

INSPECTION REPORT

The Lady St Mary CE VC First School

Wareham

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113768

Headteacher: Mrs Jan Reeves

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sue Chesters 23196

Dates of inspection: 25th – 28th June 2001

Inspection number: 192130

Full 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:	Church of England Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Streche Road Wareham Dorset
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sheila Lancefield
Date of previous inspection:	3rd – 6th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23196	Mrs Sue Chesters	Registered inspector	Under Fives Mathematics Geography History Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? Interpretation of results. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
13746	Mr David Russell	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Attitudes, values and personal development. Attendance How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7994	Mrs Pam Weston	Team inspector	English Religious Education Special educational needs	How good are curricular and other opportunities? Learning opportunities Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
22516	Mr John Williams	Team inspector	Science Information and Communication Technology Design and Technology Art and Design Physical Education Equal opportunities English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This school is situated on the outskirts of the town of Wareham, in the Purbeck region of Dorset. It is larger than most first schools, having 193 pupils (96 boys and 97 girls). This is a slight decrease from the time of the last inspection. Most pupils live locally. At the present time, only 13 pupils (7 per cent) claim free school meals, which is very low. Far more pupils are eligible for free school meals than claim their entitlement. Most pupils are of white ethnic origin. One per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of English acquisition. Children start school in the reception class, with a wide range of abilities, but many have levels of attainment below those expected of the age group in all areas of learning. There are 67 pupils (35 per cent) on the register for special educational needs, which is above average. Four pupils have statements of special educational need; this is also above the national average. The ethos of the school reflects well its Church of England Voluntary Controlled status. It aims to ensure that children work happily and achieve well in a safe, secure environment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school of which parents and the community are proud. Standards in most subjects are in line with the expectations of the National curriculum and the pupils achieve well, particularly in their personal development. It has consistently very good teaching in all subjects at all key stages. It is outstandingly well led and managed by a dedicated and charismatic headteacher. The very committed and hard-working deputy headteacher and staff ably support her. They constantly strive to meet the school's aims and to raise standards. It is a very warm, welcoming and happy community. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It is exceptionally well led and managed.
- The teaching is very good.
- It provides outstandingly well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.
- It provides very well for the children in the foundation stage.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of rich and exciting opportunities which enables the pupils to learn well.
- It provides very well for pupils with special educational needs.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing, to bring them in line with the national averages.
- Standards in mathematics and science, so that they are securely in line with the national averages.
- The use of information and communication technology as a tool in other subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. The key issue from that time, relating to how the school managed its curriculum, has been so well addressed that the curriculum, and the way that it is planned, is now a strength of the school. Other issues, about the role of subject leaders, the management of time, provision of equipment for the under fives and the lack of supervision before school, have all been similarly very well addressed. Standards overall have continued to rise and the quality of teaching has improved very significantly. There has also been very good improvement in the way that the school is led and managed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests/tasks. However, caution should be exercised when comparing the schools' results with similar schools. This is because the school has been placed in the benchmark group of schools with up to, and including, 8 per cent of free school meals. In fact, evidence shows it would be more accurately placed in the band of schools with over 20 per cent free school meals. Far more pupils are eligible for free school meals than claim their entitlement. There are no hot meals available in school and this is a likely reason for the reduced number registering for free school meals. Redefining the school's grouping in this way would make a considerable difference to its grading against similar schools.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	C	C	D	D
Writing	D	E	E	D
Mathematics	C	D	E	D

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

The above table shows that the standards of the seven-year-olds appear to have declined over the past three years in reading, writing and mathematics. This is against the national trend. However, this fall in standards is due to the rising numbers of pupils with special educational needs in the school. Over one third of the pupils, in each of the year groups represented above, are on the register of special educational needs. This, necessarily, affects the results in the national tests. The comparison made with similar schools should be viewed with caution for the reasons mentioned above.

Inspection evidence finds that standards in reading, for seven-year-olds are average. In writing, they are below average. In mathematics, they are close to the average, particularly in number work, where standards are in line with the national average. Standards in science are below average. At the end of Year 4, when the pupils leave the school, standards in English, particularly writing, and science are below average. In mathematics, standards are average. In all other subjects, standards are in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum for seven-year-olds, and at the end of Year 4. The majority of the children, currently in the foundation stage, is likely to reach or exceed the goals set for this age group by the time they leave the reception class. Pupils, throughout the school, reach the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, in religious education. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The school sets itself realistic targets and pupils are on track to exceed them this year. The school aims to raise standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils shows positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good throughout the school. There have been no recent exclusions. There is a small, but nevertheless significant, minority of pupils who find it difficult to behave well.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development is very good. Relationships are very good between staff and pupils and between most pupils and their peers.

Attendance	Attendance is average and almost all pupils are punctual.
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The vast majority of pupils takes great interest in school. They work hard and learn very well. They take on responsibility very well and enjoy helping others in school. The significant minority, who do find it difficult to concentrate and conform to the school rules, occasionally disrupt their own learning and, in extreme cases, the learning of others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is very good. It makes a very significant contribution to the pupils' achievement throughout the school. Assessment is used very effectively to ensure that pupils of different abilities are enabled to make good progress. In all of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or better. In 14 per cent of lessons it was good, in 77 per cent it was very good and in nine per cent it was excellent. Excellent lessons were seen in the foundation stage and in literacy.

This is exceptionally high quality teaching, and it extends across all key stages and all subjects. As a consequence, the majority of pupils learn very well and make good progress, particularly with their speaking, reading and numeracy skills. A major strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers use a very wide range of strategies to keep pupils motivated and behaving well. They work very well indeed with the support staff to ensure that pupils remain interested in their work and learn effectively. All staff work as a very efficient team. All have a consistent approach to managing behaviour and all have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, the pupils know exactly what is expected of them and the vast majority work very hard at all times and learn very well. Pupils with special educational need are taught very well. They have a very good level of very good quality support from the learning support assistants. Hence, they make very good progress and achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school has very effective strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The quality and relevance of the curriculum is very good. The school provides very well for the children in the Foundation stage.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school has developed detailed individual education plans that contain clear and precise targets for improvement. Pupils are very well supported and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides exceptionally well for pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and reflect on their actions. The strong Christian ethos of the school contributes very well to the excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very strong aspect of school life. The school monitors pupils' academic progress very effectively. Child protection procedures are very good. The school understand its pupils very well. All staff know the pupils very well and care for them in a very sensitive and supportive way. All pupils are included in all aspects of school life.

The school uses its very pleasant grounds very successfully as a learning resource. For example, the 'Secret Garden' not only acts as a place for quiet reflection, it also becomes an outdoor classroom for science and art work. The school arranges a number of good quality visits for all of its pupils and invites visitors into the school to work with the pupils. It has very good links with the community and with parents, who actively contribute to the pupils' learning by, for instance, coming into school to read with their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent, professional leadership. The hard-working and dedicated deputy headteacher and staff very ably support her. They are committed to raising standards and providing a secure and happy environment in which pupils can learn successfully.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body gives excellent support to the work of the school and plays an outstandingly effective role in monitoring its provision. It has a very clear view of future developments and complies with statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is a very strong commitment to high standards and to raising expectations. The school constantly strives to improve its performance in all areas.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its staffing and accommodation. Great care is taken to ensure that all staff are given training to improve their expertise. Appropriate funds are used particularly well, both to deploy staff to raise standards and to maintain and improve a school building which has had severe maintenance problems.

The school has very worthwhile aims and values, which direct its work. It evaluates its performance very effectively and takes most appropriate action to ensure that teaching and learning are very good. There are a good number of well-qualified staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. Learning resources are good. The accommodation is very good. It is bright, pleasant and provides a very stimulating working environment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They find the school very approachable. • The teaching is good. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed. • Their children like school. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents feel that their children are not given the right amount of homework. • A small number of parents do not feel well-informed about how their children are progressing.

The parents strongly support the work of the school. The inspection team agrees with the parents that the strengths of the school far outweigh the weaknesses. They feel that the school uses homework well to reinforce learning in lessons and that it has good systems for providing information to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, standards, for all age groups, were in line with expectations in all subjects; except in religious education and music, where standards were above the expectations of the time. Speaking and listening skills were also good. Since then, the demands of the National Curriculum have changed and, in some subjects such as information and communication technology, expectations are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Since the last inspection, the school has seen an increase in numbers of pupils in each year group who have special educational needs. There has also been a rise in the number of pupils who come to and leave the school at times other than the start of the reception year. These factors have inevitably had a negative effect on standards, which, in some subjects, have dipped.

2. Currently, reading standards for seven-year-olds are average. In writing, they are below average. In mathematics they are close to the average, particularly in number work. Standards in science are below average. At the end of Year 4, when the pupils leave the school, standards in English, particularly writing, and science are below average. In mathematics, standards are average. In all other subjects, standards are in line for all age groups. Pupils, throughout the school, reach the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, in religious education. They achieve well. Learning in most lessons is very good.

