

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **SPETISBURY (HALL AND SLOPER) FIRST SCHOOL**

Spetisbury, Blandford

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113826

Headteacher: Mrs D Guy

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald  
17932

Dates of inspection: 26 - 28 June 2000

Inspection number: 191919

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 category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Spetisbury Blandford Dorset
Postcode:	DT11 9DF
Telephone number:	01258 452107
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Bradley
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr J Bald	Registered inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
		Information and communications technology (ICT)	The school's results and achievements
		Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught?
		History	
		Music	
		Equal opportunities	
Ms A Smith	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?
Ms W Burke	Enrolled inspector	Mathematics	
		Geography	
		Design and technology	
Ms J Bavin	Enrolled inspector	Under fives	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Science	
		Art	
		Physical education	

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Spetisbury is a small rural first school. It has 124 pupils, with significantly more boys than girls. The overall social and economic context of the school is favourable. Most pupils joining the school have reached good standards for their age, but the proportion with special educational needs is above the national average. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and all pupils speak English as their first language.

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

This is an effective school. Standards are consistently above average at seven, and above average overall at nine, with particularly good standards in science. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good, reflecting the school's Christian ethos. Teaching is good, and the school is well led and managed. Value for money is satisfactory, and is set to improve further.

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

- Standards are consistently above average at seven, and above average overall at nine.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about school, work hard and behave very well.
- The school is well led and managed.
- Teaching is good overall, and very good to excellent in about a third of lessons.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- There is a broad and interesting curriculum, including excellent use of facilities outside the classroom.
- Pupils are encouraged to think and to reflect on their work.
- The school grounds provide excellent opportunities for learning and play.

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

- The teaching of spelling for pupils aged seven to nine is not effective.
- The school does not track these pupils' progress closely enough.
- Standards in information and communications technology are below average.

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

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

When the school was last inspected, in November 1996, it had serious weaknesses. Standards were below average at nine, and only average at seven. Almost a third of teaching was unsatisfactory, and management required improvement. The school has made good improvements in all of these areas. Standards are now above average overall at nine, and consistently above average at seven. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in lessons during the inspection, and about a third of lessons are now very good or excellent. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work and reporting to parents have improved, though the school still needs to track pupils' progress more closely between the ages of seven and nine. Efficient management systems have been established which make good use of the strengths of all of the staff and of governors. The good climate for learning noted during the last inspection has been maintained, and there have been substantial improvements in the school's resources for learning, accommodation and grounds. The well-qualified and committed team of teachers and teaching assistants that has been built up in recent years, and the pattern of rising standards at seven, have put the school in a very good position to make further improvements.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	B	A	B
Mathematics	C	A	A	B
Science	B	A	A	B

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average      E

Almost all pupils reach the standards expected in national tests for seven-year-olds, and an above-average proportion exceed them. Seven-year-olds' work during the inspection was also consistently above average in number work, reading and writing. Nine-year-olds reach very good standards in science, good standards in mathematics, including good number work, and good standards in reading and in speaking and listening. Nine-year-olds' writing during the inspection was of broadly average quality, but suffered from weak spelling. These standards were similar to the school's results in voluntary national tests for nine-year-olds. They are, overall, in line with those parents are entitled to expect, and the school has set good and achievable targets for further improvement in each year group.

Standards in art are very good throughout the school, with examples of excellent drawing and close observation. There are good standards in history and geography, where they benefit from the school's excellent use of resources outside the classroom, physical education and music. Average standards are reached in design and technology. Standards in information and communications technology are below average, despite recent improvements.

Children under five reach good standards in all aspects of their work, and many make a good early start on the National Curriculum, particularly in reading and in number work.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils work hard, listen attentively, concentrate well, and are keen to take part in all activities. They are proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons and in independent work. Excellent in the use of the grounds during breaktimes.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils willingly accept responsibility and help each other. Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils are excellent.
Attendance	Above average.

There is a very good start to the school day, and a happy working atmosphere in all lessons. Pupils' attitudes to school, and their good completion of homework, reflect values shared by the school and parents.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Under fives	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.*

Teaching was very good or excellent in 31 per cent of lessons, good in 48 per cent and satisfactory in 21 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in lessons during the inspection. Good teaching in mathematics and numeracy enables pupils to develop good skills in mental mathematics and to apply mathematical ideas in solving problems. Teaching and learning in English, including literacy, is consistently good for pupils aged five to seven, and good overall in the literacy hour for pupils aged seven to nine. However, spelling is not well taught in subjects other than English, and this limits standards and the quality of learning in writing. Teaching in science is very good, and helps pupils develop very good skills in observation and analysis. The school's skilled and experienced team of teaching assistants promote learning very effectively throughout the school.

In the most successful lessons, teachers inspire their classes to high rates of mental and imaginative effort, which they then bring forward through their own outstanding knowledge of the subject. In all lessons, teachers promote pupils' speaking and listening skills well, and stimulate interest. They manage classes very well, and sustain a good pace of work which, in combination with pupils' very good attitudes to school, results in good learning. Teachers' use of resources outside the classroom, including the Ancient Technology Centre and the school's grounds, is excellent. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, work is planned in less detail and the pace of learning is slower. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is of good overall quality, and leads to good learning for these pupils, particularly in number work and in reading. The teaching of children under five in the reception class is good overall, and well matched to their abilities and learning needs. It promotes good early learning and a well-planned introduction to the National Curriculum. Teaching in information and communications technology is satisfactory, and teachers are beginning to use computers well in other subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good breadth and balance, with good links between subjects. Very good opportunities for pupils to think and reflect on their work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall, leading to good learning and progress in number work, reading, the early stages of writing, and self-confidence.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school had no pupils with English as an additional language at the time of the inspection.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, based on the school's Christian ethos and on its aims and values. Pupils learn to value and respect each other and to appreciate their own and other cultures. Teachers set them a very good example of hard work and consideration for others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of pupils' welfare, and provides good guidance on their personal development and on their work.

The school has a good working partnership with a substantial majority of parents. The lunchtime recorder club is very successful. Pupils have good opportunities to perform music, and the school grounds provide excellent opportunities for learning and play at lunchtime. However, there are no other clubs, and no provision for additional study support. The school's use of an exceptionally broad range of resources and visits contributes breadth and interest to pupils' learning. Very high standards in art contribute much to pupils' cultural development, and the links between art and science through observation help pupils develop broad and independent thinking. The school provides very good personal support to pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Management of staff is very good - this leads to a strong sense of teamwork in the school and a shared commitment both to its Christian ethos and to high standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors contribute to the school's clear sense of direction. They play an effective leading role in improving standards, in maintaining its ethos, and in financial and development planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school uses the results of national tests well to track pupils' progress and its own performance. Pupils' work is used to track performance well for children aged five to seven, but this is less effective for pupils aged seven to nine.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is astute and effectively tuned to educational aims. There is good strategic use of resources, including excellent use of resources outside the classroom.

