

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKHURST COMMUNITY FIRST SCHOOL

West Moors, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113685

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Knight

Reporting inspector: David Milne
22277

Dates of inspection: 8th - 11th May 2000

Inspection number: 193151

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shaftesbury Rd West Moors Ferndown Dorset
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Stephen Gillham
Date of previous inspection:	13 th - 17 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
David Milne	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information Communication Technology Music	Standards Teaching Leadership and management and finance English as an additional language
John Baker	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and attendance Care of pupils Parental partnerships Equal opportunities
Valerie Howells	Team inspector	English Geography History	Special educational needs Accommodation & resources
Christopher Banbury	Team inspector	Science Design Technology Physical education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision Assessment Under Fives
Eric Wilson	Team inspector	Art Religious education	Curriculum

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Oakhurst First School is located in West Moors, a large village on the outskirts of Bournemouth. It currently has 182 pupils on roll from Year R to Year 4, aged from four to nine. There are similar numbers of boys and girls. Most pupils' attainment on entry is average. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals (twelve per cent) is below average. Twenty seven per cent of pupils have special educational needs which is slightly above the national average. No children come from homes where English is a second or additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is moderately effective; this means that the combination of standards, teaching, leadership and school improvement is satisfactory overall. Standards in mathematics and science are average. The school's weak performance in English over several years is being remedied; most pupils are now reaching appropriate expectations. Nearly half the teaching is good. The newly appointed headteacher has provided capable stewardship in leading the school through a period of change since September 1999. The overall leadership and management of the school are sound but improvements are needed if higher standards are to be achieved. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. As a result, pupils receive a balanced education and become well-rounded individuals.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work in lessons are very good. This helps them to concentrate and learn effectively.
- Pupils are well cared for and their personal development and relationships are good.
- Parents have positive views of the school and are active in supporting it. The school is a focal point of the community.
- The quality of display is good. This helps pupils feel valued and to appreciate other pupils' work.

What could be improved

- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low in some subjects and year groups and the school's test results show little year-on-year improvement.
- The assessment of pupils lacks rigour. There is not a policy to promote coherent and effective assessment practice throughout the school.
- The new headteacher has no deputy to delegate and share key responsibilities with. The current budget is in deficit and several policies and the school development plan are outdated. These factors inhibit the school's effectiveness and limit the rate at which standards are being raised.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection in 1997. It received a favourable report and was left with five key issues. Clear progress has been made in tackling three issues: the curriculum time at Key Stage 2, the balance of subjects offered to pupils and religious studies planning have all been strengthened. However, several curriculum policies have not been updated regularly. This area remains a weakness. Training to improve teachers' knowledge of information communication technology (ICT) has been undertaken and there has been a significant investment in new computers. However, this has yet to make a significant impact upon improving pupils' attainment. The need for further teacher training in order to meet revised pupil expectations for ICT remains.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	D	C	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	E	E	D	E	
mathematics	D	D	B	B	

At the age of 5, children meet expectations in all areas of learning and exceed these in their personal and social development. The overall trend in attainment since the last inspection has been largely static. There has been an improvement however, in the proportion of more able pupils reaching higher than expected levels (Level 3) in mathematics and reading. Mathematics is the strongest of the basic skills outlined above. Over eighty-six per cent of Year 2 pupils have reached the expected (Level 2) standard over the last five years. There is a very wide spread of pupil attainment in reading. Forty per cent of Year 2 pupils reached high standards last year. This is above the national average. However, about thirty per cent of the same year group did not make sufficient progress and develop adequate reading skills. Results in writing are weak, notably in comparison to schools with a similar intake of pupils. Writing standards achieved by more able pupils are much lower than could be expected. However, inspection evidence indicates improvement this year, as a result of setting pupils literacy targets. Science standards are secure and have matched the national average over successive years. Pupils' attainment in all other subjects is generally satisfactory. The quality of artwork is good. Overall, there is considerable potential for pupils to achieve higher standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils like school and have positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well and are orderly, sensible and considerate at work and play.
Personal development and relationships	The school gives high priority to these areas and promotes very good relationships between children and adults.
Attendance	Pupils' attendance rate is broadly average.

The school's aims and values emphasise the development of pupils' co-operation, mutual respect and self-esteem rather than academic attainment. It is successful in meeting its prime aims. No pupils have been excluded.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is sound throughout the reception classes, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, teaching in nearly half the lessons is good. Compared to the last inspection, a greater number of very good lessons were seen (seventeen per cent), as well as some unsatisfactory ones (nine per cent). The best teaching was presented with enthusiasm and at a brisk pace. It involved interesting and challenging activities that promoted pupils' active involvement. This helps pupils make good gains in their learning. However, consistently good teaching is only found in some classes. In some lessons, teachers' expectations are too low, particularly for bright children, who cope easily with the work given. Literacy and numeracy skills are being taught satisfactorily. The recent focus on Key Stage 1 pupils who have reading and language difficulties, and the extra support they receive, is helping them to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Previous deficiencies in the curriculum have been corrected. The subjects and opportunities offered to pupils are now well balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	The identification and support for younger pupils with SEN have improved since September 1999. Pupils with learning difficulties are now making satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school does not have any multi-lingual pupils who need help with their language development.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is a strength of the school. Notable features are the high quality of display around the school, including multi-cultural materials, and the reward systems to promote good work and behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff show a high degree of personal care for pupils' welfare but procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are not sufficiently robust or applied consistently throughout the school.