3. A significant proportion (at least one third) of pupils in each year group has special educational needs. They have low communication and literacy skills when they start school. Consequently, they make slow progress in reading and writing. This limits their ability to read and write in all subjects. The fact that they reach average standards in most subjects, by the time they leave the school, is due to the very good teaching that they receive. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These are beginning to have a noticeably positive effect in supporting standards in English and mathematics.

4. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, in particular in personal and social skills. They make good progress toward the targets set for them in their individual educational programmes. The school identifies pupils with special needs early in their school life, and appropriate learning targets are set. Able pupils are also identified and benefit from the booster classes in English. They achieve well in these classes because of the very good level of support and very good challenge that they receive. The pupils have a positive attitude to their work and make good gains in self-confidence. This aids their overall progress. In lessons seen during the inspection, no significant differences were observed in the performances of girls and boys. All pupils achieve well.

Foundation stage¹

5. Over the past four to five years, children have entered the reception class with levels of attainment, across all areas of learning, which are below average for the age group. In some instances, children's personal, social, emotional and communication skills are well below average. However, this year's intake has a wide range of ability and some have

¹ The new curriculum for children under six, which started in September 2000, which replaces the Desirable Learning Outcomes.

average skills in all areas of learning. Assessments made as children started school this academic year, show that overall attainment is below average in all areas of learning, even though more children show better skills, particularly in language, literacy and number, than is usual for the school. Children make rapid progress in the reception class particularly in their communication skills and in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the consistently very good teaching in all areas of learning. This year, the majority of children are on course to achieve the goals set for the end of the foundation stage.

Years 1 and 2

6. Results in the Year 2000 national tests in reading, show that standards for the seven-year-olds were below average. They were well below in writing and mathematics. This is a downward trend and goes against the national trend. The teacher assessments for science show standards as average. The indications are that, this year, standards have risen and the pupils will have reached the targets set for this year-group by the school. The comparisons made with similar schools for the Year 2000 are not realistic. The school has evidence to show that it is in the wrong bench-marking group. It is compared with schools having up to eight per cent free school meals because currently it has seven per cent of its pupils registering as eligible for free school meals. In fact, evidence shows it would be more accurately placed in the group of schools with over 20 per cent of free school meals. This is because far more pupils are eligible for free school meals than claim their entitlement. This would make a considerable difference in the comparison with similar schools.

7. Inspection findings show that standards are improving. For the current group of pupils in Year 2, overall standards in English are below average. However, reading standards are average and speaking, listening and writing skills are now close to the average. In mathematics, standards are rising and are now close to average, particularly in number work. Similarly, in science, standards are approaching the average expected for the age group. In mathematics, pupils begin to discuss their work confidently and use correct vocabulary. Many recognise patterns in numbers and understand place value satisfactorily. In science, many pupils understand the scientific concepts studied but few have adequate vocabulary to talk about their findings successfully. By the age of seven, pupils achieve at the levels expected in information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. In religious education, they reach the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

Years 3 and 4

8. Pupils maintain good progress in Years 3 and 4. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards are in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum in mathematics, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education. This is because of the very good teaching which enables the pupils to learn very well and to use the skills learned in Years 1 and 2 to advantage, particularly in mathematics. The National Numeracy Strategy also makes a positive impact on standards in mathematics. The structure of numeracy lessons encourages good progress and pupils learn rapidly. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education.

9. In English and science, pupils maintain good progress and standards improve on Key Stage 1 results. Standards in reading are average for the age group. However, by the end of Year 4, pupils' standards are not quite in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum in either English or science. In both subjects, this is partly due to the difficulty that many pupils have in expressing themselves. Many pupils do not have the vocabulary

needed to explain their work accurately. In English, although the able achieve average standards, their weak writing skills hold most of them back. This is reflected in subjects, such as geography and history where, although the subject skills are secure, pupils do not have the writing skills to do themselves justice in their recording.

10. Whilst speaking skills improve in Years 3 and 4 and the majority of pupils become more confident in conversation, their listening skills are still immature. Many pupils enjoy reading and begin to discuss books with a good level of understanding. However, a few lose interest in reading and this affects their learning in other subjects. Standards in writing begin to improve, as pupils see the importance of writing for a variety of purposes and in a number of subjects. They begin to use a wider range of punctuation and the majority of pupils tries hard to extend their use of vocabulary.

11. In mathematics, pupils begin to work confidently with numbers to 1000 and beyond. They begin to explain satisfactorily the methods that they use to arrive at answers. The constant emphasis that the teachers place on using correct vocabulary is instrumental in raising standards and ensuring the pupils' success. In science, pupils begin to reach satisfactory levels through practical investigation. They begin to use correct scientific language to explain their work and begin to understand the concept of a 'fair test'. However, for many, there is still a long way to go to reach the standards for the age group.

12. Throughout the school, teachers encourage pupils to use their literacy skills in all subjects. They plan opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and listen carefully to each other; for example, at the ends of lessons when pupils share their ideas with each other. Numeracy skills are used satisfactorily in geography and design and technology; for example to design to scale and to measure accurately. Pupils use their information and communication technology skills satisfactorily in many subjects. For example, they edit and produce final copies of their writing in English. They practise mathematical skills through number games on computers, and they design and draw pictures using drawing programs.

13. The school's current focus on teaching the basic skills needed for pupils to succeed in the tasks set, ensures that the majority of pupils makes good progress and reaches their targets. The school sets itself appropriate targets and strives to exceed them. It works hard to raise standards in all subjects. Thorough coverage of the curriculum throughout the school contributes well towards the good progress that pupils make. This, together with the clear learning objectives set by teachers in lessons, has a positive effect on raising standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The school has maintained the pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and personal development since the last inspection. These contribute to the progress that the school makes in raising pupils' achievement. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school. Parents also share this enthusiasm with their children. This is seen at the start of the day when parents come into school with their children and settle them into the daily routines.

15. The pupils show a very good level of interest and involvement in activities. The reception children clearly demonstrated this with their interest and total involvement in their assembly for parents. Their strong teamwork and obvious ability to plan and prepare for such an event, were very striking.

16. In lessons, the pupils' attitudes are normally good. Staff use very effective and wide-ranging strategies to keep pupils interested in their work. This means that the majority of pupils has strong positive attitudes towards learning new tasks. There is, however, a significant minority of pupils whose levels of concentration tend to fade. These pupils lose their self-motivation and this disrupts their own learning. Staff ensure, by very positive support and guidance, that there is minimal disruption to other pupils. Most pupils' positive attitudes have direct, positive impacts on standards. Pupils work and play well together and willingly help each other.

17. The pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils play well together. Playtimes are well supervised. The lunchtime supervisors hold regular meetings to discuss lunchtime concerns. They celebrate good lunchtimes with teachers and pupils, awarding 'stickers' for those pupils who have been particularly helpful. The provision of good play resources helps to keep the pupils involved. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for themselves and for their actions. For example, in fine weather, lunch is normally eaten outside in the courtyard. This means that, sometimes, the play area gets messy. Several pupils are then nominated to clear the litter for the benefit of everyone. Pupils also enjoy taking responsibility for routine jobs at lunchtime; for example, taking out the balls, games and dressing-up clothes for everyone to use.

18. There are good relationships amongst pupils and an absence of bullying and sexism. Over the last three years, there has been only one permanent exclusion. Pupils are polite and very considerate of others feelings and values. Circle Time² sessions help the pupils to talk about any concerns that they may have about life at school. For example, in one Year 3/4 class the difficulties one or two of the pupils were having because of the high number of girls in their class, were highlighted and talked through. Pupils accept issues discussed in this way because of their mutual respect for each other.

19. Pupils show good respect for other people and their property. The school, therefore, remains clean, tidy and well cared for. Staff encourage the pupils to undertake gardening activities. Pupils enjoy this and carefully tend the Secret Garden and a small vegetable patch. All take a great pride in watering the plants and looking after the pond. This reflects on their commitment towards the environment and wild life.

20. The pupils have ample opportunities to develop their initiative and personal responsibility. Staff encourage pupils to be self-disciplined and learn independently. The majority of pupils respond well to these opportunities and they willingly undertake routine tasks around the school.

21. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually. The attendance level for the academic year September 2000 to May 2001 is broadly in line with the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of teaching is very good and contributes significantly to the quality of pupils' standards, their attitudes and the progress that they make. Teaching throughout the school is consistently very good. This is a strength of the school and there has been an improvement since the last inspection. The issues raised at that time have been successfully addressed.

² Circle Time: in these sessions, pupils sit in a circle and, through agreed rules, have the opportunity to speak and listen to each other talking about issues which touch them all.

23. One hundred per cent of teaching during the inspection was good or better. Of the lessons observed, 14 per cent were good, 77 per cent were very good and 9 per cent were excellent. Very good teaching was seen in all key stages and all subjects.

