knowledge and understanding from which progress can be monitored. The writing of a whole-school recording system is identified in the co-ordinator's development plan for the subject. The satisfactory school resources are supplemented when needed by artefacts supplied by a nearby middle school. At present a small number of pupils in Year 4 miss the first part of every religious education lesson through attending recorder tuition.