

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Swindon

LEA area: Swindon

Unique reference number: 126494

Headteacher: Mr Paul Winfield

Reporting inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey
3764

Dates of inspection: 26 February - 2 March 2001

Inspection number: 192328

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bessemer Road East
Swindon
Wiltshire

Postcode: SN2 1PE

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Father Liam Slattery

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Registered inspector	English, art, and English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements, How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9528	Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
24019	Ken Parry	Team inspector	Mathematics and physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30618	Paul Story	Team inspector	Science, design and technology and information technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
23945	Anna Sims	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage, geography, history, music and equal opportunities	
23812	Carol Slade	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a large school with 276 boys and girls on roll between the ages of four and eleven. There are 30 children under six in the reception class. When they start school, children's skills, knowledge and understanding are wide ranging, but broadly average overall. Some pupils live near the school and many travel from other parts of the parish. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. Most have their cultural roots in Europe, with some coming from second and third generation Italian, Polish and Irish families. Five per cent come from other ethnic minority groups. Two of these pupils are bilingual. Seven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well below average. Sixteen per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is slightly below average. Two pupils have statements of special educational need. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a good school. The teachings of Jesus Christ form the foundation for the school's work. The headteacher shares his clear educational vision with staff and governors and there is a commitment to enabling individual pupils to do as well as they can. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. Standards in English are above average. The school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in reading and writing throughout the school.
- Older pupils also reach high standards in mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good and ensures that pupils achieve well.
- A strong Christian ethos underpins the work of the school. This is particularly evident in the very good care for individual pupils.
- The headteacher is a strong leader and is committed to raising standards further. He is supported well by staff and governors.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- There are very strong links with the church community.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology. (ICT)

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 moved forward well since a positive inspection in 1997. Standards have risen in English and mathematics, especially in Year 6. This is as a result of better planning, improvement in the quality of teaching and careful assessment of pupils' attainment in order to provide them with effective support. The staff management structure has been revised and teachers now have responsibility for managing subjects in which most have special expertise or interest. Overall, staff and governors have tackled the areas for development from the last inspection well. Consequently the whole area of assessment is much improved, with some aspects very good indeed, especially the monitoring of pupils' progress from year to year. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has also improved, particularly for those who are only a little behind their peers, and is now a strength of the school. Satisfactory progress has been made on planning for science and the foundation subjects, which was another issue identified by the last inspection. The school is in a good position to move forward further.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Similar schools are those with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. St Mary's is at the top of the 0% to 8% band.

Standards in Year 6 have risen since the last inspection and are now consistently above average in English and mathematics. The school did particularly well in 1999 because of a high achieving group of pupils. In the Year 2 tests for 2000, pupils also did well overall. Standards were well above average in writing, above average in reading and average in mathematics and science. Pupils did better than their peers in similar schools in writing and not as well as them in reading and mathematics. In both year groups, higher attaining pupils did particularly well.

The inspection found that standards have risen in English and mathematics since the last inspection and that the vast majority of pupils are doing as well as they can. In the reception year, children make good progress towards the early learning goals. In Year 2, standards are above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics and science. A slight fall back from last year in writing is due to the make up of this particular year group and not related to the school's provision. This year, standards in Year 6 are again above average in English and mathematics and average in science. The school is well set to meet its challenging targets for this year. Standards in most other subjects are broadly average and most pupils achieved well in the lessons seen. In ICT, pupils have not had the opportunity to develop skills in all strands of the subject and are not doing as well as they should. The school is taking appropriate steps to improve this.

The school is committed to supporting all groups of pupils and has worked well on providing challenge for each individual since the last inspection. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and higher attaining pupils are also doing well. Pupils from ethnic minorities achieve well. Boys continue to do as well as and sometimes better than girls in the older classes. This is because of the positive way all pupils view their work as a consequence of high teacher expectations and effective teaching strategies. The school is fortunate in having a number of positive male role models in the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils show pride in their school and are pleased that their parents have chosen to send them to St Mary's. They enjoy all aspects of school life and value the caring Christian ethos. They are attentive to their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are very well behaved at playtimes, in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are eager to take responsibility and show good initiative, in raising money for charities, for example. They generally help each other. Older pupils look after younger ones.
Attendance	Good. Consistently above the national average, with very few unauthorised absences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Good teaching throughout the school ensures that pupils achieve well. In the lessons seen, 27 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory, 61 per cent was good, 10 per cent was very good and one excellent lesson was seen. The very good teaching was particularly associated with work with pupils with special educational needs.

There are common strengths in teaching. These are the very good relationships between staff and pupils and teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort. As a result, pupils feel positive about their work, concentrate well and try hard. Staff teach the basic skills of both literacy and numeracy well and this has had a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is a strong feature. Work is very carefully planned for these pupils and this helps them make good progress. Educational support assistants contribute well to work in classrooms and are used effectively to give extra support to pupils who need help.

Within this very positive picture there are some minor areas for development. In some classes there is insufficient emphasis on including investigative and experimental work in mathematics and science lessons and so pupils are not developing these particular skills so well. Similarly, there is insufficient planning for the application of ICT skills in other subjects and this means that pupils' skills in this subject are not being sufficiently extended.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a broad curriculum with a good range of visits and other activities to widen pupils' experiences. Planning for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills has been effective in raising standards. Planning for other subjects is improving.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. Early intervention to support younger pupils has proved to be very effective, as has the additional support for pupils in literacy in Years 3 to 6.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is a strong area with a clear commitment by the school to providing for pupils' personal development. Provision for moral development is particularly good. The whole area is underpinned by the school's commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good provision. There is a caring ethos in which individual pupils are looked after well. Pupils' progress is very carefully monitored and appropriate support is given. There is a good partnership with parents and the Friends' Association makes a particularly strong contribution.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
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Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is a very effective leader. He has a clear vision for the educational direction for the school, with a good focus on raising standards. The deputy headteacher and key staff support him well. There has been a recent reorganisation of subject manager responsibilities and these roles are developing.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors support the school effectively and use their individual talents well. They ascertain how well the school is doing through governors' meetings and visits. The chair of governors, who is also the parish priest, makes an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has effective procedures in place to evaluate how well it is doing. It uses these evaluations well to plan for the future. Teaching is carefully monitored and support given where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	There is very good financial planning, with clear links to identified priorities. Financial management and control are good, with due reference made to the principles of best value. There are sufficient staff and the school is making best use of the building and grounds. Some work is needed to improve the accommodation. Learning resources are adequate overall, with some strong areas, such as ICT.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Children are expected to work hard (98%) Children like school (95%) Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school (95%) Behaviour is good (94%) The school is well led and managed (94%) Children are making good progress (92%) The school is helping children become more mature (90%)	The amount of work their children are given to do at home (18%) The range of activities outside lessons (18%) Information about their children's progress (15%) The school's partnership with parents (15%)

Eleven parents attended the meeting held for them before the inspection and 130 of the 278 questionnaires sent to parents seeking their views were returned.

The inspection unreservedly supports parents' positive views. It looked carefully into the concerns raised by parents. It found that the amount of homework given to different year groups is appropriate, but that more detail needs to be given to parents. A clear letter was sent at the beginning of the academic year, stating the homework for each day, but there was no reminder as the year progressed. The inspection found that there is a broad range of interesting activities organised outside lessons, including visits, visitors and a residential trip for older pupils. Pupils also have opportunities to take part in school productions. The range of out-of-school clubs is more limited and they are mostly for older pupils. Arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress are good and include parent consultation evenings and a detailed written report. Teachers are approachable and happy to discuss individual pupil's progress at other times. Overall the inspection found that the school's partnership with most parents is a good one. The school is aware of the need to work more closely with the small minority who are not so happy.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Starting school

1 When children start school at St Mary's in the September after their fourth birthdays, their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide ranging, but broadly average overall. The balance of higher and lower attaining children in each year group varies from year to year. This year children have made good progress and the majority are on line to achieve the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development during their time in the reception class.

Results in national tests and assessments

2 Standards in national tests have risen in the last two years in both Years 2 and 6. In 2000, Year 2 pupils did very well in writing and were above average in reading. Standards were average in mathematics and science assessments, where the improvement was not so marked. They did better than their peers in similar schools in writing and not so well in reading and mathematics.

3 In Year 6, standards were above average in 2000 in English and mathematics and average in science. Pupils did as well as their peers in similar schools in English and mathematics and not so well in science. In both year groups higher attaining pupils did especially well in all subjects. In 1999, Year 6 standards had been well above average in all three subjects. The drop from 1999 to 2000 is entirely related to the make-up of those particular year groups, with more pupils with special educational needs in the 2000 year group.

Standards in English

4 Pupils' speaking and listening skills are wide ranging, but above average overall. Throughout the school, pupils speak confidently to each other and their teachers. They also have opportunities to speak to a larger audience, in assemblies, for example, and do well at these times. However, there is no systematic planning for the development of skills in this area of English. Most pupils use Standard English by the time that they leave the school. In reading and writing, standards are above average. This is because of the good attention paid to the mechanics of learning to read and write in the younger classes and the successful development of these skills in older pupils. In a few classes pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to write at length in order to practise their skills.

Standards in mathematics

5 Standards reflect those of the national tests last year. In Year 2, standards of attainment are in line with levels expected nationally. In Year 6, pupils achieve well and standards are above those expected nationally. Pupils are developing their numeracy skills well. In some classes they use these appropriately in investigations and problem solving tasks, but this is not consistent through the school. In Years 1 and 2, teachers rely heavily on a published scheme and commercially produced worksheets and this is an important factor in the lower attainment in this part of the school. Another reason for the higher attainment in older pupils' classes is the very good use made of careful assessment.

Standards in science

6 All pupils make sound progress and most pupils attain standards in line with expectations. There is an increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels. This has been supported by the implementation of a more structured curriculum based on recent national

guidance, coupled with a focus by teachers on developing pupils' scientific knowledge. Pupils' skills in investigative work are not as well developed as their knowledge about science and this is why standards are not so high as those in English and mathematics.

Reasons for improvement

7 The real measure of the school's success is the good achievement of the majority of pupils. Irrespective of their levels of attainment, pupils try their hardest and do as well as they can in most lessons. This marks an improvement from the last inspection, both in terms of standards in English and mathematics and in the progress that pupils make. Standards in science have fluctuated more. There are several factors that have contributed to this overall improvement. The school has developed rigorous assessment procedures from Years 2 to 6 to identify pupils who are not moving on as fast as they should. These pupils are given extra support and most are now doing well. Teaching has also improved in Years 3 to 6 and this too has had an impact on standards at the end of Year 6. The introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has also had a positive impact on pupils' development of skills. The school is now setting challenging targets for all pupils from Year 2 to Year 6. It is likely to meet the statutory targets set for the current Year 6.

Standards in information and communication technology

8 There is insufficient evidence available to make a firm judgement about standards in all aspects of ICT. In the work seen in lessons, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are attaining the expected levels but pupils in Years 3 to 6 are below that expected. The very recent opening of the ICT suite has meant a change in focus to the whole class teaching of ICT skills. Younger pupils using the new suite make the quickest gains in learning as they confidently engage with tasks. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop ICT skills in other subjects.

Standards in other subjects

9 Pupils achieve broadly average standards in art, geography, history, music and physical education. Work seen in design and technology is also average within a limited range of tasks. In the lessons seen, pupils achieved well. They do not do so well in these subjects as they do in English and mathematics because new planning frameworks have only recently been adopted. Skills in design and technology remain an area for development.

Achievements of pupils with special educational needs

10 Most pupils with special educational needs have identified difficulties in English and mathematics. They achieve well because of the extra support that they receive. In both literacy and numeracy sessions these pupils work in a small group within their class on appropriate tasks. Sometimes they are withdrawn for special help and again do well and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

Achievements of pupils learning English as an additional language

11 Only two pupils are learning English as an additional language. They are both fluent English speakers and do not need any extra support. One of these pupils, for example, read a prayer very confidently at the Parish Mass to a congregation of over three hundred people.

Achievements of gifted and talented pupils

12 Gifted and talented pupils do well at St Mary's because high achievement is valued. Last year, for example, two Year 6 pupils reached Level 6 in the national tests. These pupils are clearly identified by the school's assessment systems and challenging tasks are set for them.

Attainment of boys and girls

13 There are no significant differences this year between boys' and girls' attainment, except

in Year 6 where there are some high attaining boys.