24. At the time of the last inspection, there were issues raised over teachers' subject knowledge in some lessons. Sometimes, introductions to lessons and class discussions were drawn-out which reduced the pace of the lesson. Occasionally activities were allowed to go on for too long and the aims of the lesson were not made clear to the pupils. These were aspects of teaching which slowed pupils' progress. All of these issues have been very successfully addressed, resulting in the very good quality teaching and learning now seen.

25. Teachers have very high expectations, particularly of what they expect pupils to achieve and of their behaviour. They make the purpose of the lesson very clear to pupils and refer to that purpose during the lesson. They make very effective use of resources to support pupils' learning. Teachers match work very closely to the needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and gain new knowledge, skills and understanding.

26. Staff know and understand the pupils very well. Throughout the school, everyone works as a most effective team. Staff recognise and address the needs of all pupils quickly and efficiently. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. They meticulously plan work in each subject which very effectively challenges all pupils. This results in pupils learning rapidly. Teachers use time very well and, by very good preparation and organisation, ensure that lessons proceed at an extremely good pace. This keeps pupils very interested in their work and results in very good learning. Very occasionally, when the pace dips, particularly in the middle section of lessons or when activities are not sufficiently practical, some pupils begin to lose interest in the tasks set, their behaviour deteriorates and the quality of learning is diminished.

27. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour outstandingly well. There is an extremely consistent whole-school approach to this. Teachers use many exceptionally effective strategies to inspire pupils to behave acceptably and to enjoy learning. This encourages pupils to work together and to share resources and ideas productively. There is a small, but nevertheless significant, minority of pupils who find it difficult to behave well. There are occasions when their behaviour becomes unacceptable. This adversely affects their progress. Very occasionally, the behaviour of this minority affects the learning of the whole class. This is quickly rectified by the teachers, who work very closely with the very good support assistants to minimise the effects of such behaviour.

28. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly, both informally through questioning and by more formal testing. They record, systematically, the attainment and progress made by individual pupils. They use information from assessments very effectively to plan the next stage for each pupil. They mark work regularly and positively. Homework is set and used very successfully to support learning in lessons.

29. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good throughout the school. Therefore, pupils learn well and make rapid progress. Teachers teach pupils the basic skills required to succeed in English and place strong emphasis on using language correctly. In mathematics, they teach the pupils correct vocabulary and encourage them to discuss the strategies and methods used to solve problems. Thus, most pupils develop their key learning skills effectively in both areas. Teachers make satisfactory use of information and

communication technology to support pupils' learning in other subjects, with particularly effective links in mathematics and science.

30. Teaching is consistently very good in the foundation stage and makes a strong contribution to the rapid progress that children make in the reception class. It also results in happy, secure and confident children. Teachers plan a wide range of practical activities. These involve the children in their learning, and develop and extend them appropriately. Teachers teach basic skills very well and there is very good emphasis on the teaching of reading, writing and number.

31. Teachers provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs. Work is planned to match each pupil's individual targets and good use is made of support staff. Sometimes this support is individual but, on other occasions, pupils are taught as part of a small group. Pupils with statements of need receive very good support from their curriculum support assistants. This, coupled with the very good teaching strategies used, provides a good foundation for these pupils. Staff know the needs of their pupils very well and all of the work set is adapted to take account of the diverse ability levels of the pupils, and to provide the right blend of challenge. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils realise their full potential, recognising strengths as well as weaknesses. All pupils are included in all aspects of school life.

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

32. The school offers its pupils a very good, broad curriculum, which meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. In the reception class, the new curriculum for the foundation stage has been introduced very successfully and planning is very good. The curriculum throughout the school provides a very good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. There is a very good emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and this is effective in raising standards for all pupils.

33. Since the previous inspection the school has worked very hard to produce policies and implement planning guidelines for all subjects. The schemes of work provide clear guidance which helps teachers plan effectively to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to highlight the success of new developments and to identify areas for improvement. Similar schemes of work are in place in the middle school and this ensures continuity of learning.

34. Arrangements for personal, social and health education are very effective. Circle Time has a high priority in the school and provides the pupils with a very good opportunity to speak for themselves on subjects such as 'What friends mean to me'. Each class has formed its own class rules based on the six school rules, and great emphasis is placed on these by teachers in all lessons. This preferred way of learning is built into all areas of the curriculum. The school nurse visits and talks about the harmful effects of drugs; things that may be good or bad for the pupils, and the need for healthy eating. There is no direct teaching of sex education, but it is school policy to answer any questions as they arise. A commitment to Circle Time has resulted in the formation of the 'Three Step Rule' which aims to build pupils self-assertiveness in a polite and friendly manner. Whenever possible, teachers include opportunities for pupils to practise these rules in order to train them not to be afraid to speak up, if there is something about which they are unhappy.

35. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school promotes equal opportunities very well and all pupils have access to the full range of the curriculum. There is very good inclusion. Pupils have detailed individual programmes of work, which are regularly reviewed and new targets set to meet the pupils' needs. There has been great emphasis on the training of support assistants and this, plus the joint planning which takes place with teachers, means that the pupils are given work which best meets their needs.

36. A very good range of visits to museums and the theatre enriches the curriculum. There are also specialist visitors to the school, such as a local archaeologist and clergy from Ethiopia. During the week of the inspection, there was a visitor from a local church who very successfully held the pupils interest and attention; telling a bible story and delivering the message of caring for others and putting one's trust in Jesus. There is a very good and wide range of lunch-time and after-school clubs. The pupils support these very well. The pen-pal club is a very good example of this; here pupils write to, and receive letters from, pen pals in countries such as Australia, Tanzania and Swaziland. The garden club regularly wins awards in the 'South of England in Bloom ' competition.

37. The school has very good links with the local community. An excellent example of this occurred when the 'Secret Garden' was vandalised. The pupils were very distressed and considered what they could do to put it right. They wrote letters to the local paper and, as a result, local businesses and parents rallied around and restored the garden for the pupils. The school has very close links with all local churches and take Services in the parish church. There is a 'thank you' afternoon, when parents and other members of the community are invited into school for afternoon tea. The pupils prepare the tea and, dressed as waiters, they 'wait on' their visitors.

38. There have been many workshops provided by teachers to enable parents to learn about play activities, the work that the pupils do in school and how best to help them in the work that they take home. The curriculum is enhanced by the parents' involvement, they are involved as helpers on out-of-school visits and are welcomed as helpers in school. The most successful parent involvement in the curriculum must be the end-of-school-day reading activity. It is impossible to do justice to describing the atmosphere of the school as a healthy, working buzz permeates the air, nor to count just how many parents were present sitting in various areas of the school helping their children with their reading. This is true partnership, with parents helping to deliver the curriculum

39. The curriculum is enriched by excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a significant minority of pupils with behaviour problems and this enriched provision enables them to benefit greatly alongside the other pupils.

40. Excellent opportunities are given for pupils to develop spiritual awareness. In one lesson seen, just before the pupils left for dinner, all pupils prayed silently as one pupil said aloud his own prayer of thanks for dinner-times. In the Secret Garden, an area greatly valued by the pupils, there is a poem on the wall written by the pupils. It gently portrays the quality of spiritual awareness that the school seeks to provide for the pupils.

'My Secret Garden
Calming people all day long
Flowers on the wall'

41. All encounter the wonderful stories about Jesus and start to appreciate how all individuals are unique, and highly valued and cared for by God. They are taught to be aware of the beauty in the world, and how everyone is responsible for caring for the beautiful environment. Pupils experience a sense of wonder when they hold delicate shells

during close observational drawing. This sense of wonder was sufficient for one pupil to gasp aloud "wow"!

42. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent. The work of the school is guided by the school's aims and the six rules found within the symbol of the 'friendly fish', an early Christian symbol. These rules emphasise the need to treat others as you would like to be treated. The teachers have high expectations of behaviour and of effort, and this is reflected in all aspects of school life. The head teacher has an excellent understanding of all of her pupils and takes care to always be available to discuss any areas of difficulty that a pupil may encounter. The school has a very clear system of rewards and sanctions. Rewards, such as receiving a certificate for the wall of fame, are valued by the pupils. These awards are particularly significant as they are not only awarded by the teacher, but also voted on by the pupils. Throughout the daily routine of school life, opportunities are taken to present and discuss social and moral issues. An example of this was the presentation of the story 'The Three Little Pigs' by reception children; they discussed with the wolf, why he had destroyed the little pigs' homes and, indeed, eaten them up. Although there is a significant minority of pupils who are the exception, taking responsibility and helping each other are natural occurrences throughout the school. Pupils happily play and work together, celebrating others achievement generously. They are all mindful of the plight of others; for example, there is always an impromptu voluntary offer of help from pupils after any Blue Peter appeal.

