

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKWATER COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Truro

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 111866

Headteacher: Lesley Harris

Reporting inspector: Geoff Burgess
OIN: 23708

Dates of inspection: 19th to 22nd November 2001

Inspection number: 192456

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 category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: North Hill
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Near Truro
Cornwall

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Verna Moyle

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

Information about the inspection team

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			Under fives: SEN	Teaching & learning
			Geography; History	Leadership & management
			Music	Strategic use of resources
			Religious Education	School improvement
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				Partnership with parents
				Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development
				Personal welfare & care
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Blackwater Primary School serves a wide spectrum of families of British heritage mainly from the village of Blackwater. A good deal of employment in the area is seasonal being based on tourism and about a sixth of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils on roll is currently 73 but the number starting each year can be very variable and the coming and going of traveller families often changes the position mid-year. Nearly a quarter of pupils are on the special needs register of whom four, an unusually high number, have statements of special need. Attainment on entry is usually similar to that found in most schools but with the small numbers involved, any one year can be better or worse.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, very well led and managed, where consistently good teaching is helping very enthusiastic and hard working pupils to achieve good standards. With its mixed but usually average intake and average funding, it provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Consistently good teaching and pupils' enthusiasm for learning is helping them to achieve well
- It makes very good provision for its pupils who find learning difficult and they do well
- The school sees pupils' personal development as very important. Boys and girls behave and relate very well and are growing into very mature, responsible and self-reliant citizens
- Staff give pupils very good opportunities to experience and appreciate the arts and their own cultural heritage, to celebrate the cultural diversity of others and reflect on life and their feelings
- It has fostered a very good partnership with parents and the community and provides many extra activities to enhance learning and enrich the life of the school.
- The headteacher is an outstanding leader and manager who continues to make it possible for all staff and pupils to achieve high personal standards

What could be improved

- More use could be made of developing staff and pupil expertise in information technology by increasing use of the computer suite to extend learning in many subjects.
- Deficiencies in the accommodation inhibit provision for boys and girls physical development and make private consultations and discussions difficult for staff and parents

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection in March 1997, pupils in years two and six were said to be attaining average standards except for writing in year two. This has improved greatly and standards in literacy, numeracy and science have shown a good improving trend over the intervening years. All the other issues have been dealt with successfully. Assessment procedures are now good and work is well matched to pupils' needs. The pace and challenge of work has increased and marking provides much more useful information. National initiatives have helped the school in planning for all subjects, which are now all managed by responsible members of staff. Overall improvement is good.

STANDARDS

No table of comparative national test scores is included in the report because of the small numbers of pupils who are eligible to take the tests. This makes the school vulnerable to the ups and downs caused by the impact of individual pupils. However, results over a five year period indicate that in most years, standards in years two and six are above average and sometimes well above in mathematics and science while in reading and writing, standards have been much more variable though usually above average. Standards observed throughout the school reflect these findings with all children, including those who find learning difficult, achieving well. The great majority of pupils, including those in years two and six, achieve standards in literacy, numeracy and science at least similar to pupils in most schools with many doing even better. However, overall standards can appear to be lower where one or more pupils in any year group find learning difficult. This can be compounded by the arrival of the children of traveller families with significant gaps in their learning. Current work in religious education is better than expected. Standards in other subjects match those in most schools but the small school hall limits performance levels in gymnastic activities in physical education. Boys and girls in the current reception group are already well on their way to achieving most of what is expected of them in their foundation year except in their physical development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Boys and girls join in with all the school has to offer with enormous enthusiasm. They work and play extremely hard, always do their best, respond animatedly in discussions or when answering questions, and are very proud of their school and their achievements. Their attitudes to school and to their work are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Children manage their own behaviour very well and adults rarely have to do more than give simple reminders. Lunch and playtimes are happy, sociable occasions and pupils' very good behaviour in lessons makes it possible for both them and teachers to give of their best.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good throughout the school and from their first days in the reception class, pupils are encouraged to be confident independent members of the school community. They are growing into very sociable and sensible citizens who recognise their own worth and appreciate the contribution made by others. All adults act as excellent role models in this respect and this helps to foster the family feel of the school.
Attendance	Most pupils really want to go to school and unnecessary absence and lateness is rare. However, erratic attendance among a small minority of families brings the overall attendance figures down.

Boys and girls make a very positive contribution towards their own learning and the relaxed, happy feel of the school by their very good behaviour, friendly and caring disposition and love of learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is consistently good in each of the three classes and in all subjects observed during the inspection with no unsatisfactory teaching, just one satisfactory lesson and two very good. Features of all good teaching are the high expectations teachers have for pupils behaviour and work habits, and the very good way they manage pupils and activities. For their part, pupils make a very good contribution to their achievement by their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning, get on without the need for constant prompting and think for themselves. Pupils who find learning or conforming difficult, some very difficult, are very well supported in meeting their own learning targets.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Staff provide children of all ages with a good range of learning experiences covering all the necessary elements with literacy and numeracy suitably emphasised. Very good use is made of national guidance and rolling programmes to ensure that all pupils in the mixed age classes enjoy the full range of the curriculum. For such a small school, the range of extra activities is very good and personal, health and social education are well catered for. Visits, visitors and special days or weeks further enhance pupils' enjoyment and understanding.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Children who show signs of not achieving as well as hoped are identified early and the school has very good systems in place for assessing and meeting their needs and monitoring progress. Parents are fully involved in reviews and appropriate and attainable targets in pupils' individual plans are updated each half-term. Pupils with more significant or urgent special needs are very well catered for with very good use made of support from the local authority. Provision and support is very good and pupils with special needs make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The school makes very good arrangements for promoting pupils' personal development. Curricular provision for pupils to study and appreciate the arts, their own cultural heritage and to celebrate the cultural diversity of others is very good with equally good attention given to helping pupils to reflect on the more spiritual aspects of life. High quality provision for promoting pupils' personal development includes very good arrangements for the development of social skills and attitudes and moral awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils and ensures that they are safe and not at any risk. It keeps a close watch on their attendance, progress and personal development and maintains suitable records to note events or trends that may be significant. Assessment procedures are well developed and improving. Teachers and other staff know the children very well and the school's excellent relationship with parents helps to ensure that any problems are dealt with promptly.