Strengths include:

- *Good achievement of most pupils.*
- *Standards in reading and writing.*
- *Standards in mathematics in Year 6.*

Areas for improvement include:

- *Standards in ICT.*

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Pupils' attitudes

14 Pupils have positive attitudes to school. They are proud of it and very aware that their parents have made a conscious choice in selecting it. Pupils are fully involved in the spiritual dimension of the school's life and value the sense of community and belonging that being part of the Catholic family brings. Parents state that children like coming to school. As pupils enter the school at the start of the day they are eager to share their experiences with their teachers and friends. Good routines are established as children begin their school life. This helps them to develop good attitudes to their work and the ability to concentrate. Children quickly settle and learn to persist in working at tasks to a good standard. For example, in an ICT lesson in a class of children under five very good teaching and well-structured support helped pupils to quickly achieve gratifying success and the realisation that learning could be fun.

15 The good attitudes that are developed in the foundation year remain with pupils as they progress through the school. Good teaching in many lessons sparks pupils' interest and they respond by being enthusiastic and eager to learn. They maintain these good attitudes even when teaching is less stimulating. They are keen to join in and hands are quickly raised in response to teachers' questions. This enthusiasm makes an important contribution to pupils' learning. In a Year 2 numeracy session, for example, pupils' high levels of involvement in a quick-fire starter session meant they were not only very eager to contribute but were reluctant to move on to the next task. Pupils listen and concentrate well. In a Year 4/5 science lesson, for example, they carefully watched in silence whilst their teacher showed them how chocolate melted before neatly recording their observations.

16 Pupils play an active role in the life of the school and are eager to participate in the widening range of activities that are available. These include clubs for football, netball, cricket and art and tuition on a wide range of musical instruments. Pupils are proud of their sporting achievements that are celebrated through displays in the school.

Behaviour

17 Standards of behaviour in lessons, assemblies and around the school are very good. Parents' views echo this, with 94 per cent feeling that behaviour is good. Good behaviour is positively reinforced and pupils respond well to this and the well-established and clearly-understood expectations of how they should behave as members of the Catholic family. In some classrooms this is reinforced by the display of class rules that list expected and unacceptable behaviour. If noise levels rise in lessons this is usually quickly corrected and does not interfere with the learning opportunities of others. This good behaviour has a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. Resources and equipment are carefully handled and appropriately used for their intended purpose. For example, when Year 6 pupils cleared away large bowls of water they had used in their experiments no fuss was made and none was spilt.

18 In assemblies pupils sit for extended periods without fidgeting, listen carefully to the service and join in enthusiastically with the singing and responses. They show consideration for others as they hold doors open or move to let others pass. In the dinner hall they sit quietly and patiently as they wait to be served and generally move about the school in a calm and orderly manner. There is a pleasant atmosphere in the playground as all pupils mix well and older pupils look after younger ones. Boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds happily work and play together. There were no signs of bullying or aggressive behaviour seen during the inspection and there have been no exclusions during the past year.

Personal development

19 Throughout the school very good relationships have a positive impact on the quality of learning because pupils feel secure and well supported. The majority of parents feel that the school is helping their children to become more mature. Pupils are polite to staff, visitors and each other. They get on well together in lessons, supporting one another and listening attentively when classmates are speaking. They look after each other and respect others' views. Teachers help pupils to think about the results of their actions as, for example, when laughter accompanied an error in a Year 4/5 class, pupils were reminded that it was hurtful and did not fit with Jesus' teaching. Pupils with special needs are well integrated and respectfully treated by their peers.

20 Pupils' are encouraged to be involved in the daily life of the school from an early age by tasks such as taking registers to the office and tidying up after lessons. Pupils are regularly involved in the assemblies and services and each class takes turns to run a tuck shop selling cakes to raise funds for charity. By the time they reach Year 6 the scope for taking the initiative has increased considerably. For example, pupils distribute registers, prepare the hall for assemblies and tidy the library. They help supervise younger pupils at wet playtimes and act as servers at the family lunch tables. Many have positions of responsibility such as prefect, house captain or head boy and girl. They take their responsibilities very seriously and provide good role models for the younger pupils they care for. Although pupils' views are sought on specific issues such as possible playground developments, there is no established process or culture for this. In some lessons pupils are encouraged to work independently and in the numeracy and literacy sessions pupils often work well on set tasks without a teacher's direct support.

21 As at the time of the last inspection these aspects remain a strong feature of the school. The good attitudes, very good behaviour of pupils and very good relationships that exist within the school enable teaching to take place in a calm and often stimulating environment.

Attendance

22 Attendance is good and has been above the national average for several years. There is no unauthorised absence. Almost all pupils arrive punctually for the beginning of the school day.

Strengths include:

- *Good positive attitudes pupils have towards the school and their lessons.*
- *Very good behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school.*
- *Very good relationships that exist within the school between pupils and adults and the very good development shown in their increasing maturity.*

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23 Teaching throughout the school is good and this ensures that pupils achieve well in most lessons. In the lessons seen, 27 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory, 61 per cent was

good, 10 per cent was very good and one excellent lesson was seen. The most successful teaching was particularly associated with the work with pupils with special educational needs. This marks an improvement from the last inspection when teaching was good in the reception year and Years 1 and 2, but only satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. This improvement is partly as a result of staff changes, but also because appropriate support has been given to teachers to help them to improve their practice.

Teaching and learning in the reception year

24 The good quality of teaching is a feature of work with the youngest children. Planning is based appropriately on the new curriculum for the foundation stage. There is a good balance between class sessions and times when children work independently. The room is satisfactorily organised to provide areas where children can engage in practical and imaginative activities. At the moment there is a large imaginative role-play area and smaller corners for activities like painting, sand play, reading and construction toys. However, there is not a writing corner for children to work independently. The use of imaginative resources and the expertise of educational support assistants contribute to the development of children's thinking and questioning skills. There are effective strategies for behaviour management and to help children solve problems.

Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2

25 Good teaching in the infants helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers work well together as a team to plan work appropriately for the pupils. This is particularly important because the 'middle' class in the infants is a mixed Year 1 and 2 class and so teachers need to be particularly mindful of providing similar experiences for pupils of the same age, but in different classes. Again relationships are very good and pupils are keen to do well. In the better lessons teachers' imagination and flair bring the learning alive. In one literacy session, for example, pupils enjoyed writing a warning poster for the reception class about a particularly fierce looking toy wolf. In another session about Victorian washdays, small groups of pupils worked with an assistant to wash dolly clothes using a board and brush. They understood how their ancestors dealt with the laundry over a hundred years ago, but found the experience fun rather than arduous. In recent years there has been a move towards more class teaching throughout the school, with less opportunity for pupils to work independently on self-directed tasks. This has been beneficial in some respects; the clear focus on the development of skills in literacy and numeracy sessions, for example, has helped pupils to move forward well. Less attention is paid currently to planning opportunities for investigative and experimental work, which is an important part of the curriculum for younger pupils. As one boy lamented, 'We don't get to choose any more'. In one or two sessions the changeover time between the introduction and the activity part of the session was a little disorganised.

Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6

26 Teaching is good overall in the junior classes, with the stronger teaching at the top of the school. Older pupils are particularly well challenged and this helps them to move forward quickly. Again there are some mixed-age classes and teachers discuss the work planned for the pupils in the same year groups, but in different classes. Relationships are also a strength, with one teacher having exceptional rapport with the pupils. Consequently, pupils in this class hang on the teacher's every word and try hard because of the very positive self-esteem that has been fostered. In one or two classes, in spite of the good relationships, teachers occasionally speak too loudly to pupils in order to gain attention. Generally teachers explain new ideas clearly and use challenging questioning to move pupils on further. Rooms are generally well organised, with teachers making the best use of the space available in most classes. In most of the classes, displays of pupils own work helps them to feel that their efforts are valued. In the better lessons teachers have very high expectations of pupils and this is reflected in pupils' hard work and very good behaviour. Throughout the school

appropriate homework is set for pupils.

Teaching of literacy skills

27 Literacy skills are taught well. This is because teachers plan carefully for the sessions and prepare resources and books carefully, so that the lesson runs smoothly. The national literacy strategy forms a firm basis for the work and so pupils are developing phonic skills and an understanding of how language is structured in a systematic way. Within the activity part of the session activities are planned carefully for pupils of different attainment levels and as a result all achieve well. In some classes there is less emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils to write at length. Throughout the school, handwriting is particularly well taught.

Teaching of numeracy skills

28 Teaching of numeracy skills is good throughout the school and teachers use the national numeracy strategy as a basis for their planning and pupils are developing numeracy skills well. The impact of the good teaching over time is stronger in Years 3 to 6. This is partly because teachers in Years 1 and 2 rely heavily on workbooks and commercially produced worksheets. This limits the range of strategies and approaches used by teachers. Also, objective assessment is more firmly embedded in Years 3 to 6 as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Teachers throughout the school demonstrate good knowledge of mathematics. Opportunities are sometimes lost to develop numeracy skills in problem-solving tasks.

Teaching and learning in other subjects

29 Science was only observed in the junior classes and here teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The sound progress made by pupils is a direct result of this. Lessons are carefully planned with an emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of a range of carefully prepared resources to illustrate the teaching points and capture pupils' interest. As a result, in these lessons, pupils are enthusiastic about their science lessons and all enjoy investigative work using materials and equipment carefully.

30 Teaching was good overall in lessons seen in other subjects, with individual teachers having expertise in particular areas. In some lessons planning did not specify clearly enough what was to be taught and insufficient links were made with the development of skills. Some teachers lack confidence in the teaching of music. Class teaching of ICT has begun this term, with the opening of the new computer suite. The teaching was good in the lessons seen and pupils made good progress as a result, mostly working on word processing. However in other lessons teachers do not take opportunities to plan for work on the class computers so that pupils apply their skills in other areas. Some staff lack confidence in some aspects of the subject.

Teaching for inclusion

31 All teachers are committed to challenging all groups. Boys and girls, for example, are equally challenged and teachers provide good support for pupils from minority ethnic groups.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs

32 Overall there is consistently good teaching for pupils with special educational needs, with the very good work of the special needs teacher having a very positive impact on pupils' learning in the reception year and Years 1 and 2. Educational support assistants make a particularly important contribution to the teaching and learning team. They help pupils with special needs both in lessons, in the classroom and when working with small groups of pupils in the special needs 'Rainbow' room. They are a highly motivated, sensitive group of experienced staff, who work closely with teachers on a daily basis.

33 Work for these pupils is very carefully planned. Each pupil has an individual education plan to meet their particular learning needs. Practical targets for learning achievement are set in the plans and teachers devise suitable activities throughout the curriculum which help pupils to meet them. Targets are known to teachers, educational support assistants and parents alike so that all adults are pulling together and are helping pupils with special educational needs appropriately.

Teaching and learning of gifted and talented pupils

34 The challenge for higher attaining pupils has improved since the last inspection as a result of careful assessment of each pupil's potential. Teachers plan appropriate tasks for these pupils, especially in the activity part of the literacy and numeracy sessions. A measure of the success of this is the especially high level that two Year 6 pupils reached in last year's national tests in mathematics.

Summary of strengths:

- *Very good relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to feel positive about work.*
- *High expectations of work and behaviour help pupils to achieve their best.*
- *Very good support for pupils with special educational needs.*
- *Good contribution from educational support assistants.*
- *Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills.*

Within a positive picture areas for development include:

- *In one or two classes teachers spend too much time managing behaviour.*
- *Sometimes planning does not outline clearly what is to be achieved.*
- *In one or two classes the changeover times from the class session to the activity part of the lesson are occasionally unsettled.*
- *In some classes, teachers do not take enough opportunities to develop problem solving in mathematics and investigative work in science.*
- *Teachers do not use the classroom computers as much as they could.*

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

35 The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the particular needs of pupils in a Catholic primary school. Pupils are prepared successfully for the next stages in their education and beyond into their adult lives through a range of experiences that effectively promotes their intellectual, physical and personal development. Within this overall picture there are areas of strength and relative weaknesses. Significant strengths include the provision the school makes for pupils with special educational needs, the efforts made to ensure that all pupils have full access to the curriculum and the very effective two-way links with the community. Weaknesses occur in planning for ICT and design and technology and to a lesser extent for the other foundation subjects.