The headteacher and governors have built a strong team of teachers and teaching assistants, whose work is the bedrock of the school's improvement. All have helped develop the school's good collection of learning resources. The school has good indoor accommodation and excellent grounds. The principles of best value are used well in financial planning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils make good progress and behave well.</li> <li>Pupils enjoy school.</li> <li>Teachers expect pupils to work hard.</li> <li>The teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities outside lessons.</li> <li>Co-operation with parents.</li> <li>The school needs to be more approachable.</li> <li>The quality of homework.</li> </ul>

Positive comments substantially outweighed negative ones, and were generally confirmed by inspection evidence. A significant minority of parents expressed negative comments, which were investigated. The inspection team found that the school was playing its part to build good personal relationships with parents, particularly at the beginning and end of the school day, but that the presentation of its newsletters and the governors' annual report could be improved. Activities outside lessons, including the use of the grounds at lunchtime, were of good quality, but their scope could be extended to provide more support for learning. Homework was found to be good overall, though some tasks needed more guidance and structure.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The results of national tests for seven-year-olds in 1999 were well above national average levels in English, mathematics and science, and above average when compared with similar schools. These results have shown very good improvement since the last inspection in 1996. Seven-year-olds were consistently reaching above-average standards in all three subjects during this inspection, with examples of work of very good standard, including a series of extended stories in English and very good analytic work in science. The results of voluntary national tests for nine-year-olds in 1999 were above national average levels in reading, writing and mathematics, and in line with national average levels in spelling. Nine-year-old pupils during the inspection were reaching very good standards in science, and above-average standards in reading and in mathematics. However, the quality of their writing was held back by weaknesses in spelling, and was in line with the standard achieved in most schools. During the last inspection, the work of nine-year-olds was below-average in English, mathematics and science. Overall, these results represent a good improvement since the last inspection, and a very good improvement in science.
2. Seven-year-olds read and write fluently and accurately, with good expression both when reading aloud and in their stories. They discuss their work well, using a good range of vocabulary, and offer interesting ideas, for example on the criteria for assessing the qualities of materials in science lessons. Standards in mathematics are consistently above average, with quick and accurate calculation in mental mathematics, and good application of mathematical knowledge in solving problems. Pupils' understanding of scientific principles is also consistently above average, with examples of outstanding work among higher-attaining pupils, who were beginning in discussions to address questions at a level expected of eleven-year-olds.
3. Most nine-year-olds read a broad range of books, including non-fiction, fluently and with good understanding, while lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a good grasp of the basic skills of reading. Speaking and listening skills are above average at nine, and are developed well through teachers' good use of question and answer sessions in lessons. Nine-year-olds write clear, straightforward texts for a good range of purposes, with examples of better writing from higher-attaining pupils. However, their approach to writing is not consistent, and much of their work outside English lessons is marred by lack of sufficient attention to spelling. The spelling of lower-attaining pupils is also much less secure than their knowledge of reading. Standards in mathematics and numeracy are more consistently good. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the number system, and use and apply it well. Standards in science are very good, following teaching which is closely focused on the development of scientific thinking, and which stretches all pupils very effectively.
4. Pupils throughout the school were reaching average standards in other subjects during the last inspection. Here again, the school has made significant improvements, and standards at both seven and nine are now better than average in history, geography, physical education and music, and well above average in art,

where pupils develop a broad range of skills and use them to create work which is often beautiful and, in some of the best pastel drawings, strikingly powerful. Pupils' creativity and imagination are given good scope in all of these subjects, and they are encouraged to think about people and values, for example by putting themselves in the position of a woman living under the laws and customs of ancient Greece. Standards in design and technology are average overall throughout the school. While pupils often reach good standards in making things and in cooking, their work shows limited evidence of designing and of evaluating designs. Standards in information and communications technology were average during the last inspection, though pupils' skills were somewhat limited. The school has recently begun to develop its work in the subject effectively in line with its priorities for development, and pupils' skills and confidence are improving. Nevertheless, the school has made less progress in this subject than most schools nationally, and standards are still below average throughout the school.

5. While pupils begin school with a good overall level of skills, an above-average proportion have special educational needs. Despite the weakness in nine-year-olds' spelling, the good standards they reach in other aspects of English and in mathematics, and the very good standards in science bring the school's overall results into line with those parents are entitled to expect. The school has worked hard and effectively to raise standards, chiefly by ensuring improvements in teaching, and has set challenging targets for further improvement. The standards now reached by seven-year-old pupils provide a very good basis for achieving these.

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

6. The last inspection found that pupils behaved and concentrated well in most lessons and were interested in their work. The school has maintained this strength, and pupils' attitudes to learning have a positive impact on learning and standards.
7. Pupils arrive at school ready to work and settle down quickly to the tasks set for them by teachers. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other, and work both co-operatively and independently, often with a strong sense of purpose. They are genuinely interested in their work in the classroom, and in the opportunities for learning outside it, such as the lunchtime recorder club. Pupils are proud of their school. They help to keep it clean and tidy, and help with the care of the school gardens and playing areas. For example, they have helped to design and make part of the Millennium Garden, have contributed to the attractive selection of games and activities set out in the playground, and helped build the replica Iron Age hut in the school grounds.
8. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good, with excellent behaviour in the school grounds at break and lunchtime. The school is an orderly and well-mannered community, and its atmosphere of politeness and mutual respect is an important factor in the quality of learning. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection, and pupils consistently show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. They arrive in assembly quickly and quietly, and listen thoughtfully to the views and comments expressed by teachers, visitors and other pupils. No incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour were observed during inspection, and pupils showed very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others.

9. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. Teachers and teaching assistants foster pupils' personal development and social skills by inviting them to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and actions, particularly during assemblies and circle time. Pupils willingly take up opportunities to help teachers with the day-to-day running of the school. Relationships are very good. Pupils are courteous towards staff, each other and visitors. Most are keen to work collaboratively together, both in the classroom and in other aspects of school life, and support each other's efforts. For example, two accomplished recorder players took obvious delight in working up pieces to play together to their classmates. Older pupils write to and befriend those new to the school.
10. Attendance was good at the time of the last inspection, and this has been maintained. The rate of absence which is not authorised by the school is higher than the national average, but this fact reflects the school's determination not to condone absence which is not properly justified. Most pupils arrive at school promptly, although a little lateness was observed during inspection. Registers are marked promptly and efficiently at the start of morning and afternoon school, and legal requirements are met.

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

11. Teaching during the inspection was good in 48 per cent of lessons, very good in 17 per cent and excellent in 14 per cent, so that a total of almost four in five lessons were good or better. The remaining 21 per cent of lessons were of satisfactory quality. During the last inspection, teaching was good or better in 47 per cent of lessons, but unsatisfactory or poor in 30 per cent. The good overall quality of the school's teaching shows very good improvement on the position during the last inspection, and is the main reason for the rising standards in the school.
12. The quality of teaching in mathematics, including numeracy, is never less than good, and was very good or excellent in two-fifths of lessons. The consistently good learning produced by this teaching has established a pattern of rising standards and put the school in a very good position to improve them further. The quality of English teaching is good overall. Speaking and listening skills and reading are taught well throughout the school, with good opportunities for pupils to read independently, and very good use of question-and-answer sessions to develop pupils' thinking and to consolidate skills. Writing is well taught to pupils aged five to seven. There is very good use of writing in other subjects to extend the range and quality of pupils' skills and, recently, some very good teaching leading to extended stories. However, while there is some good teaching of writing in the literacy hour for pupils aged seven to nine, much of the benefit of this is lost through lack of attention to spelling when pupils are writing in subjects other than English. This gap in teaching and learning is sufficiently serious to affect the quality of pupils' communication in writing, and is a key issue for the school to address.
13. The teaching of science is very good, and was excellent in two-thirds of lessons seen during the inspection. This teaching is based on exceptionally good professional knowledge and understanding, and uses resources, including microscopes, very effectively to develop pupils' observational and analytic skills to high levels. Art is also taught to a very good overall standard, with imaginative use of a broad range of materials and, in an excellent lesson for six-year-olds, exceptionally good links with science. Work in both of these subjects makes a

major contribution to the school's aim of helping pupils to develop independent minds.