There are very effective links with parents who offer substantial practical and financial support to the school. The strongest feature of the curriculum is the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. All statutory requirements are met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are broadly sound. The newly appointed headteacher has had a difficult role as acting head since September without the support of a deputy. The positive contributions of governors and parents are counterbalanced by budgetary pressures and outdated methods of school development planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors, many of whom are new, meet all their responsibilities and give freely of their time. However, greater effectiveness would be achieved if systems for delegating decision making were adopted.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Target setting for pupils and school self-evaluation systems have only recently been introduced. These have yet to make a significant impact upon raising standards.
The strategic use of resources	The financial administration of the school is efficient. Budgets are set out systematically but the contingency fund has gradually eroded. Pupils are benefiting from targeted spending and specific grants on new computers.

The headteacher recognises the need for staff to put a greater emphasis on pupils making rapid progress and reaching better standards, whilst maintaining the high quality of care provided. There is a good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum. The accommodation is very good and the school is adequately resourced. The governors follow the principles of best value, intuitively rather than explicitly, when making sensible spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents who responded to the questionnaire and the few who attended the parents' meeting were very supportive of the school. They particularly liked the caring atmosphere, the clear behavioural expectations and the way that parents are welcomed and involved in school activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents wanted a wider range of extra-curricular activities offered after school. Some other parents thought that homework was too simple, particularly for the oldest and more able pupils.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities is uncommon in First Schools, although there is scope for Key Stage 2 pupils to undertake more activities with parental help. The team found that the amount of homework given to each year group was appropriate but agree that too little is expected of bright (higher attaining) children. Some undemanding class and homework activities are set.

The team concur with parents' views that Oakhurst First School provides a happy, attractive and caring environment for young children to learn in. Although the overall quality of education provided is sound, the school has done less well than the inspection four years ago when many aspects were praised. The staff and governors need to address the areas for improvement quickly and systematically in order to keep fully up-to-speed with national developments.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children enter the reception classes with a broad range of ability. Some have well-developed early literacy and numeracy skills and are socially confident and adept. A few cannot recognise numbers to five or trace the letters of their names. The attainment of most is average. Pupils made good progress in the lessons observed during the inspection as a result of the stimulating atmosphere, well-structured activities and quality of teaching they receive. By the time they are five, their attainment is in line with what is expected in five of the six areas of learning; in the sixth area, their personal and social development is better.
2. Since the last inspection, in January 1997, overall standards have been generally maintained. Standards achieved in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 meet national expectations. Pupils' attainment in all other subjects, including information communication technology (ICT) and religious education, is also in line with expectations for pupils aged seven and nine. This means that the majority of Year 2 pupils attain the Level 2 benchmark and Year 4 pupils are working at Level 3. However, the detail behind the main picture is more involved: standards in reading and writing are set to rise after falling behind the national trend of year-on-year improvement. The National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact upon mathematics standards. Pupils' progress is slower in classes where undemanding tasks are given, particularly for bright children who are able to absorb new ideas quickly. Some subjects have improved over the last four years: experimental and investigational science at Key Stage 2 has strengthened and art standards are now good throughout the school. There was also a rise in the number of pupils reaching Level 3 at national tests in mathematics and reading last year although none reached higher levels in writing. Compared to schools with a similar intake of pupils, the 1999 results indicate that, when Level 2 and 3 scores are considered together, mathematics standards are above average and reading scores are average. However, writing falls well below standards achieved elsewhere. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) reach levels appropriate to their abilities.
3. A review of the school's end of Key Stage 1 results indicates the following. Mathematics is the strongest of the basic skills. Over eighty-six per cent of Year 2 pupils reached the expected standard over the last five years. About one-in-three pupils reached Level 3 in 1999, which was a significant improvement compared to the previous year. However, there was little evidence found of practical mathematics tasks given that are genuinely investigational. There is a very wide spread of pupil attainment in reading. 40 per cent of Year 2 pupils reached high standards last year. This is above the national average. However, about thirty per cent of the same year group did not make sufficient progress and develop adequate reading skills. This weakness is being addressed through additional literacy support for Key Stage 2 pupils and, since the beginning of the academic year, a new focus on pupils experiencing reading and language difficulties in Key Stage 1. The reading skills of all pupils who were heard reading by the inspection team matched their abilities. Results in writing have been weak for boys and girls over several years; about three-quarters of Year 2 pupils reached the expected standard in 1999 but none attained Level 3, where writing is expected to be well organised, imaginative with correct grammatical structure. Writing standards achieved by more

able pupils are lower than could be expected. Science standards are average and this is confirmed by pupils' current work and teacher assessments over several years. Over ninety per cent of pupils reached the Level 2 standard. Overall, there is considerable potential for pupils to achieve higher standards.