Curricular Planning

36 The school places a heavy emphasis on literacy and numeracy and planning for English and mathematics is based on the recommended national strategies. These have been implemented successfully throughout the school and contribute to the above average standards seen in these subjects in Year 6. A key issue arising from the last inspection was concerned with planning to ensure continuity in pupils' learning as they move from Year 2 to Year 3 and from year to year within the juniors. The school has made good progress in dealing with this issue by introducing nationally approved guidelines which, alongside the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, ensure that the statutory curriculum is fully in place. In addition, they provide teachers with clear guidance on the progressive development

of knowledge, skills and understanding as pupils move through the school and on the level of work to be expected from each year group. However, teachers have not yet adapted these documents to match the needs of their own school and pupils. Neither are they implementing the documents consistently in all classes. Planning for ICT, for example, is a particular weakness and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in design and technology. The present planning does not ensure that all pupils will cover the required units in history and geography. A useful feature of teachers' planning is the termly curriculum statement that is sent to each parent. It provides a detailed commentary on work that is to be covered and promotes the positive links that exist between home and school.

Curriculum balance

37 The curriculum is balanced satisfactorily between the subjects, with literacy and numeracy quite correctly being allocated the largest proportions of time. However, there are a variety of constraints and pressures that cause difficulties on a day-to-day basis. For example, the total weekly teaching time in Years 3 to 6 is slightly below the recommended minimum and well below average compared with schools nationally. At the same time, the demands of the religious education curriculum are double those of non-denominational schools. In addition, because of the way the timetable is arranged teachers often find they have fifteen minutes or so at the end of some lengthy sessions that are not always easy to use profitably. These are factors that clearly have a considerable impact the quality of learning opportunities offered by the school, with insufficient time allocated to some subjects, such as design and technology.

Extra-curricular provision

38 Overall, the school provides a good range of experiences for pupils outside lessons. There are a satisfactory number of extra-curricular clubs and activities and pupils enthusiastically take full advantage of these opportunities to learn new sporting and musical skills and to develop their own interests. The regular football coaching sessions ensure that school teams enjoy considerable success in local competitions. These activities contribute not only to pupils' learning but also to their ability to work with and support pupils of other ages and from other classes. A very good range of visits and visitors supports and extends pupils' classroom learning in subjects such as geography, history and science. These considerably enhance the curriculum. Recent venues for educational visits have included a Roman villa, the GWR Steam Museum and the Forest of Dean. Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit that increases their awareness of other localities, helps to extend their skills of social interaction and develops their independence.

Equality of access and opportunity

39 The school makes certain that all pupils have equal access to the full range of opportunities it provides. This is reflected in the commitment to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential. It lies at the heart of the school's successful strategies for assessing pupils' progress and forms the basis of its continuing efforts to raise standards. Teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of their pupils in English and mathematics where both higher and lower attaining pupils are suitably challenged by the tasks set for them. Wherever possible classroom assistants are effectively deployed to support teachers and to improve the access of lower attaining pupils to the curriculum. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are very good. The school ensures that all pupils are equally and fully included in the curriculum and indeed in all aspects of school life. Where pupils are withdrawn from classes for small group support for literacy and numeracy, their good learning gains in the long term enhance their equality of access to the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 1 and 2 are sometimes effectively withdrawn for extra teaching to help them develop their literacy skills. In Years 3 to 6, older pupils are given well managed, highly structured additional language support or the 'ARROW' programme (a learning scheme which develops aural, reading, response, oral and writing skills). Pupils with

statements of special educational needs have their individual requirements met fully through a carefully planned programme of support, which is regularly reviewed by the school and the local authority.

Personal, social and health education

40 The school's programme for personal, social and health education is delivered within the context of religious education, science and physical education. It fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum and is in line with Catholic doctrine. It includes teaching on health, sex and drug awareness and makes good use of outside agencies such as the fire service and police and visiting speakers such as the school nurse and the dentist. While these arrangements are satisfactory overall, the school does not provide teachers with sufficient detailed information about exactly what should be covered each year.

Links with the community

41 Very good two-way links have been established with the local community and these make significant contributions to the quality of pupils' learning and to their personal development. Many of these arise through the school's very close links with the church. The parish priests are fully involved in all aspects of the life and work of the school and are key figures in the development of the school's very successful relationships with both the individuals and the institutions of the local area. Christmas, Easter and Harvest are used effectively to extend the links with the St Mary's parishioners, many of whom regularly attend the monthly mass at the school. Good use is made of the local area for educational visits and a number of local groups, including youth groups and musicians, use the premises after school hours.

Links with partner institutions

42 Very close and mutually successful relationships exist with the St Mary's playgroup and there are good links with local secondary schools. There is good liaison between teachers who arrange for younger pupils to spend time in the reception class prior to being admitted. Older pupils visit their new secondary schools and will have been visited by secondary staff before transferring in order to make these transitions as smooth as possible.

Spiritual development

43 The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development and encourages worship, liturgy and prayer as integral parts of the life of the school. The strongly Catholic Christian environment promotes a spiritual ethos that clearly extends beyond religious education lessons and assemblies. It benefits from the very good leadership and support of the parish priests, who are highly respected and valued members of the school community. Teachers link assembly themes into their teaching ensuring that pupils gain maximum benefit from the whole school acts of collective worship. Younger pupils, for example, were very effectively prepared for the Ash Wednesday assembly, when the teacher invited them to make a private promise to God or to Jesus. Her clear explanation of the source of the ashes helped them to recognise the special occasion and to share in a feeling of reverence as they held their promises in their hearts and their minds while waiting for assembly to begin. In assemblies and in classroom discussions teachers provide opportunities for pupils to experience prayer and reflection. In Year 4 and 5, for example, pupils end their morning lessons by responding thoughtfully about people in other parts of the country affected by the bad weather conditions and by the outbreak of the foot and mouth disease. In Year 6, pupils' prayers are inspired by the diverse writings of Chief Dan George and St Francis of Assisi.

Moral development

44 The arrangements for pupils' moral development are very good. A strong moral code is evident in all aspects of school life and forms the basis of the very good behaviour observed during the inspection. Through the positive behaviour policy pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and to respect the feelings and beliefs of others. A

particular strength is the school's 'hands off' policy, which prohibits games that involve physical contact and is successful in deterring aggressive play. The positive outcome of these approaches is to be seen in the orderly school community, in which effective teaching and learning take place. School rules are well understood by all pupils and from the earliest stages they are taught the Christian perspective of right and wrong. They develop a clear understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable and they are consistently expected to consider the impact of their behaviour on others.

Social development

45 Provision for pupils' social development is good. It is firmly rooted in the school's position as an integral part of the parish of St Mary's. Teachers expect pupils to be positive and supportive members of the school community and even the youngest ones are encouraged to share and co-operate. This is clearly evident in the very good relationships formed across the age groups from five to eleven. In formal situations, such as the whole school visit to the pantomime, older pupils are given the task of helping to look after their younger partners. As a result of opportunities such as this a genuinely caring ethos is fostered. In the playground, for example, pupils spontaneously offered help to others who had fallen over and accompanied them to receive treatment. It is clear that teachers value pupils' contribution to the life of the school and in lessons and assemblies they celebrate pupils' successes in work and helpfulness. This helps to raise their self-esteem and encourages them to take pride in their achievements. The school makes good use of its links with the wider community to promote a sense of responsibility. Teachers arrange for pupils to deliver harvest gifts to elderly friends and neighbours of the school and, through their regular support of local and world-wide charities, pupils develop positive attitudes towards those who are less fortunate than themselves. However, the school does not build on these mature attitudes by seeking pupils' views about school issues.

Cultural development

46 Overall there is good provision for pupils' cultural development across the curriculum and especially in art, history, literacy and music. Pupils are introduced to literature from a wide variety of sources, from the Japanese Haiku to Shakespeare's Macbeth, and have a good repertoire of religious and secular music. An interesting range of visits, to the Pirates of Penzance and the Houses of Parliament for example, is combined with visitors to the school, such as the local MP, to strengthen pupils' appreciation of their own cultural traditions. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is extended through the school's links with African and Indian villagers, but the school could do more to prepare them for the rich cultural diversity represented in contemporary Britain. This is much the same situation as reported at the time of the last inspection.

Strengths include:

- *Very good arrangements to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the full range of opportunities provided by the school*
- *Implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies.*
- *Interesting visits to enrich learning.*
- *Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs*
- *Very good two way links with the local community*
- *Very good arrangements for pupils' moral development*

Areas for development include:

- *Implementing curriculum guidance consistently in all classes.*
- *Ensuring that the timetable allows for all areas of the curriculum to be covered in sufficient depth.*
- *Setting up procedures for consulting pupils about school issues.*
- *Preparing pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society.*

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47 The school has very good procedures and policies to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Standards of care have been maintained well since the previous inspection.

48 Staff, pupils and parents have a shared view of high expectations of good behaviour and attitudes to work and other people. This provides a very good environment to enable staff to work effectively within the framework of clear, well-established policies and procedures for behaviour, bullying, child protection and attendance monitoring. There is regular formal and informal sharing of information and this helps to ensure a consistency in pupil monitoring and supervision.

49 The governors undertake regular health and safety inspections and report their findings and any actions taken to governing body meetings. They are supported well by the staff who are alert to any potential hazards in their own work areas. There are good procedures, including clear instructions, for handling medicines, accidents and illness.

Monitoring pupils' academic performance

50 The school's procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are now good. The headteacher and assessment manager share a very practical understanding of the purposes and uses of assessment which is quite rightly seen as a major factor in the school's continuing efforts to raise standards. The headteacher's philosophy is based upon the identification of every pupil's potential and provides a clear direction for the development of assessment within the school. In the last inspection, weaknesses were reported in the school's arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. One of the key issues arising from the inspection was concerned with the introduction of systematic assessment arrangements across the whole curriculum and the use of information gained from this process to improve curricular planning. Very good procedures are now firmly established as an integral part of teaching and learning in English and mathematics. However, weaknesses remain in other subjects, where the school's strategies are not being implemented consistently. A second key issue identified shortcomings in monitoring the relative performance of boys and girls in order to address the factors that contributed to any differences. Good improvements have been made to this aspect of assessment, based on the school's commitment to raising standards of attainment through maximising the potential of each one of its individual pupils. In combination with the school's high expectations of its pupils, this has been instrumental in improving standards in English and mathematics. At the moment the school does not monitor the progress of different ethnic groups.

Assessing pupils' attainment and progress

51 When children first enter the school they are carefully assessed using baseline tests and the information is used to form groups and to plan teaching programmes. Similar tests are now repeated in Year 1 so the school is just beginning to develop procedures for younger pupils along the lines of the comprehensive arrangements that are in place in Years 2 to 6. As well as the statutory tests and assessments in English, mathematics and science at the end of Years 2 and 6, non-statutory national assessments in English and mathematics are used in Years 3, 4 and 5 together with regular testing of reading and spelling throughout the school. In addition, tests to determine each pupil's potential are administered annually. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for these procedures which have been key factors in the school's drive to raise standards in English and mathematics, and which have been implemented consistently. However, recently introduced arrangements to assess pupils' work in other subjects at the end of half-termly study units have been less rigorously applied, in science and ICT, for example. Year 6 pupils are involved in assessing their own progress and this practice is being developed in other classes.

Assessing and supporting pupils with special educational needs

52 The school has very good methods in place for the early detection, diagnosis and support for pupils with special educational needs. There is effective liaison between feeder playgroups and nurseries so that any early learning difficulties are shared. The school also makes good use of baseline assessment completed by children aged five as an indicator of special needs. Pupils' actual achievement in reading and writing is matched with their potential from standardised test results. Where there is a mismatch between these sets of scores, further investigations are made and pupils may be added to the special needs register.

53 All individual education plans have clearly stated review dates on them. These usually occur twice yearly. The special needs co-ordinator and the class teacher work closely together to make a thorough evaluation of the progress of every pupil with such a plan. Educational support assistants keep good observation records on a regular basis as they work on a daily basis with pupils and these are also used as review evidence.

Using assessment information to guide planning

54 The school gathers a considerable amount of information about its pupils in these ways that builds into a detailed picture of their potential attainment and their current strengths and weaknesses in English and mathematics. Making very effective use of this information, challenging individual targets in literacy and numeracy are set, which provide a clear focus for pupil's work in school and at home. The careful recording of this information enables the school to monitor the performance of individuals and whole year groups and to track their progress in great detail as they move through the school. In addition, it enables the school to identify pupils who are not achieving their true potential and to provide them with focused teaching and additional support where appropriate.

55 The school also makes very good use of this information to identify particularly able pupils and to ensure that work is set for them at a level that matches their needs. Two Year 6 pupils, for example, receive instruction in mathematics on a weekly basis to fully extend their knowledge and understanding. As a result of challenging teaching last year two pupils attained very high levels in the Year 6 national tests.