Parents are very happy with their children's school. They have great confidence in the professionalism of the head and staff and fully appreciate the efforts made to involve them in their children's education and keep them informed. In return, parents make a very good contribution to the life of the school community and their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher & other key staff	Much of the success of Blackwater School must be attributed to the very good leadership qualities shown by the head over the years. Her vision, determination and enthusiasm have become part of the shared ethos of the school and other members of staff have become effective leaders and managers in their own right.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a well founded confidence in the ability of the head to manage the overall running of the school and concentrate their efforts on the broader strategic picture of improving provision by making best use of what the school has and working for steady improvement. They are very supportive and keen for the school to succeed. Necessary business is conducted very efficiently through committees and individual responsibilities. With many actively involved or visiting regularly, they know the school's strengths and limitations very well and provide necessary practical and moral support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The head ensures that staff, governors and parents are involved in a process of looking at what the school is doing and the impact it has. Relevant assessment data, starting when pupils enter school, is used to set priorities and targets, and to track the progress of individuals. The school strategic plan, which is based on the evaluation of this process, identifies specific appropriate areas for improvement. The impact and the value for money of the various initiatives involved are evaluated by the head and governors. The school's work in this area is good.
The strategic use of resources	The school has little room to manoeuvre with its budget but where it has choice, funds are spent on what staff and governors agree is important. A good example of this is the well used computer suite. Staff make the best of the awkward buildings and the way the grounds have been developed is outstanding for such a small school. Good use is made of all resources. Notable in this is the contribution made by all the well trained and fully involved support staff throughout the school.

Despite having to teach for a significant part of the week, the head continues to provide the school with the energy, enthusiasm and optimism with which, greatly helped by her colleagues, governors and parents, she helped the school to gain its high reputation and popularity in the local community.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children enjoy going to school • teaching is good and their children are making good progress • the school is helping pupils to grow up sensibly and behaviour is good • pupils are expected to work hard and do their best • the staff are very approachable and the school works closely with parents • they are kept well informed about their children's progress and homework provides a useful opportunity for them to help • the school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the accommodation

Inspectors agree very strongly with all the positive views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The numbers of pupils in each year group are too small to allow a reliable analysis to be made of the school's national test results in any one year. However, an examination of the test scores over the past three years shows that usually:
 - seven-year-olds reach good standards in the tests of reading, writing and mathematics; the assessments made by teachers in science also indicate above-average standards;
 - eleven-year-olds attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science tests;
 - the percentage of pupils achieving higher levels in both age groups is much greater than in most schools
 - the impact of individual pupils with extra needs on these results is very significant. For instance in 2001, each pupil counted for 11%.

2. The well-run pre-school group hosted by the school helps to ensure that most children are ready for school when they start. However, the school's deserved reputation for doing well with boys and girls who need significant extra help means that it has more of these pupils than might be expected. It also provides an unquestioning welcome to children from traveller families who come and go irregularly. With consistently good teaching and very good support for those who need it, all children achieve well when they are in school but the progress of children from traveller families understandably slows when they are not in school. Pupils with very special needs make especially good progress towards their own targets and develop very good levels of self-confidence and self-esteem.

3. Overall standards in each year group are dependent on the specific needs of the boys and girls concerned when the judgements are made. This is particularly important when years two and six are taking national tests. Results in these tests are also weighted in favour of science and mathematics for these pupils in that the questions can be read to pupils whose reading comprehension is poor and they often have very sharp minds when dealing with mathematical and scientific concepts. At the other end of the scale, the attainment of higher attainers was criticised in the last report but, as noted above, recent national test results show that this is no longer the case. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement in each of the core subjects.

4. Taken as a whole school, standards in literacy, numeracy and science are above average and boys and girls attending part-time in their foundation year are making good progress in all the other areas of learning except in their physical development. Reading and mental mathematics are strengths throughout the school and by the time they leave, almost all pupils produce well presented, neat and accurate writing. Standards in all the foundation subjects are as would be expected for the ages of the pupils concerned except for religious education, where the amount and quality of pupils' work is very commendable, and indoor aspects of physical education where, despite good teaching, the small, cramped accommodation inhibits pupils' performance levels.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Pupils' excellent attitudes to school, very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour have a positive influence on the progress they make. The calm, purposeful atmosphere in all classes ensures pupils can take advantage of all the activities and learning experiences presented to them by their teachers. These high standard have been maintained since the last inspection. Mutual respect and very good relationships permeate the whole school and are a key feature of its success.

6. Children in their first year at school have settled well to school routines. They understand the need to put up their hands and take turns when answering teachers' questions. These young children concentrate well and maintain interest in the rich variety of activities presented to them.

Their behaviour is very good.

7. Pupils throughout the school listen well and are keen to answer teachers' questions. They are well motivated and have good levels of concentration. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said how much they enjoy coming to school and were keen to talk of all the exciting activities they took part in. Teachers' good questioning, organisation and planning gain pupils' interest. They settle quickly to independent work following introductions to lessons. During a Class 3 (Years five/six) mathematics lesson every pupil was attentive, on task, responsive and focused. This was as a result of knowledgeable, brisk teaching and high expectations of what could be achieved. Pupils from reception through to the oldest are very enthusiastic about reading and exploring books.

8. Inspectors fully endorse parents' views that behaviour is very good. Pupils show respect for their surroundings and all adults that help them with their learning. Very good relationships promote an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. As a result pupils are willing to share their feelings and thoughts confidently, for example, when discussing 'friendship' in an assembly. Pupils work well together in a range of groupings. The oldest pupils, in particular, have acquired very good work habits and get on with their work sensibly when not directly supervised by a teacher. Pupils work well together when sharing computers and help each other to succeed. A good example of this was seen in Class 2 when older pupils helped their younger friends and all were able to discuss ways to solve problems working on posters for the Christmas Fair.

9. Older pupils are given responsibility for a range of tasks in their classes and some around the school. They carry out these tasks with care and enthusiasm. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to make choices as for example in a music lesson in Class 2, where groups could choose which instruments to use and how to organise themselves so that they could produce music to match moods. An informal year six council gives pupils the opportunity to express their views and influence decisions that effect them. Minutes of their meetings show a wide range of issues are discussed. The views of pupils are valued; pupils complete questionnaires, which inform management how they feel about their school experiences.

10. Attendance is satisfactory overall. A small minority of pupils have very erratic attendance patterns and because of the small size of the school this impacts heavily on the school's overall figures. Many pupils achieve over 95 per cent attendance over the year. Punctuality is good and pupils settle quickly, keen to start the day's activities. Exclusions are very rare.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and across the curriculum with no unsatisfactory lessons, one satisfactory and two very good out of a total of twenty-six. This is an improvement since the last inspection where only a quarter of lessons were good with none very good. However, aspects of learning which have not changed since the last inspection are the contribution which pupils make to their own achievements by their enthusiasm for learning, their very good behaviour and their willingness to try. These remain very good.

12. The combination of pupils' very good attitudes to leaning and teachers' very good management both of pupils and activities means that the maximum amount of time is spent on constructive work. It also allows teachers to attempt all kinds of activities confident that the boys and girls can cope with whatever demands are made on their self-control. This was often seen in busy, excited classrooms such as in a middle class music lesson where pupils were so intent on producing their mood music using glockenspiels that they did not notice the sheer volume of noise they were producing. In all of the indoor physical education (PE) lessons observed, it was only because both pupils and teachers did so well in this area that it was possible at all for pupils to be active and enjoy their PE lessons.