4. The school is in the early stages of introducing target setting for subjects and individual pupils. Literacy targets have been devised in each class which older pupils are aware of. SEN pupils' targets in their individual education plans (IEPs) are being addressed effectively. The previous headteacher undertook detailed analysis of the school's test results by subject, gender and general trends and this information was shared with staff and governors. However, a combination of factors limited the impact of this initiative and its effect on standards. The results analysis was over-complex; teachers' skills of assessing and levelling pupils' work in order to know what they should be aiming for next are inconsistent; and there was too little monitoring of teaching and pupils' work in previous years to see whether broad targets, such as 'raising writing standards', were effective.
5. The majority of pupils, including those with SEN, make adequate progress in acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding. The pattern differs as pupils move through the school; their progress is dependent upon teachers' perceptions of their ability and the levels of challenge given. Good gains in learning are made by reception children and pupils in Year 3. Satisfactory progress is made in Years 1, 2 and 4 but expectations are not sufficiently demanding for rapid progress to be made. The progress of bright children (those with the potential of reaching higher standards) is uneven and less than satisfactory overall. This is because these pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to build upon what they already know at a sufficiently brisk rate. No gifted pupils have been identified.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. These are strengths of the school. Pupils like school and are keen to attend. Their attitudes to learning are good, which contributes positively to standards achieved. Pupils are attentive, respond well to questions, undertake tasks enthusiastically and enjoy lessons. For example, in a Reception/Year 1 science lesson, pupils thoroughly enjoyed contributing to the story, 'Jasper's Beanstalk', and participated enthusiastically in the seed sowing activity that followed.
7. Behaviour is very good in the classroom, in assembly, in the dining room and when moving around the school. Pupils are aware of the high standards of behaviour expected and respond very well to discipline, which consistently creates an orderly environment conducive to learning. In both playgrounds, behaviour is very good with all playing harmoniously together and lining up quietly when the bell rings for the end of play. There were no signs of any aggressive behaviour or any forms of oppressive behaviour anywhere in the school. There have been no exclusions in the past year. Pupils are friendly, courteous and polite to adults and show respect for other people's property and the school. For example, the school is litter free and there are no signs of graffiti.
8. Pupils' personal development is good overall. They mature as they progress through the school and willingly take on increasing responsibility. For example, reception children tidy up after themselves and take turns with classroom activities such as keeping the calendar up to date, Year 2 pupils take turns to be Helper of the Day and Year 4 take on whole-school activities such as helping in assembly and taking turns as

door and bell monitors. However, pupils are given limited opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons. Relationships between pupils are good. They work well together in the classroom, when in pairs or groups, and play together harmoniously. Relationships between pupils and staff are also good and pupils are secure and confident in their relationships with other adults.

9. Pupils have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and show appropriate respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, all classes discuss and agree class rules and understand the reasons for having them. Awareness of the feelings, values and beliefs of others is developed through religious education and the impact on one's actions on others is discussed in personal and social education lessons. For example, in a Year 3/4 discussion on the environment, pupils learnt about the potential danger of litter to animals and humans.
10. Levels of attendance are satisfactory, punctuality is good and lessons begin on time. These factors contribute positively to standards achieved. Registration is carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, good attitudes to learning and satisfactory attendance have been maintained. Behaviour is even better and is now very good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching and learning is sound throughout the reception classes, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Compared to the last inspection, a greater number of very good lessons were seen (seventeen per cent), as well as some unsatisfactory ones (nine per cent). Nearly half the lessons observed were good. During the inspection, two of the eight permanent members of staff were absent. The temporary teachers in the reception class and in Year 3/4 made a significant contribution to the quality of teaching. The best teaching was presented with enthusiasm and at a brisk pace. It involved interesting and challenging activities that promoted pupils' active involvement and learning. Good teaching can be found in almost all year groups but is consistently found in Year 3. Only a few lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. These involved too little progress being made by particular groups of pupils and low-level questioning and tasks. Most teaching was judged to be satisfactory with a balance of strong and weaker features. However, these lessons lacked the 'buzz and spark' associated with good teaching where pupils are highly motivated and make rapid progress.
12. The staff have much to gain from sharing the good teaching that exists as well as advice being given as to how to improve unsatisfactory and 'safe but uninspiring' practice. Good or very good teaching incorporates specific learning intentions that are clearly stated in the lesson plan; pupils are told what these are at the start of lessons. Pupil grouping arrangements by ability, friendship and interest are clear in all classes. The best teaching has clearly delineated times given for particular sections of the lesson; a good example of this was seen in a mathematics lesson in the reception class. The least effective lessons were pedestrian and predictable. Plenary sessions that summarise key learning points at the close are incorporated into numeracy and literacy lessons. However, the staff as a whole need to improve the skill of teasing out from pupils what they have learnt and understood from lessons. The structure of the literacy and numeracy programmes leads to pupils spending a good deal of time in the morning sitting down and listening. Even the most effective teachers could improve the balance between 'telling and asking' (exposition and questioning) pupils in order to make lessons less passive and more interactive. Few practical investigational activities were observed, although pupils responded with interest and enthusiasm to tasks such

as playing the recorder and artwork. Science practical work has been given greater emphasis since the last inspection. There was limited evidence of pupils being encouraged to undertake independent learning, problem solving and using their initiative, and there is considerable scope to develop these aspects further. Visits to the school library are not scheduled regularly and, when asked, few pupils knew how to search for specific information.

13. Teachers have consistent expectations about the accuracy and presentation of pupils' work. Subject portfolios are in the early stages of being developed. A useful model is the ICT portfolio, which shows off the quality of pupils' work to the best advantage. Most of the pupils' work is regularly marked. Verbal feedback is given to younger children about the quality of their work. However, the inspection team found very little evidence of written comments that prompted pupils to respond to mistakes. High quality display is a strong feature of the school, particularly artwork. Most classrooms are vibrant, colourful, well organised and stimulating. Teachers have worked very hard to provide an attractive learning environment for pupils. There is a strong culture of encouragement, rooted in the school's ethos, which boosts pupils' self-esteem. Praise for effort and attainment is used widely by teachers but not always in a sufficiently discriminating fashion. A homework policy has been established which parents found helpful. Reading, spellings and number work are commonly set. Most homework is appropriate and helps pupils' learning but some tasks would not challenge capable pupils who have well developed reading and spelling skills.
14. Pupils make good gains in their learning in the reception classes and Year 3. Their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is satisfactory elsewhere. Pupils concentrate and apply themselves consistently well irrespective of whether the lesson is stimulating or bland. Pupils with SEN learn quickly when given one-to-one or small group support and their progress is satisfactory in whole-class lessons. Expectations of able pupils in several year groups are too low. The school does not have an able child policy to support teachers in the identification of bright pupils and the provision of extension activities. Some teachers' skills of asking challenging and exploratory questioning are good but there is room to extend these skills further. Teachers are not sufficiently aware of the pace, variety and expectations necessary to extend pupils who have the potential of reaching higher levels of attainment.
15. The overall quality of mathematics teaching is sound; observed lessons ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Most teachers are confident in teaching mathematics and the numeracy strategy introduced this year has reinforced good practice. The best lessons are illustrated by a clear explanation of tasks and the appropriate use of mathematical terms. Mental arithmetic at the start of lessons is developing pupils' thinking abilities well. However, in some lessons the pitch and level of questioning is too low and the introductory starter session goes on for too long. When there are high expectations of pupils, they are stimulated into thinking mathematically, giving reasons for their answers. Limited examples were noted of pupils being encouraged to use and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects, for example, the tallying of references to story characters in ICT database work.
16. Literacy teaching is of a satisfactory quality throughout the school. In Key Stage 1, literacy lessons are well planned, taking account of the abilities of the pupils. There are good introductions that provide opportunities for pupils to discuss what they have to do. However, the teaching of phonics lacks sufficient precision and clarity of explanation to move pupils on briskly in their learning. The literacy strategy is used effectively in Key Stage 2 to keep lessons purposeful and pupils respond by trying hard and often making

good progress. Sound planning is based on assessment procedures that have been recently introduced across the school. Good use is made of the 'First of the Month' books for assessing pupils' writing. However, plenary sessions are too short and some teachers do not ask questions in a way that encourages extended discussion. This limits the progress made by the less able pupils in each class, as they do not readily offer their own ideas.

Teaching of SEN pupils

17. Pupils with SEN are fully integrated into mainstream classes. Support is targeted to the needs of children from the reception class. This new initiative and the introduction of a more rigorous system for reviewing pupils' progress is enabling them to have an understanding of their own needs and to receive appropriate support both within and during withdrawal sessions. Pupils are sensibly and helpfully supported from entry to school following the recommendations of the national Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs.
18. The SEN support teacher represents the LEA Language and Numeracy Support Service and leads 3 sessions each week to help pupils at Stage 3 and 5 of the Code of Practice. She liaises well with school and individual teachers and assists the school in the assessment of pupils at Stage 3. Class teachers write their own individual education plans (IEPs) and ensure that they are followed in the class to enable pupils to access the National Curriculum. Withdrawal teaching is arranged well so that pupils do not miss the same lessons each week. Staff from outside agencies generally offers good support and advice to the school. Teachers, support assistants and parent helpers work closely together to assist pupils in their learning by providing interesting and relevant tasks. In the classes where the support is not well-targeted, pupils become listless and make insufficient progress during lessons. All pupils who receive additional help are gaining in self-esteem and generally, make significant gains in learning because of the additional help they receive.

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

19. The school has improved the provision since the last report and the curriculum now fully meets statutory requirements. The curriculum provided, including that for children under five, is broad and balanced. Sufficient time is allocated to each subject and there is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The provision made by the school promotes personal development well and is enriched by the use of visits and visitors, particularly for assemblies and work in art and history. The curriculum is based around themes and activities, with sufficient emphasis on the subjects within the National Curriculum. It is well supported by schemes of work but several of these, as well as curriculum policies, are now out of date and in need of review. The variety of planning formats clearly indicate activities and learning but rarely include assessment opportunities. There is a curriculum working party within the governing body that meets regularly and is well placed to know what is happening in the school. Members of the working party visit the school and classrooms and record their monitoring notes in writing. The forthcoming review of the curriculum will also include a re-examination of the role of the working party.
20. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are fully integrated within the school. Opportunities for pupils with statements to learn and make progress are appropriate; the statement provides well for these pupils' learning needs. Pupils' individual education

plans (IEPs) relate to their particular difficulties and are reviewed termly. Teachers provide suitable support for SEN pupils and work closely with classroom assistants to ensure that pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum. However, this is not formalised in writing.

21. The school has adopted the literacy and numeracy strategies appropriately and introduced them effectively. There is evidence from pupils' work this year that this is having a positive impact upon standards. For example, Year 2 writing quality is improving and recent QCA end of Year 4 mathematics tests show that about one-third of the pupils are on target to reach Level 4. There remain some teaching elements, for example questioning skills and the use of the plenary session, which are recommended in the literacy and numeracy strategies, that could be refined.
22. The school offers satisfactory additional activities for the pupils during and after school which enrich their learning. These include sports and music. Training in cycling proficiency is provided during the summer term; parents help with this activity. All pupils have access to the curriculum and no exceptions are made on the basis of gender. Boys and girls take place in the football tournament and take equal responsibilities when moving PE equipment and helping around the school. The school sets a high priority on pupils' personal development. This is achieved through elements of the curriculum and in the way pupils are treated and valued. There is a clear policy for personal development but this is now out of date and due for review. The requirements for sex education and drug awareness are fully met. There is a clear behaviour policy that is applied consistently and a high standard of good behaviour was maintained throughout the inspection.
23. The school enjoys the support of the local community and makes sound use of visits and visitors. Parents are involved in the work of the school and provide good support. The Parent Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) is very active and also provides very good support through its fundraising and the organisation of a variety of activities during the year. The links with partner institutions are very good. There are excellent links with local pre-school groups and very good ones with the other schools in the Ferndown pyramid. There are good opportunities for students on a nursery course to work with younger children.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

24. The provision for the pupils' social development is very good and for spiritual, moral and cultural development it is good. The school creates a very caring and supportive environment for all its pupils and an ethos in which good behaviour is promoted and rewarded. The school's aims clearly emphasise the importance of each individual.
25. The good provision for spiritual development includes planned assemblies, incorporating an act of worship, providing a range of experiences for the pupils that contribute to their spiritual development. Some opportunities for reflection are provided, for example when the pupils at Key Stage 1 are asked to think about the seasons of the year and listen to the Four Seasons by Vivaldi. In addition, the pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through work in religious education, history and art. In religious education, the pupils have studied and compared the values and beliefs of several major world religions. In history, the pupils appreciate the impact of poor social conditions on the lives of people from the past through their work on Victorians, particularly Dr Barnardo.

26. The provision for the pupils' moral development is good. They are made aware of and know the differences between right and wrong. This is reinforced through regular class discussions in 'circle time' (this is an opportunity for pupils to listen to and reflect upon other pupils' feelings and points of view). The pupils also request these discussion times if they feel they have a particular issue to explore. The pupils are very good at helping others and have a good understanding of the meaning of honesty and for respecting fairness. A system of rewards is used in every class throughout the school and the pupils are encouraged successfully to exercise self-discipline and respect for others. The pupils know their own class set of rules and follow them. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves is good.
27. The provision for the pupils' social development is very good. They share ideas and resources sensibly and safely and are able to take turns when answering questions in their classes. The pupils offer each other support and encouragement. They work co-operatively in pairs and groups in class when required and listen very attentively to one another and to the teachers. The pupils are very polite to one another and to the adults in the school.
28. The provision for the pupils' cultural development is good. They have appropriate opportunities to develop an understanding of their own culture through visits to local museums and having a local artist work with them in school. They have experienced the work of a range of artists such as William Morris, Jackson Pollock, Monet and Mondrian in their art lessons. However, the resources used for this are only from white and Western European cultures. As part of religious education, the pupils have learnt about the richness and diversity of other cultures and their religions, for example in their work on the traditions of Islam and Judaism.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. This is a very caring school which makes good provision overall to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pastoral care is the responsibility of the class teachers who know their pupils and their families very well, are sensitive to their pupils' needs and thus able to provide good personal support and guidance. The good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have. Circle Time offers a good opportunity to discuss issues such as the effect of one's actions on others and the environment. Liaison with outside support agencies is appropriate and the school cares very well for its SEN pupils.
30. Procedures for promoting positive behaviour and eliminating bullying are very good and include involving pupils in discussing and agreeing class rules as well as giving appropriate rewards for good behaviour. These include a variety of incentives within the classroom such as star charts and smiley face charts and school awards such as entry in the "Praise Book". Procedures for monitoring and promoting regular attendance are good. Attendance and punctuality are carefully monitored and frequent unauthorised absence or lateness is followed up appropriately. Parents are given frequent reminders about the importance of good attendance and punctuality through newsletters.

31. The school follows Local Education Authority guidelines on Child Protection but the Headteacher who is the designated person has not yet received formal training in this field. However, staff are aware of their role in Child Protection and there is good liaison with outside agencies. Strong emphasis is placed on pupils' health and safety. Aspects such as healthy eating and personal hygiene are delivered through the curriculum, with a major focus on these issues during "Health Week". Road and personal safety is addressed through talks by the local Road Safety Team and the police, and Year 4 pupils undertake cycling proficiency training. Health and Safety procedures are very good and include formally reporting any concerns, very thorough risk assessment practice and good involvement by the governing body.
32. Pupils are supported satisfactorily on their academic development through adequate monitoring of their academic progress and encouraging and occasionally informative marking. Day-to-day assessment in lessons, however, is not sufficiently developed. Since the start of the academic year, literacy targets have been set twice a term for all pupils and other academic targets are set in Year 2 to Year 4, which are displayed in some classrooms as archery targets. These aspects, together with celebration of good work through awards such as entry in the "Praise Book", are beginning to make a contribution to helping and encouraging pupils to improve.

Assessment

33. The assessment of pupils' academic performance is unsatisfactory overall. There have been no assessment systems that track the pupils' academic standards through an agreed whole-school system and there is no assessment policy. A new system of a record of achievement for every pupil has been in place since last September. This includes the setting of academic targets, particularly in literacy and numeracy, but it is too early to judge whether these new procedures are helping to raise standards. From the analysis of the pupils' test results at age seven, the headteacher has identified as a priority the raising of the standards of attainment in writing. However, it is not clear how the school intends to meet this priority and monitor and evaluate the progress the pupils make. Procedures for assessing standards in other areas of the curriculum are inconsistent. There are portfolios of assessed work in English and science but their use was discontinued several years ago. Portfolios in religious education and art are used as examples of the work the pupils have covered. There are some examples of the more informal assessment of the pupils in lessons to inform the day-to-day teaching in literacy and numeracy. Questioning was used effectively as part of the plenary in a numeracy session in Year 3, where skilled assessment of the pupils' learning took place. However, its use is inconsistent in other subjects and any comments made are frequently not useful to inform the pupils' next stage of learning. The pupils are not encouraged to evaluate their own work to see exactly what they have learnt and use this information to begin to set their own targets. Some examples of detailed and helpful comments for pupils were found in Year 3. However, marking of the pupils' work is inconsistent and does not provide them with sufficient guidance about how to improve and what they should do next.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. There is a good partnership with parents, which is a strength in supporting pupils' learning. Parents are very satisfied with most aspects of the school, although some question the provision of homework and extra-curricular activities. The team considers homework to be appropriate for the age of the pupils and extra curricular provision is

satisfactory for a first school.

35. Parents are very well informed about the school through the prospectus, the governors' annual report and fortnightly newsletters. Curriculum information is provided through meetings which have covered literacy and numeracy. Details of the topics to be covered each term are given in newsletters issued early in the term. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through termly consultation evenings but receive limited information through annual reports. Although these reports give comprehensive details on what pupils can do, they make no reference to attainment levels or give any indication of what pupils need to do to improve. Parents are welcome to raise any concerns with teachers if they arise.
36. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning at school. Parental help in the classroom is good across the school and especially so in Key Stage 1 classes. Parents also provide support on trips and visits including swimming. Parents also help in many other ways including making curtains for the computer suite, preparing design technology and numeracy resources, running extra-curricular activities and by raising substantial funds for the school through a very active PTFA (Parents Teachers and Friends Association).
37. Induction arrangements for children starting school are very good. These include: the Oakhurst Bees group using the school facilities once a week during the summer term; home visits by teachers, and a meeting with new parents to advise them about their children starting school. Nearly all parents have signed the home/school contract that includes supporting the behaviour and the homework policies. The very good homework policy gives parents a clear understanding of homework expectations and guidance notes on reading, handwriting, spelling and mathematics enable parents to make a significant contribution to their children's learning. Parents are beginning to take an active part in the development of school policies and a number were involved in the preparation of the homework policy.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school provided by the governors, the headteacher and teachers who carry posts of responsibility. The newly-appointed headteacher has a clear vision and understanding about what needs to be done to improve the school, partly as a consequence of undertaking school self-evaluation training. Parents and governors also take an active interest in supporting the school and pupils' interests. These positive elements are counterbalanced by outdated school development planning as well as some old curricular policies, a budget deficit, and an inequitable balance of responsibilities due in part to the absence of a deputy head. The school has a positive ethos rooted in valuing children and good relationships are evident throughout. The school is successful in meeting its prime aim of boosting children's self-esteem and developing co-operative and positive attitudes.
39. The headteacher was formally appointed to the post in March 2000 after successfully steering the school through a transitional period as acting head since September 1999. The period of change has been marked by the departure of the former headteacher to a new post, and a significant number of new governors as well as some temporary teaching staff joining the school. The school received a favourable inspection report in January 1997; moderate rather than rapid progress has been made in addressing the key issues. The headteacher is mindful of the need to give greater emphasis to raising

standards and ensuring that all pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The procedures followed to produce the school development plan (SDP), and the model itself, are similar to that adopted 4-5 years ago, a strength of which is collective input of ideas from teachers, senior staff and governors. However, the SDP model has served its time and lacks sufficiently clear priorities related to raising attainment, as well as cost implications, deadlines and who will monitor and evaluate the success of each objective. The priorities identified by the new headteacher for development are very appropriate but differ from the ones within the current SDP.

40. The headteacher has too many responsibilities to carry them all out effectively. These include assessment, in-service training and up until the inspection week, science, as well as absorbing the new role of providing guidance and leadership for the whole school. She does not have a deputy or senior management team to delegate responsibilities to or share in decision making. As such, it will be difficult to create sufficient momentum to drive key areas of improvement through without the support of an external mentor and colleagues in the school with senior management experience. SEN co-ordination has been delegated to a member of staff who is only in her second year of teaching. This is a less than satisfactory arrangement. The SENCO has undertaken this challenging responsibility to the best of her ability but has not received appropriate training. Nonetheless, SEN provision itself is satisfactory and pupils with learning difficulties are making sound progress. Subject co-ordinators carry out their responsibilities diligently and, for the most part, effectively. For example, the former music co-ordinator has left the school with a first-rate scheme of work.
41. The governors are supportive of the school and give freely of their time. All statutory requirements are met. The Chair of Governors has made a very significant contribution to the school over the last fifteen years and has been influential in guiding the school, for example chairing until recently all three working parties and taking a major role in key decisions. However, it is recognised that it is timely to replace the system of governors' working parties with a committee structure that will allow discussion and decisions to be made at a lower level than the full governing body. The governors as a whole have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The previous headteacher undertook very detailed analysis of pupils' national test results which, due to their complexity, some governors found difficult to understand. The governors have helped develop and ratify a comprehensive set of policies, with the exception of assessment. However, a regular cycle of reviewing and modifying policies has not been established; for example, policies for design technology (DT), physical education (PE) and SEN have not been amended for five years. The outcome of this has been restricted internal development.
42. The school has made relatively slow progress over the last four years in school improvement. This can be attributed to systems for internal review that are not fully developed; for example, monitoring teaching; appraising staff and developing a shared understanding of performance trends. There was no monitoring and evaluation of teaching from the time of the last inspection up until about a year ago. This was unsatisfactory and hampered school and individuals' development. Since then all teachers have been observed several times by external advisors, some subject co-ordinators and senior staff. The headteacher acknowledges the need for lesson evaluation to be more regular and constructively critical if high quality teaching is to be promoted throughout the school. The school follows appraisal requirements (the assessment of teachers' skills and professional development needs) but performance management systems are not in place. Teachers are not sufficiently aware of the relative performance trends of the school compared to others. They accept the need to

raise attainment, but the emphasis within the school's aims and values has been to develop positive attitudes and behaviour in pupils. Baseline assessment data (information on what children are able to do and understand) is collected when children enter the school at the age of five but this is not used systematically. Literacy targets have been introduced this year, and, coupled with new support for Key Stage 1 pupils with reading difficulties, this is indicative of the school beginning to move in the right direction.

Staffing

43. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and in most classes they are well used. The school does not have links with colleges to help train student teachers. However, newly qualified teachers are successfully inducted into the school through mentoring arrangements. A wide range of in-service training has been undertaken by staff, and in some cases, for example a twenty-day mathematics course attended by the co-ordinator, it has had a positive impact upon standards.

Accommodation

44. The building is well maintained and kept in a very good state of cleanliness. The accommodation is very good and enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. Classrooms are of adequate size and enhanced by colourful displays and pupils' work. Space is sufficient to enable pupils to carry out a wide range of activities. The school occupies a picturesque site, which provides ample facilities for outdoor games and play. A recently built adventure playground, used by the school during the school day, is shared with the families in the local community.

Resources

45. Adequate resources have been provided to support children's learning, although provision in English and geography is limited. Good provision has been made for ICT and music. Overall, the provision, use and deployment of resources make a satisfactory contribution to the standards achieved by pupils.

Financial management

46. There are also strengths and weaknesses with regard to the school's financial health and control. The school does not have a designated finance officer, although the school secretary carries out her main duties, including the monitoring of day-to-day expenditure, very efficiently. Good support and advice is available from the county finance staff who undertakes monthly outturns and reconciliation statements. The school received a clean bill of health regarding its financial systems in the last auditor's report and minor recommendations have been responded to. The finance working party makes carefully considered spending decisions. However, the contingency fund inherited from LMS funding has gradually eroded and the school now has a modest deficit that has been sanctioned by the LEA. The school does not have any additional sources of income, for example through letting. The maintenance of a seventh class is not presently affordable, but numbers of pupils are predicted to rise. This is a consequence of the school's reputation and because other schools are full in the immediate area. The new headteacher and secretary were presently formulating plans to boost income and limit expenditure whilst maintaining present class numbers and staff-pupil ratios. This strategic financial plan needs to be formalised with clear options

established to set a balanced budget in future.

47. There is a satisfactory link between the school's financial planning and its educational priorities. For example, an increase in the number of classroom assistants has directly helped pupils who benefit from small group support. Subject co-ordinators have limited funds at their disposal but they spend these wisely on selected resources. However, if the new educational priorities identified by the headteacher were incorporated into the next school improvement plan, a tighter relationship between targeted expenditure and learning outcomes would benefit the school. All parties who act as financial guardians have an implicit understanding of best value (that is the principle of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition). For example, the strategic decision to use a specific grant to purchase a relatively expensive but highly reliable type of PC computer for the new ICT suite resulted in the facility getting off to a good start. Some other contractual services that the school has committed itself to are being reviewed carefully to see whether they offer best value. Taking into account all the factors that determine how effectively the school utilises its financial resources to produce results, satisfactory value for money is given.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The governors and headteacher at Oakhurst Community First School should give attention to the following points to raise standards and the quality of work at the school.

- (1) Raise standards of attainment and expectations of what pupils can achieve by:
- identifying and spreading effective teaching practice that stimulates and challenges pupils' thinking;
 - extending the monitoring and evaluation of lessons in order that all staff receive regular feedback about their practice and suggestions for improvement;
 - devising a policy for bright (higher attaining) children that enables them to achieve their potential, for example, by undertaking more independent learning activities and challenging open-ended investigations;
 - the headteacher and subject co-ordinators reviewing the quality of pupils' work on a regular basis to establish whether standards are good enough and whether short-term targets for individuals and year groups are likely to be met;
 - identifying subjects which staff have less secure knowledge and expectations of, for example ICT and music, and strengthen teachers' skills through in-service training and peer support.

(Paragraphs: 2, 11, 12, 42, 94, 98)

- (2) Develop a coherent and rigorous assessment strategy to improve the quality and accuracy of teachers' assessments to ensure that:
- simple, short-term and achievable targets are set for individuals across all core subjects that include the full involvement of parents and pupils in meeting these goals;
 - diagnostic marking and oral feedback that prompts pupils to respond to and improve their work are spread more widely throughout the school
 - the on-going assessment of pupils is developed, for example through skilled questioning at the end of lessons, so that teachers know what different attainment groups have learnt and understood in lessons;
 - the performance of different cohorts of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 is predicted on the basis of their attainment on entry, and end of unit review of work covered, in order to track the progress made in each year group;
 - staff understand the value and limitations of the present baseline assessment scheme and that they use and supplement the information gathered about children's different skills to gauge meaningful gains in their learning;

(Paragraphs: 12, 33, 73)

(3) Strengthen the structures to support the effective leadership and management of the school by:

- appointing a deputy headteacher at the earliest opportunity (or a group of skilled teachers in the intervening period) to support the new headteacher in carrying out school improvement;
- review the present responsibilities held by the headteacher and staff and plan how these can be reallocated equitably and sensibly with particular regard to the co-ordination of assessment and special educational needs;
- reduce the current budgetary deficit, using realistic staffing costs and pupil projections that allow for the potential expansion in numbers, that will not adversely affect standards;
- adopt an up-to-date school improvement plan to replace the current SDP that emphasises the enhancement of pupil's attainment and the management of change; a strong focus should be placed on teaching and learning in the classroom using more explicit statements about key priorities and evaluating success;
- establishing a regular cycle of implementing, reviewing and modifying school curriculum policies so that they are up-to-date and effective in raising standards;

(Paragraphs: 38 