14. The quality of teaching is good in music, both in lessons and in the recorder club, and in history and geography, where it benefits from extensive and imaginative use of resources outside the classroom. Pupils, for example, have recently taken part in a professionally led archeological dig in the school grounds, and have made iron-age implements at the local Ancient Technology Centre. Physical education is now taught to a good overall standard, with very good teaching of younger pupils. Teachers during the inspection were beginning to make good use of information and communications technology (ICT) in several subjects. The teaching of ICT skills observed was satisfactory, and led to effective learning of the early stages of the National Curriculum. There was evidence from pupils' work of some good teaching in design and technology, though this was biased, as during the last inspection, towards the making element of the subject rather than its design component.
15. While there were only a small number of children under five in the reception class at the time of the inspection, they received good teaching, well adapted to their needs and covering all the areas of learning in national guidelines. The quality of their learning was consistently good, and they were making a smooth transition to work in the National Curriculum.
16. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall, and benefits from good early identification and assessment, combined with clear and well-considered targets for learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in building these pupils' confidence and involve them well in all the activities of the class. Additional teaching for numeracy is effective, with some good use of computers. Additional literacy lessons are of good quality, but their effectiveness in promoting progress in writing for pupils aged seven to nine is limited by inconsistencies in the teaching of spelling. Teaching provides good scope for gifted and talented pupils, both in the structure of lessons and in opportunities for performance in music.
17. Where the quality of teaching is satisfactory rather than good, work is planned in less detail to meet the full range of learning needs in the class, and the contribution of each part of the lesson to the whole is less clearly thought out. The other qualities in the teaching remain consistent, however, and pupils learn from each lesson. Marking helps pupils aged five to seven to improve on their work, but spelling is not marked consistently enough for pupils aged seven to nine, and pupils are not given specific targets to improve on their errors. Teachers make good use of homework for pupils aged five to seven. Homework for pupils aged seven to nine covers a broad range of topics, with scope for personal research. It provides well for higher-attaining pupils, but some tasks for lower-attaining pupils do not give them enough explanation and guidance on how to complete them, and this leads to some work of low quality.
18. The quality of teaching benefits from a very good partnership between teachers and a team of skilled and effective teaching assistants. It creates a very good climate for learning, beginning with a prompt start to the working day, when pupils settle to work straight away, and receive good individual help with points of difficulty. Teachers investigate ideas very well with pupils, using questions and answers consistently well to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and

understanding. They manage classes well, and give particular help and encouragement to pupils with difficulties. For example, a pupil with special educational needs, who had devised his own key for a plan of the school in geography, was given very effective support by his teaching assistant and by his teacher in presenting his work to the rest of the class. Teachers use displays thoughtfully and effectively to promote pupils' learning and to develop a sense of pride in achievement.

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

19. The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum, enriched by a programme of visits, the use of the school grounds and an approach to planning that makes good links between subjects and enhances the depth of pupils' understanding. All statutory requirements are met. The school has exceeded the strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development found at the last inspection.
20. The school has introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies successfully. This development has addressed the weaknesses in planning for English and mathematics identified during the last inspection, though further improvement is needed in the teaching of spelling to older pupils. The school has made very good improvements in the depth and detail of its planning for science. Arrangements for information technology do not provide sufficient time for this subject for younger pupils, but the school's overall provision now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. While improvements in planning for information and communications technology have been held up by attention to national priorities for literacy and numeracy, the school is aware that its provision is underdeveloped, and has good plans to improve it.
21. The curriculum for children under five is well planned to meet the needs of the children in the reception class, and contributes to the good standards they reach. Children under five make a smooth and rapid transition to the National Curriculum, and the school builds well on the high level of personal and social development that most bring to the school. The school has good plans to make further improvements in its planning for children under five, including those who begin with less well-developed skills, following the introduction of the new Foundation Curriculum in September.
22. Pupils with special educational needs have a broad and balanced curriculum throughout the school, suitably adapted to meet individual needs through well-designed individual education plans. The school complies fully with the Code of Practice for special educational needs, and is careful to consider the needs of each pupil individually. This ensures that pupils' needs are properly identified, within the limits of the school's resources, and that additional information and evidence from parents are properly considered. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs makes a significant and positive contribution to their confidence and to their learning. There are good opportunities for pupils with artistic and musical talents to develop their skills and to perform.
23. All pupils benefit from the school's extensive and varied programme of visits, as well as from its excellent use of resources outside the classroom and in the community. The extremely attractive grounds, designed by all members of the

school community under the guidance of the headteacher, make a significant contribution to pupils' learning through art and scientific enquiry as well as through the games that they encourage. Visits include trips to farms for pupils in the reception class, theatre visits for the whole school, a close look at Georgian Blandford for six-year-olds and a visit to a Japanese garden for older pupils. All visits are carefully planned to contribute to pupils' learning and to develop their thinking.

24. The overall quality of learning opportunities outside the classroom is good. Lunchtime recorder clubs are very well attended. The school grounds provide excellent opportunities for educational play at lunchtime, and pupils used them with great enthusiasm during the inspection for activities which ranged from dance to the close observation of caterpillars. A significant minority of parents believe that the school should provide more opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Inspection evidence showed important strengths in the school's provision, but that it might usefully be extended to include clubs to provide specific support for learning.
25. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. In science lessons, older pupils develop very good understanding of the features of a healthy lifestyle. There is an additional, structured programme for personal, social and health education that provides good opportunities to consider issues such as feeling safe, behaviour and personal responsibility. The school has a suitable policy for sex education and education on the misuse of drugs, and prepares pupils well for making informed choices in their own lives. There are very good links with the pre-school playgroup and good links with middle schools.
26. The school ethos ensures that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates every aspect of its life. A particular strength is that pupils are regularly encouraged both to observe very closely and to reflect. Teachers are highly skilled in encouraging pupils to appreciate the wonder of the natural world, through subjects such as science, art and geography. For example, the oldest pupils marvelled when they discovered tiny working jaw bones in the pellets of a barn owl. Assemblies also provide a valuable opportunity for pupils to reflect, to value the natural world and to consider the significance of passing time.
27. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development. Adults consistently provide very good examples of hard work and consideration for others. Pupils contribute to the code of behaviour for their class, and have very good understanding of the school's few simple and well thought-out rules. Their concerned response to instances of inconsiderate behaviour in their work – for example, to a story in which a present was treated with disdain – show that the pupils absorb the school's values and make them their own. The school reflects and strengthens the moral values pupils bring with them from home.
28. All adults in the school support pupils' social development very effectively, with high expectations of their co-operation and collaboration. They provide frequent opportunities for pupils to work, plan and solve problems together. Lessons usually end with an opportunity for pupils to share their learning with each other. This is a strength of the school and is highly successful in fostering an ethos of mutual respect among pupils, as well as between them and adults. Throughout the school, pupils are given good responsibilities on a daily basis, such as tidying classroom equipment and controlling the tape recorder during assemblies. There are regular opportunities for pupils to raise funds for good causes, to which they respond generously.



29. Art and music have a high profile throughout the school, and enhance learning. Art is very effectively displayed, and there are good opportunities for pupils to perform music. Staff plan carefully to ensure that pupils appreciate other cultures as well as their own. For example, older pupils write Haiku poetry following the Japanese tradition and illustrate their work with ink sketches in the style of Japanese artists. The school has recently linked history and art in a visit to the Ancient Technology Centre. Older pupils followed this visit with artwork based on building structures that they had observed. Younger pupils collaborated to produce a mural of 'The Creation of the World' celebrating their own cultural tradition.