43. Excellent arrangements for cultural development enable pupils to develop their awareness of both their own, and other, cultures. They study Christianity and other religions in their religious education lessons. Pupils learn about the wider world in history and geography lessons, when they discover how people lived in different times and places, and how events in the past have shaped the way in which we live today. They have opportunities to listen to music in lessons and during assemblies; as they did when parents and pupils listened carefully to music from the 'Gracelands' album. On other occasions they listened to music by Mozart. Very great emphasis is placed on traditional local culture. Country dancing takes place in one of the school clubs and the pupils enter in the local country dancing festival. Members of the school football club visit, and play in the Wareham Rangers Club, the local football team; pupils take part in the Town Band Concert, joining the marching and playing their own instruments; and the Mayor presented each pupil with a Millennium Bible.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The procedures and provision for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare have improved since the last inspection. They are now very good. This is a very caring school.

45. The Premises Committee of the governing body is very knowledgeable and understands very well the importance of health and safety issues in school. They are very active and carry out regular and rigorous risk assessments and site inspections. The health policy is well prepared and well implemented. Fire drills are carried out regularly and results recorded. The school has a medical room. Two staff members are trained first aiders. Accidents are carefully recorded. Parents are kept fully informed of accidents or illnesses. They are encouraged to take part in looking after their children in school. For example, during the hot weather of inspection week, several parents came in to apply sun lotion to their children. Child protection procedures are very effective. There is very close liaison with Social Services, when the need arises. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities.

46. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. These were recently implemented and are already starting to have a positive impact on attendance and punctuality. Staff constantly make parents aware of the impact of taking their children out of school for a family holiday during term time. This is reinforced with notices strategically posted around the school. Registration procedures are efficiently carried out.

47. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent. There are sufficient rewards and sanctions systems in place to keep behaviour in check. Sanctions applied are usually directly related to the individual pupil. Teachers know their pupils very well and know what sanctions do, or do not, work in particular situations. All pupils are aware of school rules and the three-step approach to solving problems. The school has a very positive attitude towards good behaviour. This is reflected in the wide range of classroom management strategies used by teachers. These work very well, and behaviour is generally good. Teachers have very high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. This consistent, positive approach has a major influence on pupils' attainment and progress. As a result of this diligence, oppressive behaviour does not exist at the school. There has only been one bullying incident over the last three years. Systems are in place to handle any incidents, should they occur. Pupils know what they should do, if ever an incident occurs.

48. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are excellent. During lessons, teachers make sure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Consequently, pupils are able to make a systematic approach to problem solving. They take full responsibility for their own learning and their own actions. Teachers are very good role models for pupils and this has a positive impact on the pupils' personal development.

49. There are very good procedures for evaluating and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers regard knowing their pupils to be very important, and ensure that assessments are accurately implemented. They plan very careful assessment opportunities for all age groups. Very good records are kept, particularly in literacy and numeracy. These are updated monthly. Every teacher systematically compiles records of achievement for each pupil. This year, for the first time, whole school data has been assembled and reviewed. Teachers use this information very well to track pupils' progress and to target what each one can do to improve. Children are assessed as they start school in the reception class. These assessments enable the teachers to plan work carefully for the children and to give them sufficient challenge.

50. All staff very effectively support pupils with special educational needs. Teachers very effectively plan work to meet pupils' needs in all subjects. All support is very well planned, to take account of the provision outlined in the pupils' statements and individual programmes of work. There is a very effective and consistent procedure for placing pupils on the register for special educational needs. This is known to all staff and ably implemented by the special needs co-ordinator, in collaboration with class teachers. Pupils' targets are reviewed regularly and, when necessary, further assessment and advice is sought from relevant outside agencies. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, in a happy and caring environment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The majority of parents have very good, positive views of the school. They are very happy to send their children to this very caring school. Parental involvement in the life of the school has improved since the last inspection.

52. Parents value the open-door policy adopted by the school. Many parents take the opportunity to come into the school at the start of the day. They willingly involve themselves in settling the children into the school routines each morning. They also enjoy being invited to assist on school trips and extra-curricular activities. For example, on a reception class outside visit, there was such a good commitment from parents that there was an adult for every 2 or 3 pupils. The school works hard to develop a positive feeling of trust and partnership with parents.

53. There were several negative responses in the returned questionnaires from parents. These refer to behaviour in the school, levels of homework set and how well parents are kept informed about their children's progress. There is no inspection evidence to substantiate any of these claims. Most parents appreciate the immense effort that teachers make to maintain pupils' good behaviour. Homework is used very well to support learning in lessons. Although the written reports to parents of pupils' progress are not always particularly well laid out, the progress comments are constructive and meaningful. The information is presented in an easy to follow manner. The school also takes time to talk with parents each day, when necessary, to keep them fully informed about their children's work.

54. The involvement of parents in the life of the school has a very positive impact on standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The help given by parents, in terms of assisting in class or on trips, is greatly appreciated by all staff.

55. The information provided for the parents is of a good quality. The governor's annual report is well constructed and gives a broad summary of the year's events. This report, when read in conjunction with the well-presented school prospectus, meets statutory requirements. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home, via work sent home, is excellent. For example, many parents support the organised workshops to gain understanding of what their children learn. They are keen to learn how they can contribute to their children's success. The Parent Teacher Association is very active and raises a lot of funds for the school. These, and the many other contributions, have positive impacts on children's education.

56. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed and involved in the progress of their children. They are invited to discuss their child's individual education programme and to provide additional support at home, if possible. Reports, completed by staff, are shared with parents at a parents' evening.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The head teacher has an outstandingly clear vision for the school. She is an inspirational and charismatic leader whose serene presence around the school makes a major contribution to the ethos of the school. The dedicated and hard-working deputy headteacher and the staff support her very well. They enjoy her collegiate style of management. Thus, members of staff who have specific management responsibilities, make valuable contributions to the smooth running of the school. There is an excellent commitment towards raising standards further and a particularly good capability to succeed. The school has explicit Christian aims and values that are reflected in its daily life and work. These include a strong commitment to the social and educational inclusion of pupils of all abilities and circumstances.

58. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities exceptionally well. The governors' long-term over-view of the school is particularly good. They understand its strengths and weaknesses and are involved in planning for its future. The governors have received training in their roles. They have established excellent strategies that enable them to monitor and evaluate the performance of the school against agreed objectives, and to take effective action when needed.

59. The school development plan is fully costed and is a very effective working document that provides a clear perspective on educational priorities. The criteria for monitoring progress against the established priorities are clearly defined. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the attainment of pupils are very good. Planning procedures are dynamic. They consistently respond to the needs of pupils and the demands of the curriculum

60. Financial and administrative systems are very effective and support the smooth running of the school. The last financial audit, conducted as recently as June 2001, confirmed good financial practice. The recommendations for improvement have already been put into practice. Regular budget reports enable the senior management and governors to monitor and control expenditure. Specific grants are very effectively used for their dedicated purposes. The special educational needs provision is effective and very well managed. The best principles of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition are effectively applied. Very good use is made of new technology for school administration. Its use is being effectively developed to support teaching and learning, and to record and analyse pupil records.

61. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Good use is made of assessment data and test information to identify pupils with special educational needs and to set targets in individual education plans. These plans are of very good quality and contain targets that are frequently interrogated and reinforced. Provision for pupils with special educational needs permeates the school's organisation, curricular structures and practices. The level of classroom support is good and meets the needs of the pupils well. The co-ordinator, teachers and educational support staff work closely together, and this contributes to the good progress made by pupils.

62. The match of teachers and support staff to the requirements of the National Curriculum is very good. Teachers, learning support assistants and ancillary staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. They are effectively managed and deployed. The procedures for appraisal and performance management are established, and comply with the latest statutory requirements. The opportunities provided for the professional development of all staff are good. There are very effective induction and support procedures for new staff. The school has excellent potential for the training of new teachers. Newly qualified teachers receive excellent support from a mentor and have a structured induction programme, with appropriate and protected non-contact time.

63. The accommodation is very good. Its use is very well-planned and managed to provide some degree of flexibility for grouping pupils for different activities. The classrooms for the foundation stage are spacious and fully meet the needs of the pupils on roll. There is a dedicated and well-equipped out-door play area for children in the younger classes. The reception classrooms are mainly open-plan and provide a good degree of flexibility for teaching and all learning activities.

64. Infant and junior classrooms are adequate for the number of pupils on roll. They are large enough to provide flexibility. Teachers put this to very good use. Some of the small

non-classroom areas are used very effectively to provide separate libraries and working areas for individuals and groups of pupils. There is a music room which provides a small, temporary information and communications technology suite. Other small areas are used to store learning resources. Very good quality displays in classrooms, and throughout the school, provide a stimulating ethos. Displays celebrate the work of pupils or visits to places of historic and environmental interest. Others foster interests in literacy and numeracy, as well as a wide range of cultural and multi-cultural imagery. The accommodation is cleaned and maintained to a high standard.