13. With more than one year group in each class, it is always a challenge for teachers to match work to the needs of all the boys and girls in their class. However, by careful planning and the good use of all available help they manage this well. A good example of this came in a session where, in the computer suite, pupils from year four helped classmates in year two to

design a poster for the school's Christmas Fair. Both groups gained a good deal from the activity. Meanwhile in the hall, other classmates in year three carried out the same basic task on paper supported by a classroom helper. In a well-planned reading session in the youngest class, very good adult support made it possible for these young children to work at a range of levels to match their current attainment and get great enjoyment and satisfaction from reading together.

14. An important factor in the consistency of teaching is the confidence with which teachers approach all the teaching for which they are responsible. The advent of the computer suite has given teachers and support staff the opportunity to build up their own expertise and confidence in this area which they continue to do to good effect. Both music and physical education benefit greatly from subject coordinators taking classes other than their own. The effective adoption of national strategies and schemes of work, combined with good local authority guidance on implementing these with several year groups in one class, has greatly helped with planning. It was also noticeable that elements of the literacy and numeracy strategies, such as the statement of learning objectives at the beginning of lessons and the final summing up have been very productively adopted in other lessons.

15. In the best of lessons, all these factors come together as seen in a very good numeracy lesson taken by the mathematics coordinator. Here, the teacher's absolute confidence and easy facility with number had rubbed off on the class who themselves have become very confident mathematicians. She expected a great deal from them and they responded well. By pitching questions exactly at the level of the pupils concerned, she both challenged and encouraged boys and girls of all abilities. Pupils of very different abilities doubled 355 and 21 with the same level of effort and satisfaction.

16. Adult helpers in the classrooms make a very good contribution to the learning of pupils who, for various reasons, cannot work at the same pace or level as their classmates. Working closely with teachers and intervening and supporting very sensitively, they help greatly to ensure that such pupils succeed at their own levels and gain in self-esteem as they do so. Many of these pupils also receive good support for specific needs from the special needs teacher.

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

17. The quality and range of the school's learning opportunities for promoting high standards are good. They cover all that is required, are well balanced and relevant to pupils' needs and meet well the statutory requirements for national curriculum subjects, religious education and collective worship. Good use is made of the environmental areas in the school grounds, including the greenhouse and adjacent planting bed, and walks within the locality, visits and visitors to the school, contribute to enriching the curriculum.

18. Since the last inspection the school has significantly improved its curriculum planning. Rolling programmes of study, based on national guidance, ensure continuity and progression with the mixed aged classes. Teacher expertise is well used by, for example, teachers of the older pupils exchanging their classes for music and physical education. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good, contributing to high standard in English and mathematics, and teachers are aware of the need to further develop their planned use across the curriculum. The curriculum in the foundation year is basically sound but lack of access to a secure area for vigorous physical activity means that this aspect of the early years curriculum is not fully developed in the winter months.

19. Good provision is made for pupils' personal social and health education, which includes sex education and drugs awareness for the older pupils. Well-planned opportunities are having a positive impact on pupils' learning and the standards achieved by the end of year six. The school is inclusive in the way in which it accepts all pupils providing very good opportunities for all. Staff take very great care to ensure that the whole curriculum is made accessible to all children through well matched work and sensitive support and that pupils do not unnecessarily miss activities to receive extra help. Work is carefully matched to individual education plans with half-

term targets for those pupils who need it.

20. A very good range of extra-curricular activities and very good links with the community enhance learning opportunities for pupils. For a small school a wide range of activities are offered at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to join recorders, art and craft, sports, football, netball, drama and choir clubs. Activities are well attended by pupils and supported by a number of parents. The school's links with the community are frequent and varied. Some activities, such as the Wednesday lunch for senior citizens, have continued from the time of the last inspection. Pupils regularly share their talents; members of the community are invited to special events and performances. Local folk come in to talk with children about their experiences or share particular expertise, and informal conversations in the village show that this truly is regarded as a community school.

21. Very good links with the playgroup, which meets at the school and the main receiving secondary school ensures pupils move smoothly between the different phases of education. The visit by senior staff from the secondary school to talk with inspectors illustrates the importance that is placed on the partnership between the schools. The benefit to pupils of such strong links is recognised by both schools and staff work to increase curricular links to enhance pupils' learning.

22. The school makes very good overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, a strength that has been built upon since the last inspection. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are very good. Collective Acts of Worship allow for reflection through themes such as 'Gifts from God', when pupils speak about the gifts of their friends, and from Bible stories and opportunities for prayer. Religious education, visits to the church and visitors from religious communities to take assemblies and art, music and drama further contribute to pupils' spirituality.

23. Provision for pupils' moral education is very good. All teachers have high pupil expectations and from the reception class they are taught the difference between right and wrong. The school's rules, developed through consultation with pupils, are consistently applied by all who work in the school and are an important feature of this provision. Pupils are regularly rewarded for good behaviour and there are sanctions for those who fall short of these expectations. Opportunities are provided, as for example in circle time, for pupils to discuss moral issues. Older pupils think deeply about current issues and their good understanding of comparative religions contributed to their discussion on the present conflict in Afghanistan.

24. Staff make very good provision for pupils' social development and are very good role models in their relationships with each other. The personal, social and health education policy and that of citizenship, provide a secure framework for the teaching of social education. Opportunities are provided in lessons, for pupils to work together collaboratively. The residential week for years five and six pupils has a clear focus on improving their social development as they engage in activities. Pupils have increasing responsibilities as they get older and year six pupils have recently formed a School Council, which could well benefit from being extended to represent younger pupils. One response to the parents' questionnaire is that parents think that the school is helping toward pupils' increased maturity. Support for a range of charities further enhances pupils' social awareness.

25. Provision for cultural development is very good. Visitors to the school, such as theatre groups with a range of masks and puppets, a Punch and Judy man who runs a workshop after his performance and a group with home-made African instruments provide pupils with live performances. Visits to The Royal Cornwall Museum, which provides Roman and Celtic workshops and opportunities locally for role-play as Tudors in a castle and Celts in a village, contribute to pupils' awareness of their own culture. In a year five and six lesson pupils listen attentively to Ravel's Bolero and from their response show their cultural awareness of a range of composers. Pupils' understanding of Britain as a multicultural society is enhanced particularly through the study of other religions in religious education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. The care, support and guidance of each child as an individual are of the utmost importance to all adults in the school. Pupils are well known and well cared for during their time at school. Their attendance, behaviour and personal development is monitored well to ensure needs are met and support provided if needed. Good standards in this aspect have been maintained and built upon since the last inspection; pupils are given every opportunity to learn effectively in a safe and supportive environment.