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

30. The school has maintained its strengths in this aspect of its work since the last inspection, and has improved the quality of its guidance to pupils. Arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good, and make a positive contribution to improving educational standards. The school provides a clean, attractive and orderly environment in which pupils can learn effectively and in which parents are made welcome. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well, and the atmosphere within the school is caring, welcoming and supportive.
31. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. The behaviour policy places emphasis on rewards for good behaviour, but includes sanctions where necessary. Pupils with special educational needs because of their behavioural difficulties receive very effective support, which enables them to take part in lessons on a normal basis without disrupting others.
32. The school has appropriate arrangements for child protection and good arrangements for dealing with health and safety issues including first aid, accidents and emergencies. Good use is made of support staff and they are skilful at meeting the needs of pupils with learning or other difficulties. No health and safety issues arose during the inspection, but the school site is potentially very dangerous as it is next to the main road, and has also been subject to vandalism. The school has dealt with the traffic problem in its arrangements for parents to bring pupils to school in the mornings, and has recently taken effective steps to make the school grounds more secure out of school hours.
33. Procedures for monitoring attendance are consistent and work well. Registers are completed and stored in accordance with statutory regulations. Unauthorised absences are followed up by the headteacher and the school has a very good relationship with the educational welfare officer (EWO) who visits regularly. Parents are reminded of their legal duties to ensure that pupils attend school and of the educational consequences of poor attendance.
34. At the time of the last inspection, the school had too few effective procedures for assessing pupils' progress. It now uses a good range of national tests, including voluntary national tests for eight and nine-year-olds, and samples pupils' work each half-term. These procedures are very effective for children under five, and for pupils aged five to seven, where they are integrated well with the provisions of the National Curriculum. The assessment of the work of pupils aged seven to nine, however, is hampered by the lack of clear reference to the levels of attainment set out in the National Curriculum, so that sampling pupils' work does not give the school a clear picture of the progress they are making. This limits the effectiveness of the school's assessment procedures for these pupils, particularly in English. The

assessment of pupils with special educational needs is carried out to a good standard.

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

35. The school enjoys good links and partnerships with a large majority of parents, and these make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, attainment and personal development. This judgement broadly reflects the findings of the last inspection.
36. Most parents, at the meeting, in their responses to the parents' questionnaire, and in discussions with inspectors during the inspection, were happy with their children's education and their relationship with the school. They liked the quality of teaching and felt that their children enjoyed school, behaved well, and made good progress. However, while almost all parents agreed that their children liked school, a significant minority were very critical. These parents were concerned at the quality of the school's management and of the information they received, and felt that the school was not working closely enough with them. Three tenths of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that they would not feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. A fifth did not believe their children were receiving the right amount of homework – though some thought there was too much homework and some too little. Two-thirds of parents responding to the questionnaire believed that there should be more opportunities for learning outside the classroom.
37. The inspection team investigated all of the comments made by parents. It found that the school's arrangements for homework were good overall, but that some of the work set needed to provide more structure and guidance to lower-attaining pupils. The overall quality of information for parents, and particularly of annual reports, was found to be good, although some of this information could be more clearly and attractively presented. The school's arrangements for learning outside the classroom were also judged good overall, although these activities do not include support for study. Relationships and conversations between all members of the school staff and parents during the inspection were friendly and constructive. The inspection team's conclusion is that the school is managed well, and that it is playing its part in fostering good relations with parents while concentrating on its key task of raising standards.
38. Parents contribute positively to children's learning, both at school and at home. They provide very effective help with reading at home, and in some classes in school. Inspectors saw very good personal relationships between parents and teaching staff, including teaching assistants, at the beginning and end of the school day, and parents supervised children playing in the grounds before they went home. The happy atmosphere created contributes to the very good start to the school's working day. The parent-teacher association is flourishing and arranges many fund-raising and social activities for parents, pupils and the wider community. Many parents are very willing to offer help and in so doing make a major contribution to children's learning. Many parents attend school concerts, sports days, projects with other schools, and school open evenings with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Parents support homework effectively, and have good opportunities to communicate with teachers through the home-school record books.
39. The school provides parents with regular information. Newsletters are frequent, of a good standard, and inform parents about events and issues whilst also

celebrating the school's successes. Parents are well informed of matters relating to school life through the useful prospectus, which includes detailed information about the ways in which parents may help and encourage children's learning in all subjects of the curriculum. The governors' annual report to parents provides a good range of information, including detailed targets for raising standards. The 1999 report did not, however, meet the legal requirement of providing specific information on progress on the points for action raised by the last inspection. Both this report and newsletters for parents are presented in a plain format, which does not make full use of available technology to ensure attractive presentation.

40. Annual reports to parents on pupils' standards and progress are of good overall quality. They are detailed and informative and, although some use technical language, they meet all statutory requirements. The school is increasingly providing practical targets for improvement in each pupil's report. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in their assessment and work. Parents' meetings at the school are well attended.

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

41. The headteacher, governors and teachers with management responsibilities have taken a clear-sighted, determined and effective approach to the serious weaknesses identified during the last inspection. In particular, the school has built up a team of teachers with a good range of skills, experience and professional understanding and has supported them with experienced and effective teaching assistants, one of whom is allocated to each class. The headteacher has assigned appropriate management responsibilities to the newly appointed senior teacher, and has improved the effectiveness of teachers with co-ordinating responsibilities. These developments have provided the school with sufficient staff, well-qualified to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum. They have enabled the school to raise standards in science and mathematics and in English for pupils aged five to seven, although the co-ordinator for English still does not have sufficient opportunities to monitor standards in writing among pupils aged seven to nine. The improvements in staffing and management have enabled the school to improve the overall quality of the education it provides on a bedrock of professionalism and teamwork. They have been the key factors in raising standards, and have placed the school in a very good position to improve further.
42. The governors provide a clear lead and carry out their responsibilities well. The curriculum committee monitors standards well and fosters the school's commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum. Governors have developed good relationships with teachers who have management responsibilities, and are well involved in monitoring progress towards targets in the school development plan. Financial planning, both in the short and medium term, is good, and directs money towards clear educational goals. For example, classes containing more than one year group have been eliminated, and good use has been made of flexibility in funding, and of specific grants, to recruit well-qualified teachers and teaching assistants. The governors and headteacher apply the principles of best value effectively in their decision-making and purchasing. Through their prudent planning, the deficit in the accounts for 1998-1999 has been turned into modest surplus in the accounts for 1999-2000.
43. The school has clearly identified its good results with pupils aged five to seven, and the use of computers has been properly identified as a weakness, so that good

steps are now being taken to improve it. The school uses the results of a range of annual tests to monitor its performance against national and local authority averages and against the results of similar schools. It complements this analysis with a good system of internal audit, which identifies strengths and weaknesses for action through the school development plan. While the emerging evidence of weak spelling in pupils aged seven to nine has not yet led to effective action, these arrangements are in other respects effective. They have contributed much to the very good improvements the school has made in mathematics and science.