65. The school site is most pleasant. It has well-kept gardens and attractive seating areas for recreational purposes. It also has a very attractive "Secret Garden" which is much prized by staff and pupils. There is a large enclosed hard play area which is marked out for games and recreational purposes and shared use of a large sports field.

66. Learning resources are good and fully meet the needs of the National Curriculum. The libraries provide good support for the curriculum. They house a good range of fiction to encourage pupils to develop an interest in literature and sufficient non-fiction to support independent investigation. There are sufficient up-to-date working computers to meet the requirements of information and communication technology, although the school does not yet have a sufficiently well equipped computer suite.

67. This is a very effective school that provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. In order to improve the quality of education and standards achieved, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) raise standards in English by;
developing pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills:
(paragraphs: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 113)
- (2) ensure standards in mathematics and science continue to improve by;
developing the analysis work already underway to monitor pupils' attainment and progress:
using the data collected to track pupils' progress and target their further improvement:
(paragraphs: 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 91, 92, 93, 100, 101, 102)
- (3) build on the recent improvements in information and communication technology to enable pupils to use skills learned in this subject as a tool in others.
(paragraphs: 12, 66, 98, 101, 120, 121, 122)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9%	77%	14%	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	193
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	67

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	27	19	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	23
	Girls	19	18	19
	Total	33	31	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (83)	67 (76)	91 (85)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	23	25
	Girls	19	19	19
	Total	36	42	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (85)	91(85)	96 (88)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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	2
Chinese	0
White	155
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4
Average class size	27.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	150

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	420412
Total expenditure	430943
Expenditure per pupil	2232
Balance brought forward from previous year	30443
Balance carried forward to next year	19912

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	193
Number of questionnaires returned	75

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	50	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	50	6	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	60	9	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	45	19	5	0
The teaching is good.	51	45	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	47	12	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	36	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	51	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	44	6	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	49	46	3	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	51	5	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	37	6	3	6

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

69. Provision for children in the foundation stage (the reception class) ensures a very good basis for their learning. Children enter the reception class at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five. The school provides structured and friendly routines that help children to settle successfully. The very good provision, now in place, is an improvement since the last inspection. Then there was an issue to provide an appropriate range of climbing and ride-on equipment for the children under the age of five. This requirement has been very well met. There is now a wonderful range of climbing apparatus, as well as pushable and wheeled toys to promote children's physical development. Usually, at this school, the children start school with attainment below that expected for the age group. This is borne out by the assessments carried out as children start school. However, this year's intake has attainment levels nearer to those that can be expected for four-year-olds.

70. The curriculum covers all six areas of learning for the foundation stage very well. Planning is very good and meets, most effectively, the developmental needs of young children. Staff in the reception class work exceptionally well together. They plan a variety of suitable and shared activities that support the areas of learning and the nationally recognised early learning goals. They ensure that the children work and play alongside each other very well and gradually begin to work together on specific tasks. Planning successfully identifies what children need to learn, and is very closely linked with assessments of what children know, understand and can do. This careful system of planning and assessment to meet individual needs ensures that children make good progress and meet the expected levels in all areas of learning. The vast majority of children are on course to reach the expected levels in all the areas of learning by the time they leave the reception class, and some will exceed the goals.

Personal, social and emotional development

71. Teachers and support staff promote children's personal and social behaviour very well, throughout all areas of the curriculum. They provide consistent, positive, encouraging role models who treat children politely and courteously. As a result, children trust staff and behave well in lessons. They are usually polite with staff, with visitors and with each other. They have a good understanding of what is right and what is wrong. For example, they know that they must sit and listen at register times, and not run about using loud voices. Members of staff provide an environment where children are confident that their efforts will be appreciated and their work valued. This means that they are motivated to persevere with new tasks and they concentrate well in activities with an adult, such as painting or exploring objects that sink or float. Plans are carefully balanced between activities designed to promote children's understanding of diversity and those which stimulate their own initiative and expression. Staff constantly encourage pupils to be independent and make decisions for themselves. This results in sensible, independent children who socialise well and make good relationships. Their interest in trying new experiences and their understanding of their own needs, as well as those of others, are at levels expected for their age. They make good progress, as a result of the good provision made for them in this area of learning. The majority of children will reach and, some children are likely to exceed, the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage.

Communication, language and literacy

72. The teaching of this area of learning is very good. Staff make a very good start at promoting an interest in letter sounds and the way that books work. A strength of the

teaching is the way in which staff provide opportunities for children to recognise the values of reading and writing, throughout most activities; for example, by sharing interesting big books with the children and constantly referring to the theme of the moment, 'The Three Pigs'. As a result, children are keen to read and write and often choose to make marks on paper of their own volition. Teachers enjoy telling or reading stories and communicate their enthusiasm infectiously to children. Children have regular opportunities to tell and enact their own stories in 'Cinderella's house'. In this role-play area, they work through their own individual ideas alongside each other. They begin to try to share ideas and work through stories together. Teachers encourage children to write their names and copy sentences. Children enjoy writing as a means of recording and communicating their own ideas. They share their ideas and experiences to the extent expected for their age. They move through the stepping stones of the foundation stage at a good speed and are on line to reach, or exceed, the early learning goals set for this area of learning.

Mathematical development

73. Teachers teach this area of learning very well. The strength of the provision lies in the way in which staff use counting and number during the daily routines and throughout various activities. As a result, children are interested in number and shape, and use language associated with size and position to the extent expected for their age. They create repeating patterns in a variety of media. They make sets using different criteria. Some children count reliably to ten, and several more able children to twenty or further. The majority of children are on target to move appropriately through the stepping stones and achieve or exceed the set goals by the end of their reception year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. Staff promote children's knowledge and understanding of the world very well and children make good progress. This area of learning is linked very well to all other areas of the curriculum. For example, the 'Three Pigs' topic allows children to explore what materials would make a good boat for the pigs and also enables them to follow routes to find the pigs' homes. In doing these activities, they learn about the properties of wood and plastic and how different materials have their uses. They also develop a good understanding of position and place, through the route maps that they use. Children use computers to practise their learning. For example, they use a mouse to draw pictures on screen. They then very successfully learn how to add text to their picture. The strengths in the curriculum ensure that children develop an understanding of the world around them that reaches levels expected for their age. They make good progress and most are on line to reach, or exceed, the early learning goals for this area of learning, by the end of the foundation stage.

Physical development

75. By the end of the foundation stage, most children have the level of co-ordination and the physical skills expected for their age and most will achieve, or exceed, the goals set for this area of learning. Staff plan very well for children to use resources, such as scissors, paint brushes and pencils. This helps children to practise and refine their manipulative skills. Children regularly use the exciting outdoor facilities. They explore the climbing frames and successfully improve their balance and co-ordination. They use big construction kits to build imaginative structures for role-play games; such as building homes for the three pigs. They use the wheeled and pushable toys to good advantage, and with increasing agility and speed. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good.

Creative development

76. The school provides very well for children's creative development. The quality of teaching is very good. Children make good progress through the stepping stones of the

foundation stage and most are on course to achieve, or exceed, the set goals for the age group. Staff teach children the basic techniques to enable them to use and control a good range of materials. Children paint regularly and enjoy experimenting with the effects of paint and colour. They make collages and pictures, using a variety of materials confidently. They learn a variety of techniques such as, printing, cutting and sticking. They use a range of simple musical instruments to explore sounds. They learn a good selection of songs and rhymes, which they enjoy performing enthusiastically.

ENGLISH

77. In the 2000 national tests, pupils aged seven achieved standards below the national averages in reading and well below in writing, with fewer pupils than would be expected, achieving the higher levels in these tests. When comparison was made between similar schools, performance was well below, in both reading and writing. Boys did not perform as well as girls. These results show a clear drop in standards achieved over time, particularly in reading. This downward trend goes against the national trend. However, it does match the upward trend, within the school, of pupils with special educational needs.

78. Inspection findings indicate that standards are now improving. Standards attained by the age of seven are just below the national average. Pupils are attaining standards in line with those expected in reading and just below in writing, with a significant minority achieving just above. There is still a significant minority who are achieving below the national average in all areas of English, and this is reflected in the overall attainment levels. The standard of handwriting is improving but spelling is still below the national average. By the age of nine, the pupils have continued to make progress, and about two thirds of the pupils are achieving just about in line with national expectations in writing. A good number are achieving at least in line with national expectations in reading. It is important to consider the high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in all classes. The very wide ability range of pupils distorts the overall picture of the good progress made by pupils.

79. The previous year's results indicated a difference between the performances of boys and girls in national test results at seven. During the inspection no consistent evidence of significant differences in attainment of boys and girls was found.