27. Blackwater School pays good attention to matters of health and safety. All teachers have first aid qualifications and pupils are well cared for if they are unwell or have an accident. The premises are regularly monitored for potential hazards and concerns dealt with promptly as they arise. Electrical, fire fighting and physical education equipment are all checked regularly. Fire drills take place frequently. Pupils are supervised well at all times during the school day and agreed lunchtime procedures means consistency of approach by all staff. Child protection procedures meet requirements. The headteacher ensures staff are well informed about their responsibilities and the required procedures.

28. Attendance is monitored regularly and absence followed-up on the first day. Registers are marked carefully and coded appropriately, helping the headteacher to analyse any emerging patterns and trends. The headteacher liaises closely with other agencies, such as the traveller liaison officer or educational welfare officer to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils.

29. Pupils are managed well and good behaviour is promoted effectively by age-appropriate reward systems in each class. Boys and girls are clear that sanctions will be applied if behaviour is not as expected. They are involved in deciding whole school and class rules ensuring they are meaningful and relevant to them. A good anti-bullying policy is in place if needed and exclusion used effectively when absolutely necessary.

30. The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science and is developing procedures in all other subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection. A detailed policy clearly sets out the strategies used and the methods of recording information. The school uses initial assessments when boys and girls start school and standardised testing as pupils progress through the school which shows the levels pupils are achieving when compared with others in the county. All results are carefully analysed to ensure that individual needs of all pupils are successfully met. The school is starting to store data electronically to provide quicker access and to identify trends. Particularly thorough assessments carried out in literacy and numeracy are used well to set targets and to guide teachers' planning. These individual targets are extremely useful in raising standards.

31. School portfolios of pupils' work are being developed across the curriculum to demonstrate teachers' accuracy and consistency in assessment and the recently introduced marking policy is producing consistency across the school. Each pupil has an individual Record of Achievement which records progress over the previous two years both academically and personally. In a small school, with cohorts of pupils often less than ten in a year group, the emphasis is very much on knowing the needs of individual pupils, which is a strength of the school. This is especially the case for pupils who find learning difficult whose progress is monitored very carefully to ensure that they achieve all they can.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

32. The partnership with parents has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Parents are extremely satisfied with all aspects of the school's work and recognise its continuing improvement and success. Parents appreciate the quality and quantity of information provided and all those responding to the questionnaire feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns.

33. Information for parents is very good. The prospectus and governors' annual report are detailed, contain relevant information and meet statutory requirements. Regular newsletters and curriculum information keep parents well informed about what their child is being taught and what

is happening at the school in the way of special events, activities and achievements. Parents are happy with the level of information provided in annual written reports and interim reports give a quick overview of progress in each subject. However, a clear statement about how their child is achieving in relation to expectations for age, is not made. Parents have easy access to teachers both formally and informally – the headteacher welcomes parents into school at all times. The school secretary provides a knowledgeable and friendly contact for parents when the headteacher is teaching.

34. Parents' involvement in the life of the school is very good and teachers appreciate their contribution. They help with school events, extra-curricular activities and support the Parent Teacher Association who work hard to raise funds to provide additional resources and opportunities for pupils. Parents' views are sought regularly through questionnaires and parents feel the school responds well to concerns or issues raised. They support their children well with their learning at home. They receive good information and advice on how best they can support learning, particularly when their child first joins the school. Parental support for reading has a very positive impact on the standards achieved.

35. The very effective partnership established with parents benefits the quality of school life and pupils' learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

36. At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had been in post a year and leadership and management were described as good. A thorough review of all aspects of school life had been undertaken and changes were being implemented effectively 'with the committed support of governors and staff'. The effectiveness of the changes made and the impact they have had on the life of the school are plain to see and noted throughout this report. Through her efforts and with great support from her colleagues, parents and the governing body, the physical and professional environment has been greatly enhanced and a positive ethos focussing on high standards and improvement has been built up.

37. An important factor in this has been the way the leadership roles of other members of staff have been built up in order that they can make more of a contribution to the development of the school. This was an issue at the last inspection and is now a strength. Curriculum and other leaders are now powerful influences for good in their areas of responsibility which has had a noticeable effect on standards in these areas. For instance, the head, in her role as special needs coordinator, has built up the school's reputation for helping pupils with a wide range of extra learning needs and it is now highly regarded in this area.

38. Governors are very supportive and committed to the school, many visiting on a regular basis. They have a well defined and understood structure of committees and individual responsibilities and a clear programme related to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Many bring considerable expertise to the governing body and all are very keen for the school to succeed. They take their monitoring role seriously visiting regularly and receiving feedback from staff on the effectiveness of various current policy developments. As individuals and as a body they know their school and their responsibilities very well. The chair has been connected with the school for many years in a variety of capacities and she is a frequent visitor working closely with the head and fiercely proud of all the school has achieved in recent years. As a learning support assistant in the school, the special needs governor is very knowledgeable and supportive. She has a clear insight into provision and reports regularly to the rest of the governing body on special needs issues.

39. The head was complimented for having put in place 'good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school including contributions from the governing body' at the time of the last inspection. These have been built on and refined with ever increasing use being made of information provided by national testing and the school's own assessment procedures to check on progress and identify trends in standards. In addition, in such a small school, a good deal of informal but very perceptive monitoring goes on all the time in and out of classrooms with instant

feedback in the staffroom. An important extra element has been the regular and detailed consultation with parents about a whole range of issues down to how mid-day supervision is organised. As impressive as the monitoring that goes on, is the action taken by the school to deal with any issues that are identified. A good example of this was the setting up of the computer suite even before funds were released to help schools in this area.

40. All of this analysis and consultation is put to good use in the school development plan which is put together by the head but stems very much from detailed consultation with all the elements of the school community now including the children's school council. It is a detailed practical document which identifies what is to happen, who will be responsible, how long it will take, how much it will cost and what success will look like. The commitment of staff, governors and parents to constantly improving the school is very good.

41. The last report said that the 'daily administration of the finances is very good' and that the school benefits from 'very efficient administration'. This is still the case and with the active involvement of the governors' finance committee, everything to do with how funds are used, spent and managed is very well taken care of. The school secretary provides a much appreciated and very efficient service to the whole school community and the day-to-day running of the school is managed very effectively with a minimum of fuss

42. Several improvements have been made to the accommodation since 1997, notably the extra outside classroom, the development of the library/computer suite, the provision of a staff room and the excellent development of the school grounds. All of these have made a big difference to what the school can do and how well it can do it. However, the main building is still very awkward to use and the hall imposes real limitations on its use for physical education. The school deserves great praise for making it possible for the village pre-school group to meet in the hall each day. This has many very good spin-offs for the school and the local community and is well worth the small inconvenience caused. Resources are generally in good supply and well used despite the difficulties presented by the accommodation. The caretaker does a very good job in keeping the school clean and tidy despite its heavy use and difficult buildings.