44. The climate for learning, which was one of the strengths at the time of the last inspection, has been sustained and further developed through the imaginative range of learning experiences provided for the pupils and through the personal encouragement provided for all of them. For example, pupils arriving before school begins often receive individual help with their work from the headteacher or their class teacher, and less confident pupils, including those with special educational needs, are given particular encouragement to present their best work to the class. Teaching assistants are never far from a pupil with a difficulty, and their skilled help for pupils with behavioural problems, and for those who have to work hard on basic skills, contribute much to the inclusive atmosphere of the school. The school's aims, centred on its strong Christian ethos, show a good balance between high standards and personal development, and are effectively represented in its life and work.
45. The school has an attractive building, which provides good accommodation and facilities to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum. It has been modernised and extended since the last inspection in a way that has maintained its original character. The school grounds have been developed to an exceptionally high standard and offer an excellent range of play and learning activities for the pupils. The building and grounds benefit greatly from the headteacher's design and landscaping skills, and are very well maintained by the cleaner in charge. The school secretary makes a most effective contribution to the day-to-day running of the school, and uses new technology well for administrative purposes.
46. Resources for learning were adequate at the time of the last inspection, but the range of books was limited. The school now has an attractive and carefully chosen selection of books which do much to foster pupils' interest in reading. The overall quality of the school's resources is now good, and is very effectively complemented by the outstanding and consistent use of resources beyond the school boundaries. The range of resources available to teachers makes an important contribution both to standards, notably in science, and to its aim of helping pupils to develop inquiring minds. The improvements in the school's staffing since the last inspection have ensured that it has good numbers of teaching and support staff. They have good levels of skill and understanding in all areas of the National Curriculum apart from information and communications technology, where skills are adequate but could usefully be developed further.
47. Overall, management and efficiency of the school required some improvement during the last inspection, and the school was not providing satisfactory value for money. While work remains to be done, the overall quality of management is now good, and financial planning and the management of the staff are very good. The standards and quality of education currently provided represent satisfactory value for money, and the improving trend that has been established has put the school in a position to provide good value for money in the very near future.

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

48. To continue the trend of improving standards that has been established, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Improve the teaching of spelling for pupils aged seven to nine, by:
  - expecting and requiring more accurate spelling in all of pupils' writing;
  - improving arrangements for the co-ordination and teaching of spelling;
  - monitoring each pupil's progress in spelling through their work;
  - setting targets for pupils and rewarding good spelling more generously.  
(Paragraphs 1, 3, 16, 17, 34, 41, 61, 66, 72, 86)
- (2) Improve its arrangements to track the progress of pupils aged seven to nine, by:
  - noting the levels reached when pupils' work is sampled and monitored;
  - using National Curriculum criteria as well as test results to assess progress.  
(Paragraphs, 1, 3, 4, 12, 17, 34, 62, 83)
- (3) Improve standards and learning in information and communications technology, by:
  - using the National Curriculum levels to set clear targets for all pupils;
  - establishing effective systems to assess and track pupils' progress towards these targets;
  - carrying out the intended programme of training for teachers and assistants.  
(Paragraphs, 5, 14, 20, 43, 89-91)

### **Other issues which should be considered by the school:**

- (1) Improve the consistency and design of homework for pupils aged seven to nine. (Paragraph 17, 37)
- (2) Ensure that each future governors' annual report to parents contains a specific report on progress on the action plan drawn up following the most recent inspection. (Paragraph 39)
- (3) Extend learning opportunities outside the classroom to include support for study. (Paragraph 24)
- (4) Improve the presentation of newsletters and other information for parents. (Paragraph 37)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	17	48	21	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	124
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	30

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.4

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

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	14	13	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	26	26	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (88)	96 (92)	100 (92)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	26	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (92)	100 (96)	100 (92)
	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	0
Chinese	0
White	124
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

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

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.45
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.75
Average class size	25

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	103

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	230,888
Total expenditure	232,943
Expenditure per pupil	1,894
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 7188
Balance carried forward to next year	- 9.423



## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	124
Number of questionnaires returned	65

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	42	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	31	63	5	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	60	6	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	67	15	6	0
The teaching is good.	42	43	6	2	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	53	13	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	32	20	9	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	48	6	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	15	45	29	8	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	42	11	8	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	58	9	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	5	23	35	32	5

## **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**

49. There were five children under five in the school at the time of the inspection. Provision for children under five is good, and the school makes good provision for them. Most children have reached good standards in early learning by the time they start at the school at four. By the age of five, they exceed the nationally established desirable outcomes in language and literacy, personal and social development, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. Most have also made a good start on the National Curriculum. The children benefit from close links between the pre-school and the reception class, as well as the home visits that the reception class teacher makes to all families before the children start school. These links support children's confidence and help ease the transition into school life.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

50. When children start school at the age of four most of them have already had social experience outside their home and of working in groups. Children begin school with good levels of social confidence, interest and concentration. They are skilled at relating to each other and to adults. They continue to persevere well and make further gains in self-reliance, for example when changing for physical education. They behave sensibly and select an activity at the start of the day confidently and independently. They share attention and physical space well when they are working as a whole group on the carpet. The teaching of personal and social skills is good.

#### **Language and literacy**

51. The teaching of language and literacy skills is good overall and successfully fosters children's interest in and enjoyment of books and listening to stories. For example, children under five enjoyed the story, 'Hattie and the Fox', and followed the plot well alongside older children in their class. They enjoy hearing rhythm and participating in action rhymes. They make good gains in writing. They begin by incorporating a few familiar letters into shapes as they try to express more meaning on paper than they are able to write. However, they quickly learn to recognise and to form letters, for example by using letter and picture jigsaw puzzles. They quickly progress to writing a sentence to communicate meaning, such as 'Elmer has lots of colours'. Staff provide pupils with good examples of speaking and listening, and successfully encourage children to speak to the whole class about their knowledge, understanding and experiences.

#### **Mathematics**

52. Children take part successfully in lessons based on the National Numeracy Framework alongside five-year-olds in their class. They count back from five in an action rhyme and begin to understand the concept of taking away through rhymes such as 'Five Currant Buns in the Baker's Shop'. They begin to recognise the pattern of shapes as a whole number through playing number lotto and number snap and they recognise more complex patterns to represent greater numbers than

is expected at their age. They confidently count with meaning to beyond ten and write numerals up to four with a very secure understanding of the quantity of four. They use the language of quantity and weight confidently and with good understanding. The teaching of mathematics is good.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

53. Children under five have good understanding of the world around them. They quickly learn where to find equipment in their own classroom and confidently move around the classroom and the wider school environment. They demonstrated good early scientific understanding and technical skills when making houses for 'Three Little Pigs' from a variety of re-cycled materials. They know where they live and the composition of their family. They demonstrate an understanding of the past when they relate recent experiences, such as school visits or visitors, and provide interesting detail when relating an experience or previous conversation. They make close observations of the natural world, such as bees, and record them with accurate drawings. Children engaged in constructing a 'building' demonstrated a very good understanding of roof structures. Similarly, children were confident in using a computer mouse to select a numeral and drag the cursor to make a choice related to a part of a caterpillar on the screen. The teaching of this area of learning is good.

### **Physical development**

54. Children under five have good co-ordination and physical skills. They are very confident in large open spaces such as the school playing field. They hop, skip and jump with greater control and skill than is expected at their age. Staff successfully encourage independence and concentration, giving pupils a physical challenge and not constantly standing over them as they pursue their target in a range of activities. Children ran between cones with speed and good levels of control when changing direction; they threw and caught a large ball or beanbag accurately. They are equally skilled with small equipment such as a pencil, paintbrush or computer mouse. The teaching of physical skills is good overall.