80. Overall standards in speaking and listening are below national averages. At both seven and nine, a significant number of pupils attains satisfactory standards in speaking and listening. This is because, from an early age, teachers encourage pupils to reflect upon their own and other peoples' feelings and responses. Pupils listen attentively, in order to understand what they need to do to learn. However, there is a significant number of pupils who find it hard to listen and, consequently, they do not make the same progress or achieve the same standards. All pupils try their best to answer questions clearly and confidently, with some providing detailed and interesting information; as the two little girls did when, with much pride, they showed the inspectors the Secret Garden.

81. Older pupils, in Year 4, are more articulate but there is still a significant minority who are unsure and lack the ability to listen, in order to complete tasks independently; an example of this was during a music lesson, when it was necessary for support staff to keep some pupils interested by discussing with them what they needed to listen for in the music. Average and higher achievers are able to express their preferences in reading, and discuss sensibly the thoughts and feelings of the characters within books they are sharing. They can talk confidently about their reasons for choosing particular books, and what they like about stories by their favourite authors. Teachers plan and provide very good opportunities

for pupils to extend their vocabulary in other subjects, emphasising new words, and ensure that pupils with different learning needs understand unfamiliar words.

82. By the time they are seven, a significant majority attains satisfactory standards in reading. Higher achievers read accurately, confidently and with expression, but there is still a significant minority who are achieving below national averages. Higher and average achievers have a sound grasp of letter sounds and this helps them to tackle words that are unfamiliar to them. They express simple preferences in reading but do not talk easily about their favourite books or authors. They have a clear understanding of what they have read but find it difficult to make use of this knowledge when predicting what might happen later in the story. They know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books, and how to use the contents and index of a factual book to retrieve information. Lower achieving pupils have little enthusiasm for reading and are unsure of many common words. They lack the confidence to tackle new words and wait to be told what they are.

83. By the time pupils are nine a good number have shown good progress, with higher achieving pupils achieving the level expected of pupils by the age of 11. They enjoy reading, have favourite authors and are competent readers of both fiction and poetry, reading in a meaningful manner with very good understanding and expression. The reading skills are sufficiently well developed to allow them to cope with texts in other subjects. Lower achieving pupils, reading simple text, are still unsure of words such as 'what' and 'where' and although they know their sounds, they find it difficult to use these to help them tackle unknown words. The reading resources are very good with a very good selection of non-fiction and fiction materials available. All classrooms have a very good selection of books and there are further well stocked library areas, which include a library for home reading.

84. By the age of seven, writing is below national expectations. There is a significant minority who are achieving in line or above national expectations but there is still a significant number of pupils who are below. Higher achieving pupils are responding very well to the excellent support that they are receiving. This is enabling them to extend their writing and to write imaginatively, using a good, well presented, joined script. A substantial number of seven year olds write in sentences punctuated with full stops and capital letters and begin to consider the audience for whom they write. They begin to use interesting vocabulary, such as 'zooming' and 'sparkle', in their writing. They recognise similes in each other's writing; such as 'the machine was as big as a shed' and one was overheard to say, "I remembered to start a new line when I started my dialogue". Lower achieving pupils still find it difficult to write freely at length and to put ideas down on paper without additional support. They need support and guidance when working in group activities. Some form letters correctly and take a pride in their presentation but this is not always so. Handwriting shows improvement. This is because of the deliberate targeting of this area of development.

85. By the age of nine, average achieving pupils make good progress, particularly when working in a small group situation with a support assistant, who uses carefully chosen materials. They know and understand vocabulary such as 'verb' and 'pronoun'. They plan their writing, make alterations, and draft and re-draft. They successfully use sentence punctuation, direct speech marks, and search their writing for too many or too few pronouns. Lower achieving pupils achieve well, working with support from their class teacher. Using a writing frame to plan their letters, they are able to list their ideas for, and against, allowing a giant panda to live in their Secret Garden.

86. All pupils achieve well. There is a wide range of ability, with pupils overall showing good progress, in response to the school initiatives and very good teaching. In all classes, there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs; never less than a third and often as high as half the class. Despite this, the curriculum is always correctly set to meet the needs of the individual pupils and to extend their learning, in an atmosphere where all pupils are valued and all have a part to play in the class. On occasions, the behaviour of some pupils has the potential to distract from the learning. However, teachers are very well trained to meet these situations. Pupils and teachers do not allow troublesome pupils to detract from the teaching. Pupils manage these situations very well. Nevertheless, there is sometimes an impact on pupils' learning. In a few of the lessons seen, the very good teaching is not reflected in the same high level of pupils' learning. This is because of the distraction of the significant minority of pupils with learning difficulties. Writing skills are improving for all pupils but many are not secure in this skill when working unaided. This prevents many pupils from achieving as well as they might in other subjects as well as in English.

87. Teaching in all English lessons observed was at least very good with 25 per cent of lessons excellent. Teachers make sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links to what they have covered previously. They manage learning and behaviour very well. Teachers use a very good variety of teaching methods very well to interest and inspire pupils. These include the use of the big book to improve reading skills, whole class teaching of spelling and grammar, probing questions to find out how well pupils are learning and praise to make sure that pupils feel valued and that their efforts are appreciated. They constantly engage the pupils in discussion keeping a very good ongoing dialogue and provide good vocabulary, all of which encourages pupils' speaking and listening skills.

88. The national literacy strategy is taught very well. Teachers make very good use of their informal assessments to plan work that extends pupils' literacy skills well. In all lessons seen, all pupils were suitably challenged and this led to all pupils achieving well. Teachers use the end of the literacy session well as a time in which to encourage pupils and to share examples of their work.

89. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well and some very good teaching taking place. Tasks within lessons are carefully focused to address pupils' individual needs. Pupils' learning is furthered by the good contributions made by classroom assistants, who make sure that the pupils take a full part in all activities and receive support in their individual tasks. Support staff work closely with teachers to advance the involvement of all pupils in class activities and discussion.

90. Management of the subject is very good. The literacy co-coordinator is knowledgeable and has begun to monitor teaching and learning. She has made very effective use of her analysis of assessment data, to target areas for improvement. This has led to a concentration on the teaching of writing skills and the buying of a good number of additional fiction and non-fiction books. Every pupil has an ongoing assessment book which contains samples of work showing their level of attainment. This is a good record of the individual pupil's progress. Earlier this year, a data analysis of pupils progress was produced and it is intended that this will be used to enable teachers to identify areas of weakness and to plan accordingly. There are very good initiatives, still in their infancy, which, once up and running, will strengthen the identification of areas for development within the various groups of pupils. Given the wide ability range and the limitations of many pupils on entry to school, this subject is very well managed and taught to ensure that all pupils achieve to their full potential.

MATHEMATICS

91. Pupils in Year 2 attain below average standards for their age. The 2000 national test results show that standards are well below average. However, in all year groups, there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and this affects the results in national tests. Attainment in the current Year 4 is in line with the expectations for the age group. This means that pupils progress from a low level, when they start school, to a level on a par with the national expectation by the time they leave the school. This represents good learning and over time the pupils make good progress.

92. Inspection evidence found that standards are close to in line, in all year groups, particularly in the pupils' use of the four rules of number. Standards are improving and, since 1997, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in the national tests. The school is on course to maintain this pattern. There is no significant difference between the performances of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support. Learning in most lessons is very good.

93. By the age of seven, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of place value to 100, and beyond. They know and discuss some of the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes. They measure accurately, using a variety of standard and non-standard measurements. They use multiplication as repeated addition to solve problems. For example, pupils count in multiples of 10 and then count in 10p units to solve money sums. Teachers plan a very good range of practical activities and encourage pupils to explain precisely how they find the answers to set tasks. This means that the pupils learn well and confidently. However, the majority of pupils find it hard to record their work. Some pupils do not retain the work that they do orally over time and need constant reinforcement and encouragement. Teachers work very hard to find a variety of interesting ways for the pupils to present their work, and this is having a positive impact on written standards.

94. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they work out calculations in their heads proficiently and explain clearly the strategies that they use to solve problems. For example, they recall multiples of 4 and 8 readily to play games. They explain confidently that all multiples of 8 are multiples of 4 and similarly that multiples of 6 are multiples of 3, and describe the strategies they use to find the easiest way to an answer. They can do this because the teachers place very good emphasis on teaching the correct vocabulary so that pupils can describe their work clearly and accurately.

95. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good. The pace of learning accelerates in Years 3 and 4, as pupils begin to build on the skills acquired in earlier years. This, and their increased mental agility when using numbers, means that pupils achieve average standards by the time they leave the school. The analysis of pupils' work shows a satisfactory standard and indicates good progress over time; although work is not always carefully presented.

96. In the very good lessons seen, teachers plan practical tasks, which successfully challenge pupils of all abilities. This encourages the pupils to work hard and stay interested throughout the lesson. Teachers share with the pupils what it is they expect them to learn. They refer to this consistently throughout the session. At the end of the lesson, they use very good questioning techniques to establish what pupils have learned.

97. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy very successfully. Teachers are secure with the lesson structure and planning is very well established. Teachers place great importance on teaching the vocabulary needed to succeed in mathematics. They use a good range of mathematical language and this encourages the pupils to explain their work using the correct terminology.

98. Teachers plan adequately for pupils to use information and communication technology to develop their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils practise skills learned in lessons through a sound range of computer programs. However, the use of computers to collect and interpret data is less evident.

99. The subject is very well led. The subject leader monitors planning and teaching. Teachers use very effectively both informal observations and regular tests to assess pupils' attainment. They record clearly the pupils' strengths and set targets for individual pupils so that they know what they need to do to improve. The analysis of pupils' work revealed some very good practice in marking pupils' work. Resources are of good quality and used well to support pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

100. In the year 2000, teachers assessed standards as about average compared with those of all schools. However, a very few pupils succeeded in achieving the higher level, Level 3. Inspection findings confirm that standards in the current Years 2 and 4 are just below average. Although the majority of pupils develops a sound understanding of scientific concepts, they lack the scientific thinking and verbal skills to articulate them. At the time of the last inspection, standards were said to be in line with national expectations. Learning is now good in most lessons and over time. The majority of pupils achieve well. However, the school has identified the need for a more investigative approach to challenge the thinking of the potential higher attaining pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational need, make good progress.

101. Year 2 pupils use their literacy and information and communication technology skills satisfactorily to gather information about the animals that live in their local environment. Teachers prepare work, which suitably challenges pupils of all abilities, and this adds to the good learning that takes place. Pupils also learn the ideal conditions needed for good plant growth. They experiment with variables to study different effects on growth. The highly practical nature of the work enthuses them and holds their interest, thus increasing the quality of learning. Pupils in Year 4 learn about food chains and of how nature is finely balanced between producers, herbivores, carnivores, predators and prey. Higher attainers quickly work out that unless the links in their food chains are secure, the balance of nature is very quickly upset.

102. An analysis of work shows that the majority of pupils makes consistently good progress and achieve well. Starting from an initial low level of understanding, they reach standards which match national expectations. However, there is a sizeable minority of pupils who find concentrating very difficult. These pupils do not make good progress and do not achieve well. Their outbursts of poor behaviour can also hamper the progress of the majority of pupils on occasions. Teachers place great emphasis on teaching the vocabulary needed to succeed. This means that pupils increase their understanding of the topics covered. All pupils enjoy practical work and this is especially beneficial to those with poorer literacy skills, who find it difficult to write up their findings. The pupils receive good

quality support from the learning support assistants and this improves the quality of learning significantly.

103. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard, and learn and behave well. This contributes positively to the good progress made in lessons, by the majority of pupils. Teaching is planned and based on secure subject knowledge. This, and the very good understanding of their pupils' needs, enables teachers successfully to match the work to the ability of each pupil. They organise their lessons well so that pupils receive maximum benefit from interaction with the adults working in class. This increases the opportunities for talking about their work and has a positive impact on learning. Teachers manage their pupils outstandingly well, working extremely hard to minimise the effects of unacceptable behaviour.

104. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed regularly. Good records are kept and this works effectively in influencing what happens in the next lesson. While teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in a positive way, there is not a whole-school approach to the way in which pupils are informed on how they can improve their work. The subject is led well and the subject leader monitors teaching and learning effectively. Resources are good for the current curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. Standards in art and design and design and technology throughout the school match those expected nationally. This is particularly evident in skills such as drawing and painting and in constructing and manufacturing.

106. In art and design by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils investigate and use a variety of materials to communicate their ideas and meanings. They use paints and other media to produce pictures and designs of a sound standard. They produce pictures that create a good feel for the subject and have good precision in detail. They use the work of famous artists such as Vincent Van Gogh to influence their own work. They produce good quality pictures of a wide range of fruits, using pastels and watercolours. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have also made a study of Andy Goldsworthy. Like him, they have made sculptures and collages out of a wide range of natural materials. Pupils in Year 4 produce skilful pencil drawings in their 'Nature Gallery'. They successfully explore line, texture and tone, and talk confidently about these features. Throughout the school, pupils' artwork is displayed sensitively and thoughtfully. In classrooms, these displays reinforce pupils learning; whether it is a huge collaborative picture of 'The Hungry Giant' or a realistic looking flower shop. This reinforces pupils' interest and they know that their work is valued. This helps to raise their self-esteem. Particularly good examples of this are the displays of different habitats in the school hall. Pupils' collage and montage work is displayed very attractively, setting a tone of high standards of aspiration for pupils. All staff work very hard to produce these displays which do much to enhance the learning environment of the school.

107. In design and technology, pupils learn to use their knowledge of a range of materials to produce ideas and plans. They explain their ideas and many select appropriate tools and materials. They have a satisfactory knowledge of how to assemble materials in a range of ways. Once their projects have been completed however, many find it difficult to suggest ways in which they might be improved. Pupils in Year 2 design and make moving pictures for a Christmas card. They manufacture a good range of puppets, using a wide variety of materials. Part of their brief is to say how

they could be improved once made. Many pupils, however, lack the vocabulary to successfully manage this part of their assignment. They also plan design and manufacture an interesting range of moving vehicles. Pupils in Year 4 use their knowledge of joining and combining a range of different materials to make money containers. They design and make a free-standing shaduf. Some higher attaining pupils produce models of good quality, although they find difficulty in describing what improvements could now be made.

108. The teaching of art and design and design technology is very good in both key stages. Pupils are well managed and are given good opportunities to engage in a good range of focused practical activities. Teachers effectively use a variety of ways to teach art, including using the work of famous artists, and by demonstrating techniques. This variety enables the pupils to learn well. Coaching by classroom assistants is of high quality, and teacher and assistant form a good team. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and critically evaluate work, as it progresses, to help raise standards. They also ask pupils to review each other's work, and this helps to develop speaking and listening skills. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and they like to be busy. They concentrate well on their work and try hard to do their best. This enables them to take advantage of the evaluations given by the teachers and to achieve well. Well-planned and structured teaching helps pupils of all abilities to achieve well and attain sound standards.

GEOGRAPHY

109. Standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection. They are in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum for seven-year-olds and are also in line when the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. From a low level of skills when they start the school, pupils reach average standards. This is because of the very good quality of the teaching, which results in good learning in most lessons.

110. All pupils have a good knowledge of local places. This is due to the very good teaching. Teachers plan work based on what the pupils have experienced and what they know. Younger pupils know their routes to school and talk about what they see along the way. Older pupils make maps of the local area. They ask and answer a series of questions about the locality. Thus, using the local environment, the pupils' interest is captured and they learn happily about things that they understand.

111. Teachers extend the work done on the local area by using visits to places further afield; for example to Carey. They encourage pupils to ask questions and explain to others what they have seen. In this way, the pupils extend what they know and make comparisons with new experiences. They explore the differences and similarities of the new areas and match them to what they know about their own area. Teachers plan first-hand opportunities for pupils to learn about other countries. For example, when older pupils study the Indian village of Chembakolli, they invite a visitor, who has spent some time living in India, to talk to the pupils about his experiences. This brings the subject alive and gives the pupils a practical idea of how life is in India. As a result, the pupils learn quickly and gain good understanding of how people adapt their lives to the places where they live. This contributes well to their cultural development.

112. Teachers plan good links to other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2, very effectively extend their knowledge and understanding of traditions and cultures in other countries. They do this through a project considering how people in Uganda manage

to obtain spectacles. In this unusual topic, they first of all discuss the difficulties that people experience because of the development and geography of the country. Then they think about how they can help. This leads to good cross-curricular work, as they use their art and design skills to produce a promotional poster. Their literacy skills of persuasive writing then help them to word the poster in an eye-catching and meaningful style.

113. While the skills, knowledge and understanding that the pupils gain are in line with what is expected for the age groups, because of the very good teaching, their capability to write and record their knowledge is under-developed. Their literacy skills are weaker than their ability to absorb and discuss geographic facts. This reflects in the quality of the written work that they produce.

114. The subject is led well. The school has made good progress in implementing a very good curriculum and is beginning to raise standards as well as improving assessment procedures. The school makes good use of national guidance to plan the curriculum. Resources are adequate and supplemented well by loans from local sources.

HISTORY

115. Standards of the seven-year-olds and of the pupils in Year 4, when they leave the school, are at the expected levels. The strengths of the subject have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

116. The younger pupils' work shows a sound understanding of chronology and of the division of time into periods. They satisfactorily compare past events with those in their own lives and begin to distinguish fact from fiction. They learn about the lives of famous people from the past, for instance Florence Nightingale.