43. Good use is made of teaching staff and very good use of support staff, especially in meeting the diverse needs of pupils who need extra help. Many have undertaken extra training in a variety of areas and all are involved in in-house training when it occurs. Teachers involve them closely in all aspects of their work from planning to monitoring and they provide a valuable resource for the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. To build on all it has already achieved, the governors, headteacher and staff of Blackwater Community School should:

- (1) Develop the use of the computer suite to extend learning in other subjects by:
 - continuing to make it possible for every member of staff to become proficient and confident in the use of computers and other equipment
 - encouraging pupils to see the equipment and their growing awareness of the possibilities inherent in it as a tool for learning across the curriculum
 - building the use of the suite for this purpose into planning whenever possible and using learning support assistants to supervise these sessions

- making it possible for older pupils to use the suite as an interactive library and use it for research purposes on an 'as needed' basis.
(Paragraphs 81, 82 and 87)

- (2) Continue to do whatever is possible to improve the learning and teaching environment for teachers and pupils by providing accommodation and facilities suited to the education of pupils in the 21st century. (Paragraphs 4,18,42 & 85)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

- pupils' reports are detailed but do not really indicate how well each pupil is doing against national standards (Paragraph 33)
- boys and girls in their first year in school do not have enough opportunity to make choices and take responsibility for their learning or to be physically active during the winter months (Paragraphs 18, 47, 48 & 54)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

26

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

22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		2	23	1			
Percentage		8	88	4			

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		73
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		17

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) and Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

The number of pupils on roll at the end of the key stages falls below the figure (ten) above which detailed results of national tests are published.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	65
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	2	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.7
Average class size	24.3

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	139

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	195971
Total expenditure	189405
Expenditure per pupil	2668
Balance brought forward from previous year	14355
Balance carried forward to next year	20921

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	73
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	19	4		
My child is making good progress in school.	70	26			4
Behaviour in the school is good.	81	15			4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	42	4		
The teaching is good.	78	22			
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	62	35		4	
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	22			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	89	11			
The school works closely with parents.	69	31			
The school is well led and managed.	63	37			
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	31	4		
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	31	4		

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

45. At the time of the inspection, most of the small group of children in their foundation year were attending school only in the mornings sharing a class with year one. With the school hosting the community pre-school group, the school has an excellent relationship with its main pre-school provider. Most other four-year-olds who join the school have also benefited from good pre-school provision but a small minority, notably children from traveller families, have limited experience of working with other children or of books. Initial assessments made soon after boys and girls start school show that, apart from these children, social, physical and language skills are similar to those found in most schools. Mid-way through their second half-term in school, most of the present group are already working on the green level on the stepping stones to the early learning goals and all should achieve them well before the end of the reception year. This largely reflects the position at the time of the last inspection.

46. The teaching of the reception/year one class is shared between two teachers, one of whom is the head. However, since the arrangement is that the other member of staff teaches in the mornings and the head in the afternoons, one teacher undertakes almost all teaching of the foundation year at the moment. The exception is in information technology where the head takes groups from both years in the computer suite for specialist teaching. Two learning support assistants work with the class, one of whom is primarily attached to a pupil who needs a great deal of attention. They both provide very good support to the class teacher and are well involved in all aspects of provision.

47. Work is planned to promote the early learning goals but, inevitably, some compromises have to be made to deal with the year ones in the same class. One consequence is that boys and girls spend less time working on activities of their own choosing than otherwise would be the case. A particular weakness is that the layout of the school and the lack of a secure outside play area means that is very difficult for boys and girls to play freely and safely outside. Apart from this, the overall quality of teaching is good which again matches the last report.

Personal, social and emotional development

48. Boys and girls are friendly, chatty and happy to talk to visitors. They are confident and eager to volunteer information such as when responding to a wide range of sounds. All have formed very good relationships with their classmates and the adults who help them. When excited, some still need reminders of routines and conventions, such as putting up hands to answer questions and not calling out but most of the time, boys and girls show how well they have adapted to school. They generally respond well to requests to tidy up and organise themselves and their clothing such as in their physical education lesson. However, most activities are directed by adults and children have few opportunities to take responsibility for making their own choices and decisions.

Communication, language and literacy

49. Children make good progress in their reception year and many are already achieving the goals set nationally for reading, speaking and listening. Most boys and girls speak clearly and confidently and good questioning by the teacher gives pupils good opportunities to use their speech in structured situations. In group activities, all adults encourage children to express themselves using sentences and to respond to each other's contributions. Story times and explanations by the teacher show that they are good listeners when this is required.

50. Time suitably set aside each day for literacy is well used for teaching reading skills. Children enjoy sharing books with their teacher and other adults and learning about how books operate. They already know a good range of initial sounds and some are starting to have a sight vocabulary such as 'can', 'am' and 'play'. Very good use is made of adult help such as when a

group cut out words to make sentences. Reading records indicate that children are heard to read regularly at school and at home. Provision in this area is very good and, as a consequence, boys and girls are enthusiastic about reading and are doing well.

51. Most children write their first name legibly and are often required to copy writing on worksheets or in their books. They are learning to form their letters properly and a few are starting to use a word book to write down words they can use in their own writing. However, too few times are set aside when children are free to invent and use their own writing for a real purpose. Standards in writing lag a little behind those in reading, speaking and listening but most pupils should reach the goal for this aspect by the end of the year. The last report said, in March, that boys and girls were 'Keen to read and make realistic attempts at writing'. The present group in their foundation year are already ahead of that in November.

Mathematical development

52. Children's learning in mathematics is sound and most will attain the targets set nationally for young children's learning in this area before they move into year one. Routines, such as counting children present, naming the day and date, singing number rhymes are suitably used to help develop mathematical skills. In regular times set aside for learning about number children count confidently to 20 and back again, recognising all the numerals. In a lesson aimed at beginning to understand the concept of taking away, boys and girls showed that they understood what taking away means and many could achieve this by counting back. All the rest could manage the same activity using counting apparatus and write the answer down in their workbooks. Teaching and other provision in this area is good.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. Boys and girls in their foundation year gain great benefit in this area from sharing their class with year one. For instance, they learned a good deal about the area surrounding the school from accompanying them on a village walk looking at various notable buildings and areas such as the shop and the school itself. They have also been exposed to the collections of old and new toys in the 'toy museum' which their classmates have been comparing. In a science lesson, children listened to various sounds to determine how sounds are made and what changes them. Their interest and enjoyment could be seen in the way they sat for almost half an hour without losing interest. Another strong feature in this area is the very good start boys and girls are getting in learning how to use information technology through specific teaching by the head.

Physical development

54. Four and five year olds have many opportunities to handle small tools such as pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, and scissors and use construction apparatus in the classroom. Regular planned times in the hall provide a structured time for movement and most children move confidently and make good use of the space around them. However, the limitations of the hall mean that vigorous activity is out of the question and that the teacher has to keep a close control of everything that the children do. In the absence of a secure outdoor area where children can test themselves and practise running, jumping and climbing freely in a safe environment, this area of their development is not being extended sufficiently. However, in the summer months and early autumn, when boys and girls can make use of the school's excellent outdoor facilities at playtimes, this is much less significant.