### **Creative development**

55. Children under five do not have continuous access to creative materials and activities that enable them to use their imaginations. However, teachers plan a wide range of suitable activities, such as puppet-making with fabric and yogurt pots, collage work, nature walks and music sessions. This enables the children to paint and use the range of materials expected for their age. They use a variety of musical instruments to explore rhythm, for example, when they accompany 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm'. While staff appreciate the value of imaginative role play to support learning, they recognise that opportunities for children to tell their own stories are limited. Teaching of creative development for children under five is satisfactory.

## **ENGLISH**

56. Most pupils begin work on the National Curriculum with good skills in English for their age, but a significant minority have special educational needs. Results in the 1999 national tests at seven were well above national average levels, and better than those achieved in most similar schools. Seven-year-olds' work during the

inspection was consistently of above-average standard, with examples of very good work in reading and writing. Nine-year-olds reach above-average standards in reading and in speaking and listening, but standards in writing are held back by weak spelling, and are in line overall with those achieved in most schools nationally. At the time of the last inspection, seven-year-olds were reaching average overall standards, while nine-year-olds were reaching average standards in reading, but below average standards in writing. Standards during this inspection showed very good improvement at seven, and satisfactory improvement at nine, with no significant longer-term differences in the standards reached by girls and boys. Standards at nine are in line with those the school should be achieving, apart from the weakness in spelling.

57. The quality of learning of pupils aged five to seven is consistently good and frequently better. They build well on the good early skills they bring to the subject, and extend their reading, writing and spelling skills well in all of their work. Teachers' highly skilled use of questions extends pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively in all subjects of the curriculum, helping them to make their thinking explicit and building their confidence. Pupils learn to read and write well for a range of purposes, and produce good, accurate extended writing. Teachers pay good attention to the quality of writing in subjects other than English. This enables writing in history and science, for example, to play a big part in developing literacy skills. Classrooms contain attractive displays of pupils' work, leading to a pride in handwriting and presentation. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is of good quality, and is promoted both by teachers and by highly effective teaching assistants, who know the pupils well and are well briefed on the specific needs of individual pupils. The school's home-school reading scheme operates very effectively, and learning is enhanced by well-chosen books.
58. Pupils aged seven to nine make good progress in English lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy. They learn to read with good phrasing and expression, answer and ask questions perceptively, and take good care with handwriting and spelling in these lessons. Higher-attaining pupils read demanding non-fiction texts with good understanding, and lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, gain a good grasp of basic reading, which puts them in a good position to make further progress. Outside English lessons, however, teachers do not always expect the same standards in written work, and particularly in spelling. This limits the quality of work which otherwise has good features, for example in note-making in science and in writing in mathematics, where pupils' spelling of new vocabulary is sometimes poor.
59. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is good in reading and in speaking and listening, and their progress in these skills helps build confidence. Their learning in writing is satisfactory overall, with good progress in the early stages of writing and spelling, but less consistent progress in extending their skills beyond the initial stages.
60. Teaching is good in three-quarters of English lessons, with some very good teaching, and is satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers have good understanding of the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy, and plan interesting learning activities for pupils to engage them in their work and develop their thinking. Sessions involving the whole class at the beginning and end of lessons are well planned, with a good range of reading material and very good use of questions and answers. Where the teaching is good or better, teachers sustain a good pace of

work for pupils working individually and in groups. When teaching is satisfactory rather than good, work in groups is less closely matched to the range of learning needs in the class, and pace is slower, though it remains satisfactory. Homework is used effectively for pupils aged five to seven, and makes a satisfactory overall contribution to learning for those aged seven to nine, though some writing tasks for lower-attaining pupils do not contain sufficient structure and guidance to enable them to complete their work to a good standard.

61. The school devotes an appropriate amount of time to teaching spelling. This is very effective for pupils aged five to seven, who are expected to take care with spelling in all of their work, and to follow up guidance provided in marking. While there is some good teaching of spelling for pupils aged seven to nine, this is not consistently carried through into their writing in subjects other than English. Errors in writing for these subjects are often left unmarked, and teachers do not ensure that pupils use the information provided in marking to improve their work.
62. Arrangements for co-ordination and assessment promote consistently good standards of work among pupils aged five to seven, but are not linked closely enough to the level descriptions of the National Curriculum to ensure consistent progress in English for those aged seven to nine. The co-ordinator for English monitors teaching effectively in the literacy hour, and monitors reading well through decisions on the purchase of books. However, she has too few opportunities to track standards and progress in writing for pupils aged seven to nine. The school has good resources for English, and teachers are beginning to use computers effectively to promote reading and writing.

## **MATHEMATICS**

63. Standards in the 1999 national tests for seven-year-olds were well above national average levels, and above the levels achieved by most similar schools. Over the four years from 1996 to 1999, pupils of this age performed consistently above national average levels, with a rising trend in standards. Boys achieved above average results when compared with their age group, whilst girls' achievements were close to the level expected. There was little difference in the standards of boys' and girls' work during the inspection. Results in voluntary national tests for nine-year-olds are above national average levels.
64. The number of pupils entering the school with special educational needs is above average. In 1999, all seven-year-old pupils reached the standard expected nationally, indicating that those with learning difficulties are well supported in the early years of their education and perform well. Higher-attaining pupils also make very good progress, with a third exceeding the expected standard at seven. Lesson observation and analysis of pupils' work show that all year groups are attaining above average standards. This is particularly evident in their familiarity with numbers and in their ability to relate ideas learned in one lesson to a different context.
65. Pupils enjoy mathematics. In the under-fives classroom, one group worked independently at a computer, happily and productively using the mouse to choose numbers and body parts for a caterpillar. Six-year-olds enthusiastically described three-dimensional shapes hidden from the view of the rest of the class, and were delighted when the other pupils worked out the shape they had described. Seven-year-olds began their lesson after morning break looking forward to lunchtime, but

soon forgot their hunger as they became involved in the number puzzles which they were challenged to solve. In this year group, the confidence of a pupil with special educational needs rose, as the learning assistant knelt on the floor and provided encouragement. Restless pupils in Year 3 found themselves increasingly interested in fractions, and the use of the computer helped pupils with special educational needs to understand and to make progress. Mathematical games, as an introductory activity to the day, proved stimulating for Year 4 pupils, and they drew on this experience well when they came to their numeracy lesson later in the morning.

66. The quality of teaching during the inspection was always good and occasionally very good or excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge and awareness of individual needs. They use questions very well. In introductory sessions, questions are used as probes to awaken understanding, and time is allowed for the slower thinking pupils to answer whilst others are being questioned. In sessions at the end of lessons, pupils are fully involved and well motivated to keep on trying. Teachers expect pupils to engage in thinking and reflection, and pupils respond well to this. For example, one teacher recognised that a group of six-year-olds did not understand three-dimensional shapes as well as she had expected. This led her to change her lesson plans to meet their needs, without affecting the progress of others. The good working relationships between teachers and learning assistants, with assistants often anticipating organisational needs, free teachers to extend pupils' thinking. The single weakness is that teachers are not paying enough attention to spelling problems within mathematics, and have no plans to deal with them. While pupils generally respond very well to the good teaching they are offered, older boys are sometimes lazy in looking words up in dictionaries. The spelling of older pupils is frequently so poor as to interfere with their communication of mathematical ideas.
67. The subject has been well developed since the last inspection report, and the school now has schemes of work reflecting the National Curriculum for all year groups. Work is planned well to ensure progress, and to take account of different levels of attainment within each class. The National Numeracy Strategy has been incorporated well into the school's work, and is contributing to progress. Mathematical skills are used to good effect in other curriculum areas, for example in design and technology and in science, through their use of charts and graphs. Teachers use assessment data well to track pupils' progress and plan future work. The co-ordinator monitors teaching plans effectively. Good resources are provided for the subject, including good learning opportunities in playground games as well as in the classrooms. There are currently no extra-curricular activities in mathematics.
68. Standards in mathematics during the last inspection were no better than average at seven, and below average at nine. The standards now achieved represent a very good improvement on this picture. Despite their weak spelling, most pupils now leave the school with good mathematical skills.