117. As pupils progress through Years 3 and 4, they increase their understanding of how past events influence the present. They begin to put events in order accurately. For example, Year 3 pupils explained carefully that Ancient Egyptians lived a long time 'before now'. Teachers use the local area to bring history alive for the pupils. For example, pupils study the Viking and Saxon periods using local evidence for their historical enquiry. They successfully develop their awareness of how change takes place and why people invade other countries.

118. Teachers link work well to other subjects. For example, Years 3 and 4 pupils looked at changes to the town, by studying modern and historical photographs. They linked this to geography through map work. Pupils made a map of the locality, as it is to-day, and compared it with historical maps. They used the maps and the photographs to identify changes over time. The majority of pupils recognised the buildings on the photographs and satisfactorily discussed changes which have been made. However, because many pupils' listening skills are not well developed, the teacher had repeatedly to explain the task to enable the pupils to make good progress.

119. The subject is well led and monitored. It contributes well to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development. The quality of planning is very good. Teachers plan together to ensure that pupils cover a suitable range of work and make good progress in developing knowledge and understanding. Resources, books and artefacts are adequate and good of quality. They are supplemented effectively by loans from local resource centres. The interesting and well-supported history week not only highlighted the importance of history,

for both pupils and parents, but it also brought a great many interesting and useful artefacts and resources into school. The curriculum is enhanced very well by visits and visitors.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

120. At the end of Year 2, standards are in line with those found nationally. By the end of that year pupils have developed sound skills, particularly in word-processing, and they explain their work well. Pupils in Year 4 have a sound grounding in the subject and achieve standards that are appropriate for their age. Across the school, the use of pupils' skills as a tool in other subjects is under-developed. However, work is carried out in classes to reinforce or develop particular subject-specific skills; for example to improve numeracy skills. Pupils also use computer skills confidently for such activities as improving their knowledge of words with similar sounds in literacy lessons, or in carrying out research for their Egyptians or Animals topics on a CD ROM.

121. Throughout the school, pupils develop their skills systematically and, with regular focused practice in lessons, they begin to achieve well. For example, pupils in Year 1 can confidently use the keyboard including the space bar, delete and caps lock. In Year 2, they can demonstrate how to enter, save and store. They have acquired sufficient technical skill to edit their work satisfactorily. High attaining pupils in Year 4 develop their word processing skills further, gaining a sound understanding of spell-checkers as aids to producing accurate copy. Some links are made between information and communication technology and other subjects, for example in a mathematics lesson, pupils began to use computers to organise data. All pupils develop sound basic skills in logging on and off the computer, using relevant menus and icons to access programs, and responding to instructions that appear on the screen.

122. The school has made good progress in implementing a good curriculum and is beginning to raise standards as well as improving assessment procedures. The school makes good use of national guidance to plan the curriculum. Staff training is seen as a priority. Training sessions have been arranged to develop teacher competence and help them gain sufficient expertise and confidence to extend pupils' learning and provide the higher levels of IT capability. Some computers have already been housed together and the possibility of a computer suite, where whole classes could be taught, is being discussed.

123. Although little direct teaching is seen during the inspection, a review of teachers' planning and pupils' previously completed work, indicates that pupils achieve well. Where the most effective learning takes place, preparation and planning is good, resulting in tasks being set that provide challenge for all pupils. Teachers use demonstrations well, and take care to explain exactly what they require the pupils to do. Teachers work very effectively with classroom assistants and ensure that pupils receive clear guidance. Pupils with special educational needs have very good support. Relationships are very good and pupils work co-operatively and share resources well, when required. Adults interact well with pupils enabling them to gain confidence as they develop their skills.

MUSIC

124. Staff and pupils enjoy their music in school. Overall, by the end of Year 2 and Year 4, standards are average. Standards achieved in singing are good. Teachers plan a good

range of opportunities for pupils to compose and to experiment with musical ideas. The standard of provision has been maintained since the time of the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

125. Music plays a significant part in the life of the school; for instance, in setting the mood for assemblies. It also sets the mood of the day for staff when tapes are played in the hall as they enter the building in the mornings. It is used well to enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school. Pupils sing hymns in assemblies sensitively and with meaning. In one assembly, lively music with an African rhythm greeted the pupils as they entered the hall. This set a joyous and happy tone to the proceedings. The choir sing harmoniously. They enjoy performing. Pupils, staff and parents enjoy listening to them.

126. The school covers the listening, appraising and performing elements of the subject well, enabling pupils to reach satisfactory standards consistently. Several members of staff are enthusiastic musicians and their good subject knowledge enables teachers to choose a wide variety of music to extend pupils' musical experiences.

127. Throughout the school pupils sing well. Younger pupils sing songs and rhymes, enjoying familiar tunes and words. By this means, pupils who are not yet successful readers can enjoy singing. They accompany themselves with a variety of percussion instruments. Older pupils sing longer pieces, clapping and using actions to accompany their singing. The pupils listen to a good variety of music and begin to form their own likes and dislikes. Teachers carefully select music to interest pupils. They succeed well. Older pupils recognise and name both composer and title of their favourite music played in assemblies. For example, one boy not only recognised that the music was by Mozart but also knew it was his 'Concerto 21'.

128. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils make good progress in developing their musical skills. They make good progress in singing. Teachers adopt an enthusiastic approach, communicating well with the pupils and encouraging them to participate. This means that pupils enjoy music lessons and their success gives them confidence. Teachers use subject-specific language like 'tempo' and 'dynamics' in lessons, indicating secure subject knowledge. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and the range of activities challenges effectively pupils of all abilities. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development because they listen to music from a range of traditions and they use, and become familiar with, instruments from around the world.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Standards are average in Key Stage 1 and in Year 4. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. There is no difference in the standards between boys and girls. During their time in the school, the vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieves well. Most pupils start school with below average physical skills. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, their attainment is in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum. This represents good progress over time.

130. Throughout the school, the majority of pupils work enthusiastically in lessons; for example they work hard learning to throw and catch balls and to develop the co-ordination required for bat and ball skills. They begin to use space efficiently, although younger pupils have to be reminded constantly to 'work in a space where they can't touch anyone else'. They thoroughly enjoy their work and begin to co-operate.

131. Teaching is good. The main reason is that teachers teach the basic skills that pupils need to succeed in their work. They demonstrate, and explain clearly, what pupils need to do to improve their skills; for example, "watch the ball right onto the bat." This means that pupils achieve well and progress in lessons is consistently good. Teachers plan lessons so that pupils build systematically on the skills that they have learned and, thus, improve their techniques. Pupils are suitably challenged in lessons and a good range of out-of-school activities develops the skill levels of those who choose to take part.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. By the ages of seven and nine pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and personal development. A range of questions and issues are carefully considered and pupils are given many opportunities for reflection and thought.

133. By the age of seven, pupils are aware of some of the better known stories about Jesus and understand the special significance of the stories. They accept that Jesus cares for everyone, that he was loving and giving and that he would want everyone to be like him. In Year 2, the teacher very successfully uses the wall of fame certificates for pupils to explore and reflect their own feelings. She expands on the similarities and differences in the various reasons for the awards. This lesson very successfully extends the theme of the day's visiting speaker, which was why Jesus was special. Pupils reflect on why they are special and write their thoughts on a leaf for their thought tree. One pupil wrote "I am special to my brother and my brother is special to me". By the age of nine, older pupils extend this activity to reflect on, and identify, some of the qualities that they value in famous people. They brainstorm 'special people' and show a wide knowledge of famous names, for example, Monet, Florence Nightingale, Dick King Smith and David Beckham. Later, a pupil takes the 'hot seat' to answer questions about their chosen 'special' person.

134. Overall, all pupils, including those with special educational need, achieve satisfactorily in relation to their earlier attainment. In lessons, pupils respond well. In one lesson where the pupils were eager to pin their thought leaves on the thought tree, they behave sensibly and take turns. A good number listen carefully to their teacher and some are eager to share their viewpoint with others. This subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.

135. During the inspection, teaching was always very good and learning was never less than good. When learning was only good, this was because there was a significant minority of difficult pupils who prevented the very good teaching having its full impact on learning. Teachers planned their lessons very well, giving clear explanations and skilfully drawing from the pupils their thoughts and feelings. When, during group work pupils are in danger of chatting about things other than their work, teachers successfully challenge the pupils by reminding them how much time they have left to complete their work. All teachers take every opportunity to build into their lesson plans, time for pupils to extend their speaking and listening skills.

136. Visiting speakers help the pupils to have a wider understanding of Christianity and other faiths. All pupils make visits to churches. Religious education makes a good contribution to other subjects, such as art. There are many whole school activities, such as Harvest Thanksgiving. The pupils took part in the Passion Play progress around town, and the choir sang in St Martin on the Walls. There are also many concerts and Christmas

activities. Resources for the subject are good and the recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good start in his monitoring of the subject. The teachers make very good use of local resources, particularly places of worship and their use of the expertise of religious leaders in the community is very good. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support the subject, when, for example, the pupils used a range of clip art to design their own Christian symbols.