Creative development

55. Children have regular planned opportunities to use play dough, paint and draw and they respond well to specific tasks such as illustrating nursery rhymes using pastels, pencils and felt tips. Most are able to make recognisable representations of the story and colour them appropriately. They are given good opportunities to play imaginatively in the toy museum role-play area and with construction materials. Boys and girls know a number of rhymes and jingles and are beginning to develop a sense of time and rhythm but are not involved in the class music lesson which takes place in the afternoon. In this, as in all the areas of learning, children will achieve the early learning goals in good time.

ENGLISH

56. By the end of year two and year six standards of work seen in English during the inspection are above national expectations. National test results, over the last three years, show a continued improvement in standards, but the cohort of pupils for 2001 was below the required ten pupils to make national comparisons. This is an improvement since the last inspection where standards were described as being average. Children enter the school with widely differing language skills and achieve well. Key factors in this are the consistently good quality of teaching, the effective implementation of the literacy hour and the number of good quality support assistants particularly targeted at raising standards in literacy and supporting pupils with special educational needs. The latter group of pupils make very good progress towards their targets in all aspects of the subject.

57. Pupils achieve well in developing their speaking and listening skills and attain standards above expected levels. Teachers place careful emphasis, particularly with the younger children, on ensuring that they are clear about the meaning of words introduced. They provide a number of opportunities, for example through role-play and circle time, for pupils to practise their speaking and listening. Pupils listen very attentively to their teacher and to each other, responding appropriately to questions and instructions. Particularly impressive is the way pupils work together collaboratively, sharing ideas and valuing opinions. For example, in a science lesson year five and six pupils discussed very sensibly the aspects of fair testing when dissolving different types of sugar, while in an English lesson pupils read alternate lines of the poem 'Objection' giving due emphasis to reading expressively. The obvious value teachers place on what each pupil has to say contributes well to this.

58. Standards in reading are above national expectations by the age of seven and eleven and pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well. Phonics and key words are taught in a well-structured way and teachers monitor and support the progress of individual pupils carefully. The well-planned use of the national literacy strategy means that boys and girls are now familiar with the features, structure and use of non-fiction as well as fiction books. Teachers foster the interest and enjoyment of books and pupils throughout the school have a real enthusiasm for them. They make good use of guided reading sessions to help pupils improve their skills and the literacy support assistant listens to individual pupils read. Younger boys and girls have an appropriate sight vocabulary and use their knowledge of phonics successfully to sound out simple words. Pupils have a good number of books at home and the home school reading log shows that they are heard to read regularly. By the end of year two, pupils have a real awareness of some favourite characters while by the age of eleven they have read widely, can discuss authors and characters and keep regular book reviews. From as young as seven, they understand and use the library for acquiring information.

59. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress with their writing and standards are above the expected levels by the ends of years two and year six. Teachers make good use of texts in the literacy lessons to stimulate pupils' writing. In a year two, three and four lesson the teacher read 'The Lone Wolf from Number Nine' and other texts asking pupils to identify words that described physical and personal qualities of a character. In a year five and six lesson, pupils identified contradictions and spooky atmosphere in the poem 'Moon Wind' in the lines, 'there's no wind on the moon at all, yet things get blown about' and 'in utter, utter stillness your candle shivers out'. Pupils' writing is good.

60. Handwriting skills are developed systematically from an early age with the result that by the end of year two pupils write legibly, with letters that are well formed, a consistent size and facing the right way. They write in simple sentences, using full stops and capital letters and some use simple connectives. Their spelling is reasonably accurate or phonetically plausible and they make good use of word banks or their own wordbooks to help with their spelling. They write in a good variety of forms including letters, poems and book reviews. Most begin to apply what they have learned about story structure to their own writing and opportunities to re-draft their work help them to improve it.

61. Pupils continue to develop their writing skills for a range of different purposes, so that by the age of eleven their writing is interesting and carefully presented. Spellings are mainly accurate

and good use is made of punctuation, connectives and descriptive vocabulary. The very effective use of computers to word process writing also encourages pupils to use their literacy skills across the curriculum.

62. Good teaching of English is an improvement on the average teaching seen during the previous inspection. All lessons are carefully planned with clear objectives and the introductory whole class sessions in the literacy hour are well taught. Well-matched tasks and targeted questioning seen in lessons show that teachers know their pupils well. Good examples of teachers using skilful questioning to extend pupils' learning and to target pupils of differing abilities were seen in all lessons and reflect the impact of good quality in-service training and support. Teachers deploy and brief their teaching assistants very well and this contributes to the very effective, skilled support they give to pupils with special educational needs and others groups with whom they work. Teachers very consistent, positive and effective management of pupils helps to build their confidence, sustain their concentration and contributes to their positive attitudes to the subject. Teachers set high expectations and establish good classroom routines. They make good use their assessments to match work to pupil's needs and to adjust their planning, sampling and moderating writing across the school to increase their own awareness of how pupils' skills are developing

63. Teachers have worked hard and successfully to implement the national literacy strategy very consistently so that pupils build effectively on previous learning. The coordinator, who is also the headteacher, has been instrumental in this and manages the subject well. The quality of teaching has been consistently monitored. Careful attention has been given to choosing reading resources that are of interest to boys as well as to girls and they are attractively displayed in the library and classrooms. Pupils' learning opportunities are enriched through regular events such as visiting theatre groups and book fairs. All of these factors have contributed well to improving pupils' achievements since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

64. The teaching of mathematics has benefited greatly from the very positive way the school has taken on board the numeracy strategy and developed it to met the needs of the school. In this teachers have been helped by local authority produced materials to help cope with mixed age classes and recent input in the form of an in-service course. At the time of the last inspection, standards were said to be 'average compared to national expectations' – they are now consistently above average throughout the school though subject to variations in year groups with pupils with significant special needs. The report said, 'higher attaining pupils do not reach the levels of which they are capable' – more pupils now attain higher levels than in most other schools. It also said, 'the quality of teaching is ... satisfactory' – it is now good and very good. This represents a good improvement.

65. Pupils in year one have been working on the concept of subtraction or taking away and in their lesson they showed that they knew what this entailed. Almost all were able to 'take one away' or 'move one back' when using a number line or square and with their teacher's help demonstrated how to write this as a 'sum' on the board. All completed the task of subtracting 2 from several numbers to 10 and the more able went on to invent their own sums, some using higher numbers. Good use is made of number rhymes, in this case 'Ten Green Bottles' and 'Five Fat sausages' to reinforce learning. Other work in their books indicates that all these pupils are already working at level one, which is above average for this time of year.

66. Year two pupils are in the same class as years three and four and all follow a similar programme but at different levels. So far this year, year two have covered working with two digit numbers up to 50, measuring in centimetres, subtracting sums of money, investigating patterns, complex shapes such as the pentagon and the octagon and making a bar graph from data. In the lesson observed, after a good mental-maths 'warm-up' with their classmates in which the teacher skilfully targeted questions at each year group, the year two's went on to work on their two times table supported by the learning support assistant. All were fluent up to ten, most to 20 and two could count on further. This represents average levels at this time of year. However, one year two

is working with year three at a level well above this.

67. Pupils in year three were working on the relationship between numbers when multiplying and dividing such as 9×2 and $18/2$ using the 2x, 3x and 5x tables. All, including one young man who finds reading and writing difficult, were able to complete the task and explain how it works. Year fours worked with 2x, 3x, 4x, 5x and 10x tables and showed they have good recall when multiplying numbers below six and were able to count on confidently when multiplying higher numbers. Other work in their books including counting on in 10s, 25s and 50s, naming polygons and triangles, finding area by drawing and calculation shows that this year group are working at the expected level and making good progress. Very careful planning by the teacher, good use of extra help, well prepared materials and good knowledge of the needs of all the children made it possible for the teacher to provide challenge and success for all three year groups.

68. All these features were present in a very good lesson year five and six lesson taken by the coordinator. Both groups were challenged by the initial mental maths session first identifying which pairs of fractions were not equivalent (and explaining how they knew) then doubling large numbers. Each pupil had their own question matched to their ability, which stretched from doubling 21 to doubling 355, so that all had to think but all succeeded. This showed how well the teacher knew her pupils. In the whole class introductory session on dimensions and flat and solid shapes which followed, pupils demonstrated how much they already know and how confident they are talking mathematically. The teacher also showed how confident she is of her class's ability to understand new material by expecting much from them. For instance, translating polygon into 'many-angles' and asking 'What do you call a line that joins two vertices?' was accepted and understood without question. Work completed by year six earlier in the term on computation such as 6×75 and $85/17$, decimal computation, mixed numbers and equivalent fractions, and percentages of quantities shows that this year's leavers group are well on the way to sustaining the good standards achieved in national tests in recent years. A good lesson in the computer suite on spreadsheets, with pupils using formulae to calculate the total cost of books, made a good contribution to pupils' learning in mathematics.

69. The coordinator is an enthusiast for the subject and a very good practitioner in her own right. She has helped to ensure that the subject has continued to develop throughout the school through professional development and the analysis of individual aspects of national testing to identify trends and areas for development in the school. Good records of pupils' achievements against national levels are kept and targets for pupils are set and reviewed each half term. Workshops for parents have increased their understanding of the way numeracy is now taught and the numeracy governor has seen the strategy in practice while on monitoring visits.

SCIENCE

70. Standards in science seen during the inspection are above national expectations. National test results over the last three years show a continued improvement in standards, but the cohort of pupils for 2001 was below the required ten pupils to make national comparisons. This is an improvement since the last inspection where standards were described as being average.

71. Over time, the pupils acquire the knowledge and understanding they should and their achievement is good. From average levels of attainment in the reception year, they achieve well to reach standards above national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in lessons well supported by experienced teaching assistants.

72. From the lessons observed, samples of work provided by the school, discussion with the subject co-ordinator and pupils, all aspects of science including life and living processes, materials and their properties and physical process, are well covered with a strong emphasis on teaching scientific enquiry and investigative skills. Pupils record their work well by writing and drawing and they use their numeracy skills to communicate information through tables and block graphs. Pupils make use of computers to access a programme for virtually testing the conductivity of a much wider range of materials than a teacher could collect together while others in the class actually did it.

73. A rolling programme of study ensures that due attention is paid to continuity and progression in pupils' learning in the mixed age classes. In a year two, three and four lesson on electrical circuits, pupils work at different levels according to their age group. Year two pupils make a simple circuit with basic materials so that they understand which part of a battery and bulb need to be connected by wires. Year three and four pupils used battery and bulb holders to create a test circuit to test for conductivity. Strong emphasis is placed on prediction and fair testing. In a year five and six lesson pupils looked at the factors affecting the speed of dissolving. In an effective question and answer introduction, pupils established that stirring, temperature, size of particles, and quantity of water were the main consideration in dissolving sugar cubes, demerara sugar, icing sugar and granulated sugar. Pupils recorded their predictions and established their method of fair testing.

74. Science teaching is good, an improvement since the last inspection. The coordinator has worked hard to establish clear progression in planning throughout the school making good use of national and local guidance. Due emphasis is given to the required level of investigation for each age group through investigation sheets. Teachers are very good in their questioning of pupils to assess their individual needs, lessons are well resourced and pupils of differing abilities appropriately challenged. Pupils work very well together collaboratively, give well-considered answers to questions using scientific vocabulary, and listen attentively to the views of others. The green house, planting beds and environmental area further contribute to pupils first hand experience of life and living processes.

OTHER SUBJECTS

75. Though pupils in at least one key stage were observed learning in all the foundation subjects, the total number of such observations per subject was inevitably relatively small. No lessons were observed in religious education. In addition, only small amounts of evidence of work completed this school year were available for analysis in subjects such as geography, history, art and design technology which are usually taught as topics in blocks of time. Where possible this was supplemented by the analysis of work completed last year, teachers' planning and by discussions with pupils.

76. To avoid repetition and provide a solid base for judgements about teaching and other aspects of provision, art, design technology, geography, history, Information technology, music, physical and religious education are reported on as a group, with strengths and weaknesses pinpointed.

THE FOUNDATION SUBJECTS - ART, DESIGN TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, MUSIC, PHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

77. Boys' and girls' achievements in both key stages are appropriate for their ages in most of these subjects with standards in religious education (RE) better and performance levels in indoor physical education not as good. They are making sound and sometimes better progress through both key stages in all subjects including information technology. This generally matches the situation at the time of the last inspection except that RE has improved. It is also only fair to say that expectations in information technology (IT) have gone up considerably in the intervening years and, although it is what is now expected, current pupils are working at much higher levels than they did in 1997. Pupils with special educational needs are well-supported and making good progress, especially in the more practical aspects of the above subjects. They are fully included in all the school has to offer and all support is planned so that they do not miss out on any of these activities.

ART, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

78. A limited range of activities in art and design and design technology took place during the inspection but good examples of past work were seen in displays around the school. Evidence of a range of printing and the use of textiles indicate pupils are exploring different processes and materials. The use of 'paint' programmes allows pupils to explore design and colour using a computer while sketch books encourage pupils to draw from first hand experience. In a year five

and six lesson, pupils had used their sketchbooks to practise perspective and other techniques for showing depth prior to painting in the style of the Impressionists. In the lesson, pupils used paint confidently, working from background to foreground creating their landscape. The display of landscapes by artists such as Constable and Monet, the teaching of techniques for painting landscapes and the textile work based on the Bayeux Tapestry all contribute to pupils' cultural development. In design technology pupils' planning books indicate a strong emphasis on the designing, evaluating and making processes. For example, before the construction of the school's adventure playground equipment, pupils designed their own, paying particular attention to methods of joining the various materials. In a year two, three and four lesson pupils plan their picture frame before starting to make it. They select appropriate tools and use them well.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

79. With geography being the current focus in the two older classes, most judgements on history were made from pupils' recollections and previous work. The exception came in the youngest class where year ones thoroughly enjoyed discussing what it was about a range of toys which let them know they were old or new. They easily noted that old toys were 'tatty' and faded whereas the new ones were clean and bright. Older pupils were able to talk with some confidence about the Tudors and the Victorians. Their books contain thoughtful interpretations, notably a piece of empathetic writing where pupils wrote about what it would be like to be a coal miner in Victorian times which the teacher noted had been 'researched well'.

80. In geography, year one had been on a village walk which had been recorded using photographs. They had put together a village trail book with written or dictated annotations by each pupil. This led onto good work during the inspection using large-scale maps for pupils to identify where the photographs were taken using smaller photographs to mark this on the map. All showed a good sense of location and most could relate the map to their own knowledge of the village. Older pupils working in pairs took the idea of mapping much further by using road maps to find a 'scenic' route from Blackwater to Southampton visiting interesting sites shown on the map on the way. Each pair was able to plot a route and describe it using road numbers and several, in describing the route, showed good awareness of the audience in the language they used. Other good work on the water cycle working up to a study of rivers and on India linked to a study on Sikhism was recorded in pupils books.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

81. Standards in ICT are as expected for pupils at the end of year two and year six. The new computer suite and training that both teachers and teaching assistants have received have made a significant contribution to this and the school is now very well placed to raise standards as these developments over time impact on pupils. In a year two, three and four lesson to design a poster for the school's Christmas fair, years two and four pupils work well together in pairs while year three pupils design their posters by hand. Those on the computers change font size, type and colour, moving text and using different alignments. They sensibly 'preview the text' as the poster increases in size and know how to print and save their work. In a year five and six lesson pupils enter data onto a spreadsheet. They understand columns, rows and cells and can use formulae for the four rules adding headers and footers to their work before saving and printing.

82. Examples around the school show evidence of the use of the Internet. Younger pupils programme a floor turtle while older pupils write a set of commands to draw a shape on the screen. In year five and six pupils have word processed their Haiku poems into a book, imported drawings into writing and used a digital camera to record events at the school's book week. Such planned work as visiting a 'virtual reality temple' on the Internet and the use of data loggers will not only improve pupils' skills but also increase the use of ICT across the curriculum. The suite is a valuable asset to the school and its use has not yet been fully developed.

MUSIC

83. The school is fortunate to have a music specialist on the staff who takes the music in each class, two of which lessons were observed during the inspection. A choir and recorder club held at lunchtime and guitar and keyboard lesson from outside instructors also enhances

provision. Older pupils especially are given opportunities to perform to an audience with the music teacher congratulating the top class on their performance at a 'Save the Children' concert in Truro Cathedral the previous week as an example.

84. After an impressive clapping warm-up which stretched pupils powers of concentration, years two, three and four showed that they understood the pentatonic scale and the variables of long and short, high and low, and loud and soft. Given the responsibility of making a phrase which was magical, powerful, mysterious or terrifying on tuned instruments, even the year twos managed to do so and were able to reproduce it to order. Older pupils showed very good powers of concentration and ability to follow complex rhythms in their clapping warm-up and then listened in attentive silence while the teacher played the introduction to Ravels' Bolero. With the music playing quietly in the background, the teacher made very good use of the steady beat to explore the notation this would represent and then extended this to playing at double and half the timing. Every pupil was able to contribute and the teacher made very good use of 'musicians' in the group who were, for instance able to discuss the difference between a beat rest and an extended beat. Pupils' music books showed that they had experienced music from a very wide catalogue from Thomas Tallis, through Mozart to Vivaldi.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

85. A sound programme for physical education includes a rolling programme of dance, gymnastics and games and for the older pupils, athletics and swimming. The inhibiting factor in the provision is the size of the hall, which is not suited to vigorous activity or games and restricts the range of apparatus in use for gymnastics. In a year two, three and four lesson, pupils practice rolling and stretching, followed by tucked rolls. When using the apparatus they try their rolls at different levels. In a year five and six lesson, pupils balance on one and four points, making a sequence and developing this using limited apparatus. In these lessons, pupils warm up well, their behaviour is very good and they move round the limited space with consideration for others. The teacher planned the lesson with due emphasis on safety, had high expectations of what the pupils could achieve in the space and used pupils well to demonstrate teaching points. However, in absolute terms, performance levels are below those seen in schools with better accommodation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

86. Inspection constraints meant that no religious education lessons were observed but this was more than compensated for by the volume and quality of work in pupils' books and on display. The school follows the local authority agreed syllabus which it has organised into rolling programmes to meet the needs of the mixed age classes in the school. This has enabled staff to more than cover all the necessary ground and standards in the subject are good. Christianity features strongly and is significant that, although there is no church in the village, local clergy are invited in to take assemblies on a regular basis. Pupils' books also contain evidence of a visit to a church in a neighbouring parish so that pupils can experience and learn about such an environment first hand. Christian festivals such as Easter and stories such as the widows mite are studied and compared to similar stories and festivals in other faiths. A very strong feature of the school's provision is the quality of its work on other faiths including the Jewish faith, Hinduism, Islam and the Sikh faith. While celebrating the diversity of these faiths, teachers take every opportunity to point out similarities and compare likes. Jewish and Anglican leaders are studied and their roles contrasted and Easter is compared to the feast of the Passover.

TEACHING AND OTHER PROVISION IN THE FOUNDATION SUBJECTS

87. Teaching in all these subjects is consistently good. It was 'sound' in all subjects and 'sometimes good' in art, geography and music at the time of the last inspection so this represents a good improvement. Several factors have contributed to this. Some subjects did not have subject planning guidance or subject leaders responsible for them in 1997. Teachers are now making very good use of national and local guidance in the forms of schemes of work to ensure progression and challenge in their planning. In subjects such as geography, history and religious education, constructive use is made of programmes of study where topics are repeated every two or three years to prevent duplication in the mixed age classes and ensure coverage. Each subject now has a coordinator so that they are all being managed, organised, resourced and

monitored on the same sound footing. The computer suite has made it possible for teachers and other staff to actually teach the skills of information technology (IT) and for pupils to practice these skills together. Some use of this is being made in other subjects but there is scope for even more use to be made of the technology and pupils' growing skills and understanding to enhance learning across the curriculum. Good use is being made of teachers' expertise in music and physical education (PE) by teaching other classes but though the teaching of indoor PE is good, the very cramped hall severely limits pupils performance so learning is only satisfactory.