## SCIENCE

69. In 1999, the results of teachers' assessments for seven-year-olds, and of voluntary national tests for nine-year-olds, were well above national average levels, and higher than those achieved in similar schools. The overall standard of work during the inspection was above average for seven-year-olds, and well above average for

nine-year-olds. Seven-year-olds also reached very good standards in aspects of science which they were studying in detail. There is little variation in the standards reached by boys and girls. At the time of the last inspection, pupils reached broadly average standards at seven, and below-average standards at nine. The current picture represents a very good improvement since the last inspection.

70. Progress and learning are good for pupils aged five to seven and very good for those aged seven to nine. Five and six-year-olds develop a good understanding that light comes from a variety of sources that include the sun, candles and torches. At six, pupils understand that electricity is a source of both heat and light. They can identify and describe clearly a wide range of materials, such as wood, glass, plastic and metal. Seven-year-olds develop very good understanding of the properties and functions of materials through 'hands-on' work. One group of pupils showed impressive scientific understanding when offering ideas for sorting materials according to their function. For example, they suggested dividing the materials according to whether or not they are waterproof, translucent or magnetic.
71. Eight-year-olds applied their scientific understanding very well when they considered how force would change the shape of different items, such as cans, plasticine and straw. They described the lifecycle of a frog in good detail, and made well-reasoned predictions of how different substances would respond to heat. They reached a very good understanding of the functions of various parts of a plant, and explained scientific processes very well. For example, they described a broad bean growing up through the soil, 'to find the light'. Nine-year-olds make very thoughtful predictions of the outcome of experiments. For example, they anticipated that grass stored in black plastic and foil would shrivel, while grass stored in clear plastic would 'go yellow'. Older pupils can reflect on a science project, identifying what they have found difficult and where they have had success. A project on electricity ended with impressive consideration of its impact on the quality of people's lives and on the environment.
72. Pupils enjoy their science lessons and behave extremely well in them. They are excited by active and practical involvement. For example, seven-year-olds rushed to volunteer to be in the 'hot-seat' to think of a material and answer questions from other pupils trying to work out its identity. Older pupils were enthralled by their discoveries when they used a key to identify a variety of small skulls and jawbones found in the pellets of a barn owl. Throughout the school, pupils work very productively together on group tasks and they present scientific reports and observations neatly in a good variety of diagrams and charts. However, while pupils use the language of the subject well in discussion, their spelling in written work is unreliable.
73. The quality of science teaching is very good overall, and was excellent in two of the three lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge, very good relationships with pupils and high expectations of pupils' understanding and behaviour. When teaching is excellent, the methods used are imaginative and highly effective, motivating pupils and promoting very good levels of understanding. The lesson proceeds at a brisk pace and pupils are fired with enthusiasm. Teachers know their pupils well and are highly skilled at organising them into effective groups for collaborative work. Teachers also use skilful questions that challenge pupils very well, and regularly reinforce learning and check understanding at the end of a lesson with the whole class.

74. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, and include very effective use of the curriculum published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. There is a good supply of resources for learning and the school makes very good use of these to promote learning through practical, investigative activity. The quality of learning in science, and in particular teachers' emphasis on thought, investigation and reflection, makes an outstanding contribution to the aims of the school

## **ART**

75. Standards in art have improved since the last inspection and are now very good throughout the school. Staff value artwork, and are highly successful in motivating pupils. Younger pupils scrutinised the work of Andy Goldsworthy and then confidently and enthusiastically produced 'land sculptures' in his style, with excellent attention to shape and form. When they produce imaginative paintings inspired by literature they use colour and form with maturity, such as painting a sun behind branches of a tree. At seven, pupils produce well-formed clay thumb pots, sew with neat stitches and make pencil sketches from life with a good eye for detail and shape. They begin to depict perspective, use colour and plan interesting composition in their paintings to an extent that far exceeds the standard normally expected for pupils of their age.
76. At eight, pupils retain very good skills of composition and perspective and also sketch with sensitivity, for example when drawing objects in their local church. They mixed paint carefully and accurately to reproduce views of the wall and garden seen from their classroom window, and produced very mature work on grid patterns inspired by photographs of gates and fences taken in the local area. This close observation of detail re-inforces the skills pupils learn in science.
77. Older pupils produced very carefully observed and sensitively executed pen and ink sketches of Japanese gardens they had visited. They plan carefully when producing screen prints. For example, when they wished to reflect a Japanese theme, they reproduced the essential features of plants or buildings to ensure that the theme was maintained. They experiment very confidently and thoughtfully and then use this experience to make informed choices, for example in deciding on the style of the background to their prints. They produce very closely observed and beautifully executed pastel drawings of the timbers in structures that they have observed at the Ancient Technology Centre.
78. The teaching of art is very good overall. There was an equal distribution of sound, good, very good and excellent teaching during the inspection, and there was further evidence of very good teaching in work displayed throughout the school. Teachers encourage pupils to plan, think and feel in response to the inspiration for their work. When teaching is excellent, pupils are organised into groups with great care, and the teacher inspires them with tremendous enthusiasm. High standards of skill and presentation are expected and achieved, and the work makes a vital and vibrant contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
79. The subject is led with enthusiasm and expertise. There is a good supply of good quality resources. The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development and enhances their learning in a wide range of subjects.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**



80. It was not possible to observe teaching in this subject during the inspection, but discussion with pupils and analysis of their work suggest that pupils reach broadly average standards at both seven and nine, with some examples of better work. Standards are higher in making objects than in designing them. Standards during the last inspection were broadly average, but design was weak and there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, although design still requires improvement.
81. Five-year-olds have good understanding of structure and good co-ordination skills - for example, two pupils built a small room, complete with roof structure, from large cardboard bricks and rectangular blocks. Six-year-olds' cardboard models of their homes showed an individual approach and good understanding of features such as doors and windows. They had benefited from their visit to a model village, and from the observational drawing which they were able to do there. Pupils aged seven to nine explore clay well as a material for constructing model houses and Greek urns. Seven-year-olds had produced creditable thumb pots, and talked interestingly about how the clay had changed as it had dried. Eight-year-olds make sound interpretations of model vehicles including cars, lorries and also horse drawn carts. The oldest pupils had recently completed a project on healthy eating, and had recorded the results of tasting sandwich fillings in a bar graph. Many pupils had made very good miniature iron-age tools during a visit to a blacksmith at the Ancient Technology Centre.
82. However, while there is some above average work in all classes, pupils are not recording their work consistently, and the school has only partially addressed the weakness in design identified during the last inspection. For example, pupils do not have a folder or design book where this visual thinking can be kept and used for assessment purposes.
83. There was evidence of good teaching in pupils' work. Teachers had provided a good range of resources, and appropriate opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. A replica iron-age hut in the school grounds provides a permanent reminder of pupils' hands-on experience of ancient technology. Teachers do not, however, keep an easily accessible and permanent record of pupils' progress from the initial design stage to the final product. Pupils' good drawing skills, which are used well on other subjects, are not fully exploited in design.
84. Pupils enjoy making things and behave well. They take pleasure in describing what they have done, and adult volunteers describe their participation in the work with similar enjoyment. Resources are appropriate and accessible.