56 The headteacher and assessment manager rigorously analyse the results of English and mathematics tests and assessments in order to identify and address any areas of weakness. For example, analysis of test results identified writing as an area of relative weakness among younger pupils. This led to modifications to the curriculum in order to improve its quality, which in turn led to significant improvements in the Year 2 national tests in summer 2000. Similarly, it was seen that boys were achieving better than girls. In order to address this apparent weakness a limited amount of single gender teaching was undertaken, again with a positive impact on standards of attainment.

Monitoring pupils' personal development

57 Staff know the children and their families very well and follow their personal development closely. All teachers monitor personal development and they record comments in the relevant sections of their planning documentation. Increasing independence and personal responsibility are encouraged but there are no established forums to take the views of pupils into account.

Strengths include:

- *Very good care for pupils' health and safety.*
- *Strong emphasis on identifying and developing the potential of all pupils.*
- *Very good procedures for assessing pupils' potential in English and mathematics from*

Year 2 onwards.

- *Good procedures for assessing pupils' special educational needs.*
- *The use of analysis of assessments to plan future work in English and mathematics.*

Within a strong area, minor points for development include:

- *Involving pupils more fully in the assessment process, encouraging them to take more responsibility for their learning.*
- *Analysing assessment data more closely for minority groups within the school community.*
- *Implementing procedures consistently for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress in science, ICT and the foundation subjects.*

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58 The school works very well in partnership with parents. This aspect of school life has been maintained well since the previous inspection.

Parents' views of the school

59 The vast majority of parents are very positive about most areas of school life. They feel that their children like school and are making good progress in their academic and personal development. They are pleased with the standards of achievement, the teaching and the management of the school. The inspection evidence fully supports these positive views. Of the parents who returned the questionnaires, 18 per cent were not happy about the amount of homework. The inspection found that the amount set was appropriate. The requirements are listed for parents in the newsletter at the beginning of each term but further information on the work set each week might prove helpful to some parents. Some dissatisfaction (19 per cent of responses) was expressed about the provision outside of lessons. The wider curriculum provided by visits and visitors is good. A limited, though satisfactory, range of after-school clubs is provided. Increasing the number and range of these activities is currently limited by the number of staff and parents prepared to volunteer to run them.

Information provided for parents

60 The general information provided by the school through the prospectus, annual governors' report and the regular newsletters is good. There was also a minority of parents (15 per cent), who were unhappy about the information given to them about their children's progress and the school's partnership with parents. The inspection found that these concerns were not justified. The annual reports for pupils are of good quality. In addition to good information on achievement and progress these include useful details of curriculum content, classroom organisation, individual assessments and school and national summaries. Considerable thought has been given to the arrangements for consultation evenings, which enable parents on day or evening shift work to attend. Parents are also invited to make appointments to discuss the annual reports after they are published. Throughout the year the school is very open and welcoming to parents.

Parents' involvement in the school

61 A small number of parents help regularly in the school in lessons and with clubs. The Friends' Association is active and, though there is a relatively small committee, most parents and staff are very supportive. The events it organises are generally very well supported and much additional income is provided for the school. There was substantial consultation in the development of the home-school agreement with staff, governors and parents on the working party. A sample of parents was given the draft to enable further refinement before it was completed. Much thought was given to children's signatures and it was decided to delay this requirement until after Year 2. Most parents give regular help with their children's learning at home.

Partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs

62 There are good procedures in place to build an effective partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. The school sees the partnership with parents as a two-way process, in which each will keep the other fully informed of developments, and in which each may raise concerns. Parents of children already identified with special educational needs are kept fully informed of their child's progress. Twice each year they are sent their child's newly reviewed individual education plan, which they are able to discuss subsequently at parents meetings.

Strengths include:

- *Parents' support for the school.*
- *The effectiveness of the school's links with parents.*
- *The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school.*
- *The quality of information provided for parents.*

Areas for development include:

- *Information to parents about homework requirements.*
- *Building a better partnership with the small number of parents who do not feel that the school works well with them.*

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

A clear vision:

63 Leadership was strong at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case. The headteacher is a very effective leader. He has a clear educational vision for the school, shared by staff and governors, which is encapsulated in the school's mission statement:

'St Mary's School endeavours to be a community in which each individual is equally respected and valued within a Catholic Christian environment. It seeks to enable each pupil to strive towards realising and achieving their fullest spiritual, academic and physical potential within both the school and the greater community, and alongside the parish and family, to facilitate the moral and social development of each pupil to enable them to build upon the teachings of Jesus Christ.'

This vision is very evident in the every day life of the school.

A focus on improvement:

64 The headteacher is constantly working on ways to make the provision for the pupils better in order to raise standards. Consequently, the school has moved forward well since the last inspection. Standards have risen in English and mathematics and the quality of teaching has improved. Key factors in this successful work to raise standards have been improved planning for literacy and numeracy as a result of the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies, very careful analysis of pupils' progress feeding into appropriate support and working with teachers to improve their teaching skills.

Evaluation and action:

65 The school has very effective measures in place to gauge how well it is doing, with a particular focus on teaching and learning. These include detailed procedures for measuring pupils' progress and regular monitoring of the quality of teaching. Improvements needed in teaching and learning form the basis of the school development plan and this provides a clear agenda for improvement year on year.

Governors' involvement:

66 Governors undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. Most of their work is done in meetings and subcommittees. They are involved well in monitoring how quickly progress is made on issues identified for improvement, for example. Many governors visit the school regularly and many have special expertise, which they use well. The chair of governors is also the parish priest and makes an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. He is a frequent visitor and offers excellent support to the headteacher, staff and pupils. The annual report to parents about the school's work is clear. All statutory requirements related to the running of the school are met.

Contribution of staff with management responsibilities

67 There is a clear staffing structure. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for curriculum development across the school and co-ordinates the junior teaching team, while a senior teacher works with the teachers of the younger pupils. Another senior teacher is responsible for assessment. They offer good support to colleagues. Most of the staff also have some subject management responsibilities. These have been recently re-allocated in order to match subject expertise and interest more closely. This has been a sensible move, but staff are still adjusting to their new roles. The management of some foundation subjects is not as well developed as it could be.

Management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs

68 The leadership and management of special educational needs are strong. There has been a significant improvement in provision for special educational needs since the previous inspection. It comes with the change in emphasis of support towards early intervention in reception and Years 1 and 2. This strategy has provided a greater potential for helping pupils who struggle towards earlier independent learning.

69 There are two co-ordinators, with clearly defined roles, who complement each other's work. They are both very experienced. The co-ordinator with responsibility for the younger pupils helps teachers to write good quality individual education plans. She has a wide variety of pupil support skills and is an excellent teaching role model for staff. The head teacher, who is the designated co-ordinator for Years 3 to 6, organises effective liaison with outside agencies and manages the special needs budget to gain fully from limited resources. A recent innovation has been the purchasing of software to support the preparation of good quality individual education plans.

Financial planning:

70 Financial planning and control are very good. The school is giving good value for money. Financial planning is closely linked to the development plan. The headteacher and governors have managed the transition from grant maintained to local authority status very well. This has also taken place at a time of falling rolls due to demographic and local planning changes and through a difficult period of transfer of control from Wiltshire County to the unitary authority of Swindon. The headteacher is pro-active in planning building maintenance and development to ensure optimum use of the contributions from the diocese. Prudent planning has enabled the school to maintain teaching staff levels and increase the number of education support staff in recent years to ensure good support for pupils of all abilities.

71 The school is applying the principles of best value well, with wide consultation and participation by staff and governors in planning. Full competitive tendering is in place and the staff and governors regularly review service contracts to secure good value for money. The school works well with parents and the diocese to raise valuable additional income. Parents are active in using their industrial and commercial contacts to secure significant donations. For example, two parents negotiated successfully with local companies to provide complete sets of desks and chairs for the new computer suite. The school is beginning to make use of

comparative financial data provided by the local authority to enable it to evaluate its performance in a wider context.

72 Financial controls are good and the staff and governors actively review expenditure at their regular meetings. The records of the main and school fund accounts are in good order. The most recent auditors' report in September 2000 made several suggestions for minor changes in procedures and the school has implemented these. The administrative assistants of the school are very effective. The school accounts for and uses properly the earmarked funds for special educational needs and improving standards. The staff make very good use of new technology to enhance all areas of planning, monitoring and administration.

Staffing

73 The current situation is similar to that at the time of the last inspection. There are sufficient suitably qualified staff to cover all classes, teach the required curriculum and address special educational needs. (However in recent months the school has found it difficult to obtain supply teachers.) Each teacher has responsibility for the management of a subject with an interim arrangement in place for mathematics. Job descriptions were updated following the recent reorganisation of responsibilities and detail individual's specific duties. They form the basis of staff review procedures. Performance management procedures are developing with a policy agreed, review meetings held and objectives already set for all teaching staff except the headteacher.

74 Both in and out of the classroom teachers are well supported by the high number of education support assistants. By working closely with class teachers they are well prepared and give good support to pupils, including those with special educational needs, both individually and in groups. Staff who are new to the school are well supported by mentoring and the detailed staff handbook. For a number of years the school has been involved with the initial training of teachers and is currently providing placement for a final year student. The strength and benefits of this can be seen in the fact that several of the current teaching staff began their careers as students at the school.

75 Training opportunities for all staff are well matched to both the priorities of the school development plan and individual needs. For example, all staff have been involved in literacy and numeracy training and will shortly commence extensive training in information technology skills. Individual staff have undertaken extended courses of professional development. Knowledgeable and efficient administrative support combine with effective cleaning, catering and ancillary staff to contribute well to the smooth running of the school.

Accommodation

76 Since the last inspection the school has continued a rolling programme of maintenance and improvements to the building and extensive site. The main building, demountable classrooms and grounds are all well maintained and the intended programme of window replacement will continue this process. By creating a fenced play area for the under-fives an area of concern in the last inspection has been addressed. The large field and playground areas are used for both recreation and physical education. An attractive area of planting surrounds a group of picnic benches at the edge of the playground and newly planted trees will afford shade in the future. At present, the tarmac offers little in the way of stimulus for younger pupils in particular. The school has gone some way to addressing this by marking on a variety of games and providing baskets of games equipment at lunch times. The well-maintained conservation area and pond are well used to support work in science and an adjacent copse area is being established with young trees and shrubs. The entrance area has been improved by the extension to the car park but the initial vista of the building is stark and uninviting. There is therefore still considerable scope to develop the facilities further and

for the use of planting to improve the visual appearance of the building and grounds.

77 Both externally and internally the school is in good decorative order and well cared for. Classrooms are equipped with suitable-sized furniture that is in good condition and all have their own wet areas. Rooms and corridors are carpeted to reduce noise and create a pleasant ambience. There are sufficient rooms for all classes as well as a special needs base and a computer suite. There is good parental and community support for the school and the furniture for the ICT suite was donated. The large hall is used for dining, assemblies and physical education. The last inspection noted that four central classrooms were smaller than the others and that this placed some limitations on learning activities. The school has minimised this by siting the computer suite in one and using the other rooms for younger pupils. At the moment this is satisfactory. Storage remains an issue and although classrooms have storage facilities space is limited. Although they are well cleaned and various strategies have been tried, by the end of the day an unpleasant odour from the boys' toilets pervades the adjacent areas, which nothing seems to defeat. This has a negative impact on the working conditions in the classroom across the corridor.

78 The central library provides a focal point to the main corridor and reading resources are also stored along it. Light colours have largely been chosen for the internal décor and in the library spotlights placed to improve the visual impact. However class book areas are not so carefully organised. Around the school displays are used to focus pupils' attention and record their achievements. These are more effective in some areas than others. The early years and infant classes, for example, make good use of them to create a bright, colourful learning environment that stimulates pupils' interest. The recent addition of ramps have made all ground floor rooms accessible to the disabled and the creation of a dedicated toilet facility further supports this.

Learning resources

79 Overall, learning resources continue to be satisfactory and specific concerns in the last inspection have been addressed. In the early years the purchase of large wheeled toys and play equipment has improved the resources in this area. The good range of gymnastic equipment in the hall and the loan scheme operated with local schools for small games equipment means that resources for physical education are now good for all pupils. The school has continued to develop and replace its resources for learning in line with developmental priorities and identified need. Resources for both English and mathematics have been developed as part of the numeracy and literacy strategies. The school is about to replace its current published scheme for mathematics with a new one that reflects changes in the curriculum. Book provision has improved and this has had a positive impact on standards. The library stock has been supplemented with new fiction and non-fiction books and the central stock of reading scheme books broadened. However, both still contain some outdated books. The new ICT suite and the provision in classrooms of networked computers with Internet access support teaching and the subject's development very well. In music the range of instruments has been extended but there is now a need for a thorough review of these and to provide a CD player for the recorded music scheme.