## **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

85. Pupils reach good standards in these subjects. Those aged five to seven develop good understanding of the local environment, including the functions of special places, such as the church, and can make simple maps and plans. They develop a good understanding of the causes of events in the past, including, for example, the role of carelessness in starting the Great Fire of London. Pupils aged seven to nine understand the differences between modern life and life in ancient times. They receive a good introduction to the techniques of archaeology, and to the importance of technology, through their visits to the Ancient Technology Centre. The standards currently achieved represent a good improvement since the last inspection.
86. Teachers throughout the school provide an interesting range of learning activities in history and geography, and these ensure learning of good quality. Questions and answers are used well to develop children's understanding and to encourage them to explore ideas - for example, in a discussion of the social status of women in ancient Greece. A 'hands-on' approach is used wherever possible - pupils use authentic techniques to make replica Iron Age tools to a very good standard, and there is a replica Iron Age hut in the school grounds. Younger pupils explore and discuss the school environment before beginning to draw plans, and discuss differences in the stimulating range of places they have visited – these include a model of a 1950s town which is large enough to be explored on foot, and Georgian Blandford. The learning of pupils aged five to seven is enhanced by writing tasks which are carefully designed to extend literacy as well as historical skills. Pupils aged seven to nine are encouraged to write and to carry out independent research, but teachers do not ensure that they pay sufficient attention to detail and to spelling in this work. This limits the quality of learning in writing. These pupils are, on the other hand, beginning to make effective use of computers to find new information.
87. Teaching during the inspection was consistently good, with very good teaching of nine-year-olds working on ancient Greece. This teaching makes an important contribution to the overall aims of the school, encouraging pupils to develop inquiring minds and to consider the ideas and values of other societies in relation to their own lives. It also contributes much to the breadth of the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are fully involved in discussions and are given good opportunities to present their work to the rest of the class. Lessons are long enough to enable a topic to be considered in depth, and teachers plan work well to make effective use of the time available. This teaching represents a good improvement since the last inspection, when some of the teaching was unsatisfactory.
88. Work in history and geography is effectively co-ordinated, and makes consistently good use of resources, both within and outside the school. While the introduction of assessment has been delayed by the school's attention to national priorities for literacy and numeracy, it is well placed to address the issue in its approach to the new National Curriculum.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

89. Nine-year-olds use computers, to research topics they are studying and, less frequently, for writing. Seven-year-olds during the inspection could add short pieces of text to pictures, and were beginning to use word processing. Some

younger pupils were making good progress in directing the 'Roamer', a programmable floor robot, and some pupils with special educational needs were learning effectively from an instructional mathematics program. However, most pupils' skills in ICT are underdeveloped, and standards in the subject are below average. At the time of the last inspection, standards in ICT were in line with those in most schools, although few pupils were using the computers independently. The school's attention to national priorities for literacy and numeracy has limited progress in the subject since the last inspection, but it is now receiving higher priority. Training needs have been identified and are beginning to be met, teachers are identifying good uses for computers in a range of subjects, and the headteacher and governors have considered ICT skills in the appointment of new staff. These developments have placed the school in a very good position to improve its work in the subject.

90. Where computers are used, the quality of learning is good, both in the National Curriculum for ICT and in other subjects. Pupils are very enthusiastic about computers, and are keen to extend their skills, for example by arriving early to work on a computer before school starts. Teachers are beginning to include specific work on ICT in lessons, and are confident in those aspects of the subject that they teach. They give clear explanations, for example on the functions of specific keys, and encourage pupils to work independently. Teaching assistants have good skills in using ICT for specific purposes. Much of this teaching benefits from the training provided alongside the school's acquisition of new equipment. While it is too recent in origin to have resulted in high standards among nine-year-olds, it is equipping younger pupils with the basic skills they need to succeed in the subject, and standards throughout the school are now improving at a good rate.
91. Management and co-ordination in ICT have identified good priorities for future development, and ensure appropriate use of the school's computers by all classes, with good access for pupils with special educational needs. Arrangements to track pupils' progress, however, do not match the full range of skills set out in the National Curriculum.

## **MUSIC**

92. Nine-year-olds reach good standards in singing and in recorder playing, including reading music. They sustain their parts well when singing, and show good standards of rhythm and a sense of melody in their playing. The school was concentrating on these aspects of music during the inspection, but its arrangements for planning and co-ordination ensure balanced attention to other aspects of the National Curriculum in the course of the year. There was too little evidence during the inspection on which to base a judgement on the overall standards reached by seven-year-olds, although the work that was seen, for example singing in assembly, was of good quality. At the time of the last inspection, standards were in line with those expected nationally, and pupils were making good progress. The school has maintained its strengths in music since then, and has improved standards.
93. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject, and this contributes to good learning throughout the school. All the nine-year-olds and many other pupils attended the lunchtime recorder club during the inspection, and were prepared to practise. The learning of higher-attaining pupils is particularly good. They have good

opportunities to work independently on a broader range of tunes than other pupils, and are encouraged to enter for examinations.

94. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good understanding of the aspects of music they teach, and individual teachers have specific strengths that they contribute, both to teaching in lessons and to the recorder club. Teachers build well on pupils' enthusiasm to create a good climate for learning. There is a good pace of work, and pupils are encouraged to enjoy performance. Teachers are quick to recognise and promote musical talent among pupils, and there are good opportunities for performance, both to the class and in assemblies.
95. The school has a good selection of instruments from a variety of cultures, including African instruments. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively included in music-making, with additional support to enable them to play instruments. The recorder club is unusually well-attended, involving all of the older pupils and over half of the staff of the school, including teaching assistants. Music is effectively co-ordinated and makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

96. Throughout the school, most pupils demonstrate good levels of co-ordination and skill for their age. The youngest pupils can throw and catch a large ball over a short distance with a partner with good levels of accuracy. Most pupils at the age of five are beginning to co-ordinate a skip with a skipping rope, and a significant minority can skip very well. At six, most pupils can bounce a ball downwards with a short handled bat for three bounces without losing control. They can throw a beanbag accurately into a hoop at a metre distance.
97. Older pupils have a record of good swimming skills, and represent the school well in the Dorset Country Dancing Festival. It was possible to observe only one lesson for pupils aged seven to nine, during the inspection, and learning was spoiled by a lapse in good behaviour from a significant minority who did not listen properly. While several pupils improved their bowling skills, standards overall did not rise beyond those expected for their age. Nevertheless, the inspection evidence as a whole shows an improvement from the broadly average standards seen during the last inspection.
98. The teaching of physical education ranges from very good to satisfactory, and is good overall. Teachers set pupils a good example by dressing appropriately, and demonstrate the skills they are teaching clearly. They are also very careful to emphasise issues of safety. Teachers always provide a suitable warm-up exercise, and in very good lessons they draw pupils' attention to the effect of exercise on their bodies. Teachers regularly encourage pupils to perform and demonstrate skills for each other. They strike a skilful balance between encouraging pupils and valuing their effort while also urging them on to greater effort and skill. The positive ethos of the school enables pupils to appraise themselves and each other with constructive comments. This ethos also supports a very good balance of team loyalty and competition. Pupils sustain active participation and effort very well in most lessons.
99. The outside accommodation is very good for physical education, but the indoor hall is rather small. There is a good supply of games equipment, and it is kept in good

condition. The subject is well led, and pupils enjoy participating in mini football tournaments and swimming galas between local schools.