80 The range and quality of consumable materials varies from class to class, because each teacher has their own class budget and is responsible for choosing and purchasing items with this. It is particularly noticeable in practical subjects such as art that there are variations between classes in what is available.

Strengths include:

- *Very strong leadership by the headteacher.*
- *Clear focus on what needs improving with a shared emphasis on raising standards.*
- *Contribution and work of the governing body.*

- *The management of special educational needs.*
- *Very good financial planning.*
- *Well cared-for building and extensive grounds.*
- *Large hall, ICT suite and an SEN base.*
- *Conservation area to support work in science.*

Areas for development include:

- *Developing the roles of subject co-ordinators in the foundation subjects.*
- *Rectifying the problem with the boys' toilets.*
- *Improving the visual aspect of the school with planting and extending the range of opportunities for recreation and learning provided by the school grounds.*
- *Continuing to improve the book stock and class book areas.*

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81 In order to build on the many strengths of the school the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

Raise standards in information and communication technology by:

- organising staff training (already planned for this year);
- assessing pupils to see what they know, understand and can do and using these assessments to plan work to meet the needs of different year groups;
- using ICT in other subjects.

(Reference paragraphs: 8,30,35,36,51,75 and 143 - 150)

The headteacher, staff and governors should also consider the following minor points for inclusion in its improvement plan:

- Re-organising the timetable to meet the recommended 23.5 hours teaching time for Years 3 - 6. *(Reference paragraph: 37)*
- Re-adjusting the time spent on foundation subjects, especially design and technology. *(Reference paragraphs: 9, 35 and 126)*
- Tracking each pupil's coverage of study units in history and geography. *(Reference paragraphs: 36,135,138 & 140)*
- Increasing the emphasis on investigative work in science and problem solving in mathematics in some classes. *(Reference paragraphs: 5,6,28,29,107,113 & 117)*
- Enhancing class book corners to make them more stimulating. *(Reference paragraphs: 78,79 & 100)*
- Improving and refurbishing the accommodation, especially the boys lavatories. *(Reference paragraph: 77)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2%	10%	61%	27%	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	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	275
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	18
<i>FTE means full-time equivalent.</i>	
Special educational needs	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	44
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	24	23	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	20	22
	Girls	20	20	21
	Total	39	40	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (86)	85 (81)	91 (91)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	22	22
	Girls	20	20	22
	Total	40	42	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (86)	89 (88)	94 (88)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	23	18	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	18	21
	Girls	15	13	16
	Total	33	31	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (87)	76 (90)	90 (94)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	18	20
	Girls	16	13	15
	Total	32	31	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (87)	76 (90)	85 (90)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	9
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	234
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)	10.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	31

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	153

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
	£
Total income	539359
Total expenditure	548572
Expenditure per pupil	1899
Balance brought forward from previous year	44047
Balance carried forward to next year	34834

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	278
Number of questionnaires returned	130

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	42	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	48	5	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	57	15	3	1
The teaching is good.	48	46	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	51	14	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	39	2	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	35	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	54	14	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	48	45	4	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	49	8	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	51	17	2	12

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100.

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

82 Children start school in the autumn term before their fifth birthday. Those with birthdays between May and August attend school on a part-time basis during the mornings until Christmas. At the time of the inspection, thirty children were attending full-time. Nearly all the children have had previous experience of a nursery or of the nearby playgroup. When they begin school, baseline assessments show that levels of attainment are wide ranging, but broadly average overall.

83 The good provision identified in the previous inspection has been maintained and concerns have been addressed. The outside play area has been developed, with a small garden, and provides a safe place for children to play. There are plans to develop it further. Although there is no specific policy for work with children in the reception class, careful attention has been given to planning the curriculum in line with the requirements of the foundation stage. The majority of children are on line to achieve the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development during their time in the reception class.

Personal and social and emotional development

84 The teaching of personal, social and emotional development is good. The class teacher encourages the children to be independent as soon as they enter the classroom. The first task of the day, for example, is to find their name card and put it in a basket. At the end of any planned work, children who have finished choose their own activity from selected cards with appropriate pictures. Children change independently for physical activities and are encouraged to fold their clothes neatly. School routines are taught well. Children sit quietly on the carpet. They put up their hands in answer to questions and do not call out. They line up sensibly to go out to the playground or to the hall. Classroom rules remind children how to behave. A small topic on 'Helping Hands' enabled children to identify ways in which they were helpful and kind to each other in school and at home. They illustrated these with drawings of handprints for a classroom display.

Communication, language and literacy

85 Children are developing speaking and listening skills well because there are many opportunities through the day for them to express their feelings and ideas. In one session seen, they spoke clearly and with interest about pictures they had drawn at home, places they have visited and birthday presents. In another session, having realised that their model dinosaur had vanished, they suggested many ideas of where it might be hiding and who might have taken it.

86 Reading is well taught, with a good emphasis on enjoying books. Children read their storybooks with interest and enjoy talking about them. There is good parental support for reading, and books, reading diaries and key words charts go home regularly. Children sequence stories by colouring pictures, cutting them out and sticking them in order in their books. They learn words of the week and practise these every day. They are beginning to identify initial sounds and practised writing the letter 'r' on whiteboards, using good pen control. They also used plasticine to form the letter 'r,' which gave further practice in letter recognition. The playhouse outside is used as a writing area, with a variety of writing implements, but this cannot be used on a regular basis because of the constraints of the

weather. There is no designated area within the classroom for children to work as writers.

87 Good teaching underpins children's good progress. The teacher uses really imaginative ideas to encourage children's thinking and questioning skills. She organised a hunt for a missing dinosaur, with picture clues to take the children round the school, for example. She linked this with phonic teaching focusing on the letter *r* (for *robber*, who had hidden the dinosaur). She used quiet control to calm the excited children, yet extended their vocabulary by carefully focused questions. She shared her planning well with the teaching assistant, who worked very effectively with one group to develop children's research skills. They explored the texture and shape of a selection of fossils and used reference books to find out more information.

Mathematical development

88 Children make good progress in developing their numeracy skills, because of the interesting activities planned to motivate them. In one session they used a washing line to peg out clothes with numbers in order, from zero to ten. One was removed and children identified the missing number. They counted on, starting at three, and then found the number before four and the number after six. Children concentrate well and are eager to show they know the answer. In a second session, they identified shapes by feeling them with their eyes closed. They recognised circles, triangles, rectangles and squares, having used these shapes in an earlier activity to make sponge prints on their playhouse in the classroom.

89 The quality of teaching is good. The teacher uses a range of effective strategies to help children solve problems. For example, in one session, children were asked to hold a number in their head, and then use their fingers to count on. In a practical introduction to work on graphs, children sorted small plastic vehicles first by colour, then by type. They arranged them in columns were asked to find which column had the most vehicles. The teacher develops children's mathematical vocabulary in the daily tasks of taking the register and the numbers for dinner. Children counted those taking a hot dinner, and those having sandwiches, and understood how to find the difference. Planning details are shared with the teaching assistant, ensuring she is well prepared to work with the children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

90 Children are making good overall progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world. This is fostered by a range of interesting activities. Pancake Day, for example, was the focus for a range of well-planned imaginative activities. Children investigated fillings for pancakes and made choices, either lemon or chocolate. A key part of this activity was the selection and safe use of equipment, as children used graters and lemon squeezers carefully to prepare their fillings. They also made paper pancakes, which they sold for 1p at the Pancake Café.

91 The teacher has used the story, *'Where the Wild Things Are'*, very effectively to stir the children's imagination. They have made a wall display to create a jungle, and have used construction sets and reclaimed materials to build realistic models of dinosaurs. They are able to say whether their dinosaurs are plant or meat eaters.

92 Very good teaching ensures that children achieve very well when working with computers. In the session seen, clear explanations enabled them to log on and enter the program, they listened carefully, selected the cursor and used the mouse confidently to direct the bear to select the fruit he wanted, or fit doors and windows to the house. They talked confidently about what they were doing and could explain the choices they were making, as they responded to the program.

Physical development

93 Children make good progress in their physical development. Good opportunities are provided for them to use construction toys and work with malleable materials, such as plasticine, and they handle these materials well. They work on a varied range of activities during the day to reinforce manipulative skills in using pencils, scissors and glue. In one session seen, they cut out gummed shapes, showing good control, to make pictures of dinosaurs.

94 The excellent teaching in the movement session seen has a very positive impact in children's physical development. Any concerns with physical co-ordination were quickly identified, and the teaching assistant offered good support during the lesson. The teacher used very good behaviour management strategies to ensure children listen carefully to instructions. She extended children's spatial awareness, co-ordination and control very well. Children did not use the outside playground very much during the inspection because of the freezing weather. The equipment is limited. There is no equipment to help children to balance or climb, for example.

Creative development

95 Children make sound progress in this area of their work and have varied opportunities to express themselves creatively. They contributed to a classroom display on dinosaurs and other wild animals and mixed paint well to make their pictures. They use other stories as a stimulus for painting and have painted imaginative pictures of *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Peace at Last*. They drew pictures of dinosaurs using pencils and crayons, showing good pencil control. A small group of children enjoyed taking part in role-play and used their imaginations well, when they became giants wearing large wellingtons. Children sing a selection of nursery rhymes and counting songs tunefully and remember the words well. They enjoy singing in assembly, particularly when they take part in one planned especially for the younger children.

96 Sound teaching, imaginative resources and shared expertise contribute to the sound progress made by the children. Planning notes for the teaching assistants enable them to have a good understanding of the learning objectives and a good overview of the provision for early years.

Strengths include:

- *Clear understanding of curriculum for the foundation stage.*
- *Imaginative ideas to motivate children.*
- *Good strategies to reinforce phonic work and counting.*
- *Provision for class movement sessions.*
- *Effective behaviour management.*
- *Encouragement of independence.*

Areas for development include:

- *Development of an early years policy and planning document.*
- *The outside play area.*
- *Writing area in the classroom.*
- *Organisation of room.*

ENGLISH

Standards

97 Standards have risen in national tests since the last inspection. Last year they were well above average in Year 2 tests in writing and above average in reading. Standards were

above average in Year 6. In both years, higher attainers did particularly well. Pupils at St Mary's did better than their peers in similar schools in writing in Year 2, but not as well in reading. In Year 6, pupils did as well as their peers in similar schools. There are two reasons for this improvement. Firstly, the introduction of the national literacy strategy has helped teachers to improve their planning. Secondly, there has been careful tracking of pupils' progress, which has identified pupils who are underachieving.

98 The inspection found that this year standards are above average in speaking and listening, reading and writing in both Years 2 and 6. This year there are fewer pupils attaining higher levels. This is because of the characteristics of the year group and is not related to the school's provision. In lessons most pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good support that they receive, both in lessons and when they are withdrawn for extra help. Higher attaining pupils also do well because of the appropriate tasks set. The school does not analyse the progress of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds separately and so there is no evidence to indicate whether this group of pupils is doing as well or better than other pupils. In sessions seen, these pupils were achieving as well as their friends. The performance of boys and girls in Year 6 is much closer than that found nationally, with boys doing well. In 2000, boys did better than girls. This is partly as a consequence of the pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning and is not due to any gender bias in the school.

Speaking and listening:

99 Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are wide ranging, but above average overall throughout the school. By the time they reach Year 6, most are using Standard English appropriately. Pupils generally listen well to their teachers. In all classes they speak confidently, with most of the opportunities for speaking in class discussion times at the beginning of lessons. In some classes pupils share their work with the class at the end of the session. Pupils also experience speaking to larger audiences. In the parish mass, for example, several pupils used a microphone to read prayers to a congregation of about three hundred. Some pupils have difficulties with clear articulation and this affects their development of phonic skills. In one lesson, for example, a pupil felt that 'fought' meant 'thought' because he pronounces 'th' as 'f'. In some sessions it was apparent that pupils' breadth of vocabulary limited their understanding. Teachers intervened well at these times to explain unfamiliar words to pupils. At the moment there is no school planning document to identify the development of skills in this area or to suggest appropriate activities for each year group and so teachers do not plan particularly for this area of English. Similarly drama is not an integral part of the curriculum, although pupils sometimes engage in role-play in history and last year the whole school went to see a production of *'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'*. Older pupils take part in a production each year, but there is no regular, planned opportunity for pupils to explore meaning through role-play.

Reading:

100 Standards are above average in reading because of the systematic way pupils are taught. Teachers pay good attention to the development of phonic skills and pupils are clear about the strategies to use in order to read unfamiliar words. The reading scheme is used well to provide a structure for pupils' individual reading. Pupils are encouraged to take books home to share with their parents and carers and those who read regularly in this way are making good progress. Story sacks, with games and toys to accompany books also make reading fun for younger pupils. In the literacy hour, some teachers use books very well to make the work interesting. In two younger pupils' classes, for example, teachers used *'The Three Little Pigs'* and *'Little Red Riding Hood'* as a basis for the work. At St Mary's, pupils remain longer on a structured reading programme than they do in many schools. The advantage of this is that teachers can keep track of pupils' progress and guide their reading choices. The school has invested heavily in new books for older pupils because the range was very limited four years ago. The school is continuing to develop its stock of literature for

these pupils and is aware that there is room to improve the breadth and range of novels by contemporary writers. Some pupils are developing firm favourites, either authors or books and talk with enthusiasm about writers and illustrators, such as Jacqueline Wilson and Tony Ross. Others find reading less exciting. For these pupils there is not enough to whet their appetites for reading. Class book corners, for example, do not draw pupils' attention to particular authors or books. The school is aware of the need to improve the normal book stock and more money has been allocated to this area.

Writing:

101 Again standards are good because there is a concentration on helping pupils to develop the skills needed for writing. Handwriting skills are very well taught and as a result almost all of the pupils write in a neat cursive style by the time that they leave the school. Throughout the school the presentation of work is very good. Pupils also build up a bank of words that they know how to spell as a result of weekly spelling lists, which they take home to learn. They are aware that they need to transfer these skills to their own writing, but as one young pupil said *'It's difficult to remember everything at once'*. The development of independent writing within English is patchy through the school. In some classes, there are good opportunities provided for pupils to write at length and for a real purpose, while in others there is more concentration on developing skills through worksheets and comprehension exercises. The new computer suite is being used well to help pupils to word process their work. In classes where pupils do write at length, they are expected to draft and re-draft their work. In a session with the oldest pupils, for example, pupils worked on the first draft of a piece of writing in order to create suspense, and managed this well.

Teaching:

102 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. In lessons seen it ranged from satisfactory to very good. Throughout the school teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of behaviour and working attitudes and as a result pupils try hard and concentrate well. Planning is soundly based on the national literacy strategy and tasks are designed well to meet different pupils' needs. There is especially good provision for pupils with special educational needs, who are supported well in the lesson and sometimes withdrawn for extra help. Educational support assistants make a significant contribution to this area. Sometimes they are under-used in the introductory part of the lesson. They do not monitor pupils' responses at this time, for example. In the better lessons, good quality texts are used as a basis for teaching, so that pupils learn how to write by studying the work of good writers. In these lessons, teachers' enthusiasm and flair bring the sessions alive. In one or two sessions the changeover between the class teaching and the activity were a little noisy and so pupils took longer to settle to their tasks.

Strengths include:

- *Standards in reading and writing.*
- *The implementation of the national literacy strategy.*
- *The pride pupils take in the presentation of their work.*

Areas for development include:

- *Planning for the development of speaking and listening skills, including drama..*
- *Creating opportunities for extended writing.*
- *Classroom book corners.*
- *Continuing to develop the range of good quality fiction and poetry.*

MATHEMATICS

103 National test results at the end of Year 2 in 2000 and for the past four years have been average. However the proportion of pupils attaining average levels is increasing steadily year on year and keeping pace with improvements nationally. At the end of Year 6, results have improved considerably, rising from average four years ago to above average in 2000. As a

result of the school's high expectations, a particular feature of the Year 6 results is the high proportion of pupils attaining above average results. In 2000, for example, more than one third of pupils in Year 6 attained these higher levels. In 1999 results were well above average, reflecting the particular strengths of that year group.

104 The school's powerful bank of assessment data on each of the year groups as they pass through the school provides clear evidence to explain fluctuations such as these. The headteacher, assessment manager and the Year 6 teacher use this data to make accurate predictions about the results of individual pupils and whole year groups, so that there are few surprises at the end of the year. These very strong assessment procedures lie at the heart of recent improvements in Years 3 to 4, enabling the school and individual teachers to focus specific teaching and support where it is most needed.

105 The test results for 2000 are reflected closely in the inspection findings which show that in Year 2 standards of attainment are in line with levels expected nationally. In Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve well and standards are above those expected nationally in Year 6. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' attainment, except in Year 6, where there are some high attaining boys. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress because of the very good quality support they receive. Teaching sessions are well organised and support assistants are well briefed to develop their confidence and understanding. In the best examples these pupils attain levels in line with many of their peers, as in a Year 5/6 lesson where they practised the skills of measuring angles. In the same lesson the teacher had planned equally effectively for two higher attaining pupils, who worked with the same support assistant on a more challenging task. Pupils of all ability levels therefore made good progress in their learning about angles as measures of turn and as segments of a circle.

106 By the time they are seven, almost all pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge of the place value of each digit in numbers to 100, confidently adding and subtracting numbers to 20 and beyond. They estimate and measure length carefully and as in a Year 2 lesson are developing a good understanding of the need for standardised metric measurements in real life situations. They identify the particular features of common 2D and 3D shapes and compile tables, block graphs and pictograms to record their birthdays. In Year 3 to 6, teachers build successfully on these earlier experiences. The analysis of pupils' past work shows that the quality of teaching and learning is better in the older pupils' classes. As a result, pupils make more rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding than in other parts of the school. By Year 6, most have acquired a range of methods to add, subtract, multiply and divide and show a good understanding of the relationships between these operations. They calculate area and perimeter and construct and interpret line graphs and pie charts.

107 Throughout the school pupils use mathematical skills in practical situations in other subject areas. For example, Year 2 pupils use their knowledge of the pattern of odd and even numbers when producing street paintings, linking their work in art and geography. In Year 3/4 they create attractive wrapping paper designs with repeating patterns based on rotating and reflecting shapes. However, teachers did not plan systematically for these activities to enhance pupils' mathematical understanding. There are also isolated examples of pupils carrying out open-ended investigations. For example, in Year 6 they conduct an investigation into prime numbers. Generally, however, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities in this aspect of the mathematics curriculum. In addition there was little evidence of the use of classroom-based computers to support pupils' learning.

108 Teachers have conscientiously adopted the national numeracy strategy and, by using it consistently to guide their planning, are ensuring that pupils' learning builds progressively as they move through the school. However, there are relative weaknesses in the ways that teachers are implementing the scheme. For example, teachers do not always make the

three-part lesson structure explicit to pupils so that they share an understanding of the purposes of the introductory, main activity and review phases of the lesson. In mental mathematics sessions, teachers do not make sufficient use of practical aids such as counting sticks and whiteboards to involve all pupils in the activities.

109 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Although the quality of teaching and learning in lessons throughout the school is good, other evidence indicates that the impact over time is stronger in the juniors. This is partly because teachers rely heavily in Years 1 and 2 on workbooks from the school's adopted scheme and on commercially produced worksheets. This limits the range of strategies and approaches used by teachers. In addition, underlying systems such as objective assessment are more firmly embedded in the juniors as integral parts of the teaching and learning process. The very good bank of data on pupils' potential and actual attainment that builds as pupils move through the school provides strong support for teachers' planning. The school makes very effective use of this information to manage the mathematics curriculum and individual teachers are better able to identify precisely what pupils know and therefore what they need to do in order to improve.

110 The best lessons were characterised by teachers' high expectations leading to challenging and interesting tasks. In a lesson on reflective symmetry the teacher skilfully increased the challenge as the lesson progressed, so that all pupils of differing abilities were able to learn at a level which matched their needs. As a result, pupils were highly motivated, keen to participate and sustained high levels of concentration. Teachers throughout the school demonstrate good knowledge of mathematics. In a Year 6 lesson this was evident in the teacher's continuous monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress in their learning about the area of compound shapes. She created a very good working ethos in which pupils' very positive attitudes made a significant contribution to the success of the lesson.

111 The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and standards have risen and are continuing to rise. Very good whole school procedures for assessing pupils' attainment have been introduced. In addition to the statutory and non-statutory national tests which form the basis of a comprehensive annual programme, teachers use regular informal observations and half-termly assessments to measure pupils' attainment. As a result there is a good match of planned tasks to pupils' needs and abilities.

Strengths include:

- *Standards, particularly in Year 6.*
- *The implementation of the numeracy strategy and improvements in teaching..*
- *Assessment of attainment and progress*

Areas for development include:

- *Developing pupils' numeracy skills systematically across the curriculum.*
- *Work on problem solving and investigations.*
- *Improving the use of ICT to support pupils' learning.*
- *Continuing to strengthen assessment procedures in Years 1 and 2.*
- *Strengthening the three-part format in numeracy lessons.*

SCIENCE

112 In 2000, teachers assessed standards attained by seven-year-olds to be broadly in line with other schools nationally and well above in the proportion achieving the higher levels. In the Year 6 tests, eleven year olds attained standards that were average when compared to other schools nationally but above in the proportion attaining the higher levels. Overall, pupils did not do so well as their peers in similar schools. Over the past three years results in Years 2 and 6 have been average, although there was a particularly sharp rise in 1999 in Year 6 to well above average. This was largely due to the high proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels and was a feature of that particular year group.

113 Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained, with an improvement in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels. Monitoring of attainment and positive action to avoid any gender imbalance now mean that any variation that occurs between the performance of boys and girls is due to ability rather than other factors. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress and most pupils attain standards in line with expectations. This is confirmed by pupils' work seen during the current inspection. The increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels is largely a result of the focus on the needs of all pupils, including higher attainers. This has been supported by the implementation of a more structured curriculum based on recent national guidance, coupled with a focus on developing pupils' scientific knowledge.

114 During the inspection no science was being taught in the infant classes, but from viewing pupils' work and teachers' planning and talking to pupils and teachers it is evident that pupils make satisfactory progress and are working at the expected levels. Their teachers select activities that will provide suitable opportunities for pupils to extend their scientific knowledge and understanding by observing and recording what they have seen. Having looked after plants and watched their growth, Year 2 pupils know that light and water are both necessary for growth. Through simple investigations their teachers develop pupils' understanding and enquiry skills. Pupils have experimented with simple electrical circuits and now know how to wire a battery to a bulb to make it light. Pupils are taught to record through words, pictures and charts what they have learnt and seen.

115 In the junior classes there is a strong focus on the acquisition of scientific knowledge, often through direct observation. That this is not leading to higher standards is largely due to the need for greater focus on developing pupils' scientific enquiry skills and observational recording, so that they not only learn facts but also understand them.

116 Year 6 pupils are also working at a level expected for their age, developing their scientific knowledge and understanding and recording their investigations in a recognised format. Observations and measurements are beginning to be recorded in increasing detail in a widening range of diagrams, charts and tables, as, for example, when Year 6 pupils record on a table in Newtons the force on an object, first in air and then in water. Under the guidance of their teacher they note the difference and from the data predict that the force on an object will be less in water. Further testing confirms this. In a whole class discussion that draws well on their knowledge of forces, they conclude that this is because water exerts an upward thrust. That pupils are not fully secure in this process is illustrated by the need for careful explanation and constant checking by their teacher.

117 Teachers are introducing their pupils to an increasing range of methods for presenting data. However, this is not yet sufficiently established and pupils find difficulty in lessons in constructing and using charts and tables to record and present information. Pupils in a Year 5/6 class were unsure how to record what they knew about the relationship between liquids, solids and gases on a concept map, although they had used one before. In mixed age classes in Years 4,5 and 6, pupils were given opportunities to develop their observational skills as they watched reactions such as chocolate melting or the movement of water in a bottle. Activities such as this help to extend pupils' knowledge, but the opportunities to extend investigative skills and understanding are not developed.

118 Throughout the juniors there is a strong focus on pupils using the correct scientific language. A good example of this was seen in a Year 3 class, as pupils learnt to use 'transparent' to describe the quality of glass and other materials. However, although pupils learnt that light travelled in straight lines and that an object in its path created a shadow, they were not given the opportunity to discover this for themselves as the explanation and demonstration preceded the experimentation.

119 Overall, the quality of teaching in the junior classes is satisfactory, with some good teaching seen. The sound progress made by pupils is a direct result of this. Teachers are careful to plan their lessons to cover the agreed topics. They draw on recent national guidance for ideas and to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning. In the better lessons they make good use of a range of carefully prepared resources to illustrate the teaching points and capture pupils' interest. A good example of this was in a year 4/5 class where pupils learnt that melting chocolate is a reversible change and that when it has cooled it tastes the same. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their science lessons.

120 Teachers' careful explanation and exemplification draws well on what pupils already know to ensure that they understand what is expected of them and how to complete the task. In a Year 6 class, for example, pupils were reminded about balancing forces as they sought to explain why plasticene weighs less in water than air. There is good use of questioning to direct and challenge pupils' thinking and move their learning forward. Teachers also make good use of the responses to establish what pupils know and understand about what they are doing. This informal assessment is supplemented by planned assessment activities at the end of each topic. However, this does not yet provide a detailed picture of how pupils are progressing in the subject or inform the setting of targets for improvement. Teachers have good expectations of their pupils, who respond well to this in the neat presentation of their work. They also co-operate well with one another in pairs or groups as they take turns or discuss ideas.

121 The subject manager, who already has very good subject knowledge, is currently attending a long-term science management course to extend her skills further. Teachers' planning and pupils' work are regularly reviewed to identify areas for development and form a view of standards in the subject. At the moment there is no systematic record kept to track which work has been covered by each pupil. This means that some pupils in split year groups might not cover the full programme of study. Teachers use the conservation area well to support science. The use of ICT within the subject is largely undeveloped.

Strengths include:

- *New national guidance provides a good basis for planning.*
- *Good class control and enthusiasm of the pupils.*
- *Monitoring of planning and pupils' work by the subject manager.*
- *Focus on developing pupils' subject knowledge and the correct use of terminology.*

Areas for development include:

- *A more systematic approach to pupils' recording of observations and investigations.*
- *Greater use of ICT within the subject.*
- *Introducing structured assessment procedures that provide a clear view of what pupils know understand and can do and inform the setting of targets to raise standards.*
- *Maintaining a central record of what has been covered in each class to ensure that all pupils have experienced the full programme of study for the subject.*

ART AND DESIGN

122 Very little work in art was observed during the inspection because most lessons were timetabled for Friday afternoon. Based on the limited evidence of one lesson, pupils' work and discussion with pupils about what they know, understand and can do, standards are broadly average at the end of both key stages. However it is not possible to track pupils' progress in the development of skills or to pick out what aspects of art they have covered since starting school. Until recently the school had not moved forward very far from the situation at the time of the last inspection, when younger pupils did well, but older pupils made unsatisfactory progress. The school has now adopted a new national scheme, although this is not being used systematically in all classes.

123 Some of the work displayed is lively and imaginative. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to do well and painting skills are taught well. Good links are made with topics and in one class pupils had painted various forms of transport in connection with their work. In another class, pupils had looked at 'Poppyfields' by Monet and painted their own fields in his style. Every child's work was well displayed and showed that they had tried hard to create an impression of red flowers in a field. In conversation, pupils in Year 2 are enthusiastic about their work.

124 This enthusiasm was shared by pupils in Years 3 and 4, who are clear about what they have learnt. They too have studied the work of famous artists and explained how they looked at the work of William Morris before designing their own repeating pattern. There is less work displayed in classrooms in Years 3 to 4, but in the one lesson seen, pupils in Year 4 and 5 achieved well in a drawing lesson because of the high expectations of the teacher. They worked very quietly to sketch artefacts from a range of cultures, using pencils carefully and representing what they saw in an imaginative way. The oldest pupils also enjoy art and talk with some understanding about the work of artists they have studied, such as Van Gogh and Picasso. Their work is broadly average. Pupils' enthusiasm extends to the after-school art club run by the co-ordinator, which is vastly over-subscribed.

125 With the school's recent focus on literacy and numeracy, art has had a lower profile and the co-ordinator's role is developing. There has been less discussion amongst staff about the expected development of skills in strands such as painting, drawing and printing year on year. To some extent teachers have been autonomous in their planning for the subject and this is exacerbated by teachers' individual responsibility for ordering the equipment that they need year by year.

Strengths include:

- *Examples of good work in some classes.*

Areas for development include:

- *An overview of the development of skills in different areas, such as painting and drawing.*
- *The role of the co-ordinator in monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' standards.*
- *The consistent implementation of the agreed planning document.*

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

126 During the inspection little teaching of the subject was taking place, although three lessons were seen. Therefore evidence has also been drawn from talking to pupils' and teachers, viewing work and teachers' planning. As at the time of the last inspection, standards are broadly average in both Year 2 and 6. In the work seen, pupils achieved well. Although topics for each class are based on recent national guidance, insufficient time is currently allocated to the subject. This does not allow for the full range of learning opportunities necessary for pupils to develop the expected range of knowledge and skills. As a result of the good teaching in the subject, pupils still achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported by their teachers and classmates and tasks are often modified for them.

127 In Years 1 and 2, teachers encourage pupils to think about the intended purpose and to carefully execute their design using materials and methods available. With their teacher, pupils look at a range of wrapping paper before making their own sequential pattern, using paint stamps, grids and colouring materials. The finished work shows a good standard of care. This is a common feature of pupils' work seen throughout the school. After looking at wheeled vehicles, Year 2 pupils experiment with fixing wheels to axles. Before designing their own vehicles they are shown the materials available for the project. They list what they will need and show how they will join the axle to the body. The teaching is hampered by the

limited experience pupils have in joining and working with different materials.

128 Evaluating and improving products is a more prominent feature of pupils' work in Years 3 to 6, but pupils still only experience working with a limited range of materials and techniques. The good teaching and preparation in a Year 3 class ensures that all pupils are aware of safety issues as they work. They have learnt how to strengthen corners of the photo frame so that it is rigid and are now decorating it in a style that will appeal to the recipient. They produce a well-finished article with which they are suitably pleased. Junior pupils not only work with tools and different materials but also work with food. Pupils in a Year 5/6 class have made bread. The slippers made by Year 6 pupils had been carefully planned and made. Pupils worked from foot patterns to ensure a good fit. They recorded what they had used, how they had made them and suggested improvements such as stronger glue to keep the sole on. It is evident from the range of work seen that although pupils gain experience in designing and making products, they have insufficient opportunities to work with a wide range of materials and techniques. As a result they do not develop their skills and knowledge to the expected level in this aspect of the work. The use of ICT in the subject is undeveloped.

129 Pupils enjoy the subject, work well together and use equipment safely. This is a good reflection of the teaching. However, the constraints of time and the restricted subject curriculum limit the teaching and pupils' attainment. The lack of assessment arrangements means that there is no clear picture of pupils' experiences, how well they are doing and what they have not yet covered. The subject manager has formed a view of standards through viewing teachers' planning and pupils' work. There is a good range of construction kits and other resources available. Teachers are responsible for purchasing their own consumables, so there is only a limited range of materials available in each class.

Strengths include:

- *Completed work shows a good standard of finish.*
- *Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and enjoy it.*
- *The good teaching in the subject ensures that pupils make good progress.*

Areas for development include:

- *Increasing the allocation of time to the subject and ensuring that curriculum planning covers all strands of the programme of study in sufficient detail so that pupils experience using a wider range of materials and techniques.*
- *Ensuring that pupils have opportunities to disassemble products and use control devices, simple electrical circuits and mechanisms in their products.*
- *Introducing assessment arrangements so that a record of what pupils know, understand and can do is maintained and used to plan for the next stages of their learning.*
- *Making greater use of ICT in the subject.*

GEOGRAPHY

130 Only one lesson was observed during the inspection, so judgements are also based on an analysis of pupils' work, planning, displays, resources and discussions with the co-ordinator and with pupils. It is evident that pupils make sound progress and their achievements are broadly in line with levels expected at the ages of seven and eleven.

131 The weakness identified in the previous inspection (systematic coverage of a contrasting locality to extend pupils' awareness beyond central Southern England) has been addressed. The oldest pupils visit the Isle of Wight and make direct comparisons with Swindon. The school has adopted a national scheme of work to ensure that all elements are covered appropriately. An annual overview shows the topics chosen for each class.

132 In Years 1 and 2, pupils are developing a sense of place in their study of the local

environment. Pupils in Year 1 have walked round the school grounds. With the help of photographs, they have painted pictures for a map of the grounds and identified the car park, hall, playground, playgroup room, Rainbow room and field. The very effective display shows they have a good understanding of where places are around the school.

133 Pupils are also developing an awareness of localities beyond their own, as they investigate reasons for visits to the seaside. A map of the British Isles identifies the most popular seaside resorts with photographs and pupils' write about seaside souvenirs. Year 2 pupils speak confidently, showing a good knowledge of geographical terms, about the differences between Swindon and Struay, an imaginary Scottish island, described in the *Katie Morag* series of stories. They explain that Struay is an island and this is land in the middle of the sea, with fields. It is quiet and has fewer people. They emphasise that Swindon is a town; a noisy place, with many houses, shops, a market and a railway, but there are lots of exciting places to visit, such as the park, the zoo and the steam museum.

134 Pupils in Years 3 and 4 discussed ways of improving their environment. After a walk in the neighbourhood, they were saddened by rubbish in the bushes, leaking pipes and the high level of noise. They were concerned over the lack of room for cars to park. Opportunities for individual research enabled pupils in Years 4 and 5 to understand more about the rivers of the world. Other pupils learned about the water cycle, asking the question, *Where does water go?* Using their mathematical skills, they measured puddles and made a table to illustrate how fast a river flows. Pupils in Year 6 learned about the River Jordan, combining their work in geography with religious education. The annual residential visit to the Isle of Wight provides good opportunities for pupils in Year 6 to compare this locality with the town of Swindon and to make a study of coastal geography.

135 The quality of teaching was satisfactory in the lesson seen and pupils' work indicates that this is generally the case. Planning, using the new scheme of work, is good and there is a clear overview of topics studied. However there is no clear recording of topics covered or arrangements made to ensure that pupils in split year groups cover the same work.

136 Geography is well managed. The co-ordinator took on this responsibility in September and has liaised well with other teachers in Years 1 and 2 to discuss units for study. This is having a positive impact on work in this area.

Strengths include:

- Leadership by subject co-ordinator.
- Use of the local environment and the residential visit to Isle of Wight.
- Effective displays.

Areas for development include:

- Checking which areas of study pupils have undertaken in Years 3 to 6.

HISTORY

137 Pupils achieved well in the three lessons seen during the inspection. Judgements were also made from other evidence, which included discussions with the co-ordinator, an analysis of work completed this year, teachers' planning and resources. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of chronology is in line with levels expected for their age at seven and eleven years, as are skills of historical enquiry and research, noted in displays on classroom walls.

138 Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, and the weaknesses identified in the development of awareness of chronology in Years 1 and 2 have been addressed. The implementation of a national scheme of work for history ensures that all elements should be covered appropriately. However, the school has not yet planned a

programme of work for Years 3 to 6 to show when each child will undertake the six required study units.

139 The younger pupils are developing a sense of the passing of time, when they compare their homes now to those of one hundred years ago. A very good display of artefacts contributes towards their understanding of bedtime in the past. Pupils drew realistic examples of a stone hot water bottle, a candle and candle-snuffer, and china washing bowl and jug, and their pictures were added to the display. They have painted pictures of their own homes, made models showing different types of houses and created an imaginative road of houses, which cover stories about their house. Pupils in Year 2 are also making good progress in their chronological understanding, as they compare how people travelled in the past with modern transport. They have made a time line of their birth dates and they compared this with a time line on which they placed photographs of the earlier forms of transport. Pupils successfully completed a table showing how people used to travel to school, to town, to London and to America, and how they travelled now. A display of work completed last term on '*Remembering*' shows that pupils' factual knowledge of World War 1 has been well developed.

140 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed further in the wide range of topics studied in Years 3 to 6. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have completed a time line with pictorial representations, which begins with the birth of Christ and covers some important events in our history, for example the first flight, the Great Fire of London and the first man on the moon. More recorded evidence shows that pupils in Year 4 have observed the effects of invasion in their study of the way the settlement of the Romans has affected British society. Careful tracking is necessary to ensure that all pupils in Years 3 to 6 cover this unit of work. Good research skills are evident in the time line, which illustrates important people in Tudor times, created by pupils in Years 4 and 5. Some pupils in Years 5 and 6, studying a topic on Ancient Greece, have looked at evidence from pictures and are challenged to identify what they know, how they can guess and what they found out. In a lesson seen on Gods and Goddesses, which linked to work in literacy, there was useful discussion and a good focus on gathering information, with references drawn to inconsistencies between the texts studied. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of the changes that have taken place after studying life for children at school and at home in Victorian Britain. They used a census database to find out about burials of children and their ages at death.

141 The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was good and has had a significant impact on the historical learning the pupils achieved. All teachers refer to previous lessons and use effective questioning to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They have good subject knowledge. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour, with the result that pupils concentrate and respond well. Lessons are well organised with appropriately matched work for the differing needs of pupils. Clear explanations enable pupils to start independent activities immediately and the good pace ensures that the work planned is completed during the sessions. Well-prepared resources include vocabulary lists with the correct spellings for the most common words to be used.

142 Visits are an important aspect of the subject and help to bring learning alive. The visit to the Chedworth Roman Villa and the Corinium Museum, as part of the topic on the Romans, and Osbourne House to reinforce the Victorian topic, have been particularly helpful in giving the pupils practical experiences. Good use is also made of the local environment and the Swindon Steam Museum.

Strengths include:

- *Good teaching and good subject knowledge*
- *Effective use of questioning skills*
- *Work on historical enquiry*

- *Use of visits*

Areas for development include

- *Checking which topics pupils study in Years 3 to 6*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

143 There is insufficient evidence available to make a firm judgement about standards in all aspects of ICT. In the work seen in lessons, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are attaining the expected levels but pupils in Years 3 to 6 are attaining below the levels expected. The very recent opening of the ICT suite has meant a change in focus to the whole class teaching of ICT skills. Staff and pupils are currently becoming acquainted with the capabilities of the new equipment. Its use so far has focused largely on the introduction of word-processing skills and experimentation with paint-and-draw programmes.

144 Since the last inspection the facilities for ICT have been considerably enhanced and the school is now very well placed to move the subject forward. It will now be possible to organise the direct teaching of ICT skills so that deficiencies in pupils' knowledge and experience are addressed. They will be able to practise, develop and utilise the skills learnt in the suite on their networked classroom computers and use them to support their learning in other subjects. Given these factors, all pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.

145 Historically the time available to pupils on the communal class computers was limited and it was difficult for teachers to teach ICT skills. Pupils' ICT skills are therefore not as developed as might be expected although they have made some progress in all aspects of the subject. In Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils have accessed the Internet and used a search engine to research topics. Pupils in Year 4/5 located information about John Cabot, the explorer, for history and Year 6 pupils obtained pictures and data about wild animals for a personal study. Year 2 pupils recall how to operate a floor robot and throughout the school pupils have operated control devices such as cassette recorders. In all classes there are pupils who have access to computers at home and this is reflected in their greater development of skills. Younger pupils using the new suite make the quickest gains in learning as they confidently engage with tasks. However, it is the older pupils who often need to make the greatest gains in order to catch up.

146 In Years 1 and 2, standards in lessons seen are generally in line with those expected for pupils of their age. Pupils are developing their keyboard skills and understanding of the functions available in a word processing package. Teachers are basing the tasks on work for other subjects so pupils will appreciate the capabilities and practical uses of ICT. Pupils show good dexterity in their control of the mouse using it to select and confirm options. Year 2 pupils compose and type sentences about themselves, linked to their literacy work. They learn how to punctuate, amend and correct errors and save their finished work. Pupils in a year 1/2 class develop their basic keyboard skills by typing short dictated sentences that contain their weekly spellings. Very young pupils make quick gains in their learning, as without fear of failure they quickly match words and objects. They already know how to use the mouse to drag and position items and confirm their choice with a double click.

147 By Year 6, standards are below those expected, although within lessons all pupils are making good progress. Eleven-year-old pupils have word-processed text for their work on Macbeth and created block graphs from data that they have input about letter frequency. They know how to load their own document from a disk and amend and correct it. Pupils in a year 4/5 class edit a prepared text about Tudor kings and queens. They correct errors, run a spell check and learn to use cut and paste to rearrange the text.

148 Although tasks are linked to work in other subjects, the use of ICT to support learning in

them is largely undeveloped. Only once during the course of the inspection was a classroom computer seen being used. This was in a Year 1/2 class, where it was used to design and print wrapping paper.

149 In Years 1 and 2, the teaching is good or better and in Year 3 to 6 it is good. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations so pupils clearly understand how to complete the task. They are careful to choose tasks that are well matched to pupils' levels of skills development. This ensures that they make good progress in their learning. In a Year 3 class pupils substitute adjectives for the word 'nice' in a prepared literacy text supported by a wordbank. Carefully guided by their teacher, they learn how to replace and amend the text before printing it and saving their work to their own disk. Teachers confidently use the equipment and ensure that their lessons are well planned and prepared, so that pupils quickly develop their basic ICT skills. Some staff are not so confident in teaching more advanced ICT skills. This concern will be addressed by the centrally funded extended training for all staff that will commence shortly. The brisk pace to lessons is well supported by the good use made of education support assistants to work with pupils and correct errors. A particular asset in this respect is the education support technician whose expertise quickly corrects glitches and frees teachers to work with the whole class.

150 The subject has been thoughtfully managed by the headteacher, whose vision is responsible for the present high profile of the subject in the school's developmental priorities. He is aware that at the moment staff do not have a clear picture of the attainment levels of pupils in their class.

Strengths include:

- *New ICT suite and networked computers with Internet access in all classrooms.*
- *The use of new national guidance as the basis for planning.*
- *The enthusiasm of pupils.*
- *The planned NOF training for all staff.*

Areas for development include:

- *The introduction of a planned scheme of work which identifies expectations for each year group and ensures that the programme of study for the subject is covered.*
- *The implementation of assessment procedures so that what pupils already know, understand and can do is clearly identified and forms the basis for future teaching and learning.*
- *The use of ICT to support other subjects.*

MUSIC

151 Pupils across the school make sound progress in music and standards at age seven and eleven are in line with national expectations. A published music scheme with taped resources has recently been adopted. This provides a structured approach to the teaching of skills and concepts and is a great support to non-specialist teachers. Observations are limited to three lessons, but judgements are also based on planning, discussions with the co-ordinator, attendance at assemblies and at instrumental lessons.

152 Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, where recorder clubs and choirs enhanced the music curriculum. The subject is adequately resourced but the inspection found there was a need for a wider variety of instruments. This concern has been addressed.

153 Pupils enjoy their lessons, particularly if there is an opportunity to play the percussion instruments. In Year 1, pupils differentiate well between high and low sounds. They listen carefully to the teacher's instructions and follow the actions of the song 'Why don't we?'

making hand movements to show the rise and fall of the music. They are able to sing quietly and are quick to identify the beat and tap out the rhythm. The use of xylophone and chime bars gives pupils practical experience and also provides visual support to help their understanding of high and low sounds. Pupils in Years 1/2 have learnt the difference between verse and refrain in the song '*Morningtown Ride*'. They found it difficult to remember the words of all the verses during this introductory lesson.

154 The pupils in the Year 2 class respond well to rhythm and beat. They recognise that tempo, timbre and pitch can be used to create different moods and effects. They performed '*Mama Paquita*', keeping good time with the taped music. Those using tuned percussion played the downward scale accurately as an accompaniment. Pupils kept a steady beat by tapping an accompaniment to a new song, '*Horsey, Horsey on your way*', and then used untuned percussion to represent the trotting horse.

155 In Years 4/5, pupils are learning about music in Tudor times, an extension of their history topic on the Tudors. They sang '*Greensleeves*' tunefully, with good attention to long phrase shapes and changes in the way different sounds were combined. Pupils in Years 5/6 performed a song '*When he wore ebony trousers*', which they had practised earlier. This was a complex song with a refrain, using a wide range of notes and rhythms. Pupils performed it as a round and sang tunefully, holding their parts accurately and finishing together. There was very good support from the teacher, with his guitar accompaniment.

156 Years 5 and 6 pupils lead the singing for assemblies. They take this responsibility very seriously and are well prepared, knowing a range of hymns and responses well. They stand and sit unobtrusively during the service and provide a very good model for the younger pupils. Their whole-hearted participation and tuneful singing encourage all pupils to join in and sing during assemblies. A few older musicians have added their instrumental skills to the musical accompaniment and this also has had a very positive impact on the music in assembly.

157 Although teaching in the lessons seen was good, with clear learning objectives and high expectations of good behaviour, some teachers are not confident in their own musical abilities. The introduction of the scheme of work in January provides a helpful planning framework for them. There are opportunities for pupils to learn a wide variety of musical instruments; the trumpet, violin, guitar, flute, keyboard and descant and treble recorder, through the support of the local authority's music service.

158 Pupils take part in the Swindon Music Festival, and each class is involved in an annual musical performance. Visiting musicians entertain the pupils regularly and pupils have listened to the music of Gilbert and Sullivan, in preparation for their performance of Pinafore Pirates. During the week of the inspection, the music for listening, as pupils entered and left the hall, made a significant contribution to their spiritual development.

Strengths include:

- *Standards of singing*
- *Provision for learning a wide range of instruments*
- *Pupils' musical accompaniment at assemblies*
- *Range of musical productions*

Areas for development include:

- *Staff confidence and subject knowledge*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

159 Overall, standards in physical education are average at ages seven and eleven. Pupils

with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons and mostly attain similar standards to their peers. There is no difference in performance between boys and girls.

160 All aspects of physical education, including athletics, dance, games, gymnastics and swimming are included in the school's curriculum plan. However, in a recent subject review the school has identified weaknesses in the development of specific skills in gymnastics and in the breadth of games opportunities offered to pupils in Years 3 to 6. The recently appointed subject manager has begun to address the latter and is introducing a good range of additional sports including table tennis, cricket and rugby. In Years 3, 4 and 5, pupils receive swimming instruction in the nearby public pool. In order to ensure that all pupils leave the school being able to swim, this is extended into Year 6 if necessary. All pupils currently in Year 6 meet the National Curriculum requirements and many have achieved higher awards. Standards in swimming therefore are above average.

161 In the one lesson seen in the infants, the quality of teaching and learning was good. Pupils develop good attitudes to physical education and fully understand the need to warm up before taking part in vigorous exercise. They take part enthusiastically and, through skilful teaching, their natural enthusiasm is successfully channelled into effective learning. Working on the large apparatus they explore a range of skills and actions, demonstrating increasing control of their bodies and awareness of the space around them. They begin to join these actions to form sequences, effectively linking the floor and apparatus. The teacher's calm manner and very clear instructions promotes a good working atmosphere in which pupils work quietly and sensibly. In discussion, they show a good understanding of the need at all times to be able to hear the teacher's instructions in order to ensure their own and others' safety. The teacher's concern about safety, however, means that she is not sufficiently involved in direct teaching and coaching to help pupils to refine their movements.

162 In the two lessons seen in the juniors, in gymnastics and games, the quality of teaching was satisfactory in one lesson and good in the other. Standards attained by pupils were average. In gymnastics, pupils demonstrate variable levels of commitment to the tasks. Although the teacher had good subject knowledge, there were lapses in behaviour management and as a result pupils' responses were not always positive. Successful elements of teaching included opportunities for pupils to observe the work of others and to make judgements about how they might improve their performances. The lesson also included a good example of a pupil with special educational needs being successfully integrated with sensitive help provided by a support assistant.

163 In games, pupils develop their passing, catching and running skills in tag rugby. In a useful classroom introduction they talk about using space and playing within the rules, helping to promote the positive attitudes to competition that are evident in the group activities that follow. They show an increasing awareness of tactics, for example in their marking of opponents and in their developing understanding of attack and defence. They clearly enjoy their lesson, are attentive to their teacher and co-operate well to ensure a session with a strong competitive element. The teacher's strategy of grouping pupils by ability is successful in enabling all pupils to be fully involved in their learning throughout the lesson.

164 Understandably the whole school emphasis in the recent past has been on improving attainment in the core skills of literacy and numeracy. In order to raise standards in physical education it will be necessary for the school to address the issue of curriculum balance in order to ensure enough teaching time to cover the subject in sufficient depth. Nationally approved guidelines have been adopted to support teachers' planning, although they are not yet being implemented consistently by all teachers. There are no formal arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment. There have been few opportunities for the subject manager to develop his leadership role. Satisfactory provision is made for extra-curricular activities and

these include opportunities for competitive sport, in which the school football team enjoys considerable success. Facilities and resources for physical education are good and the potential for improvement in the subject is also good.

Strengths include:

- *Standards attained by pupils in swimming*
- *The school's facilities and resources for physical education*
- *Pupils' positive attitudes.*

Areas for development include:

- *raising the status of physical education within the school's curriculum;*
- *developing the role of the subject manager;*
- *implementing the adopted guidelines consistently to ensure full coverage of the physical education curriculum and the systematic development of skills throughout the school;*
- *ensuring an effective balance between recreation and enjoyment, and the structured and systematic development of basic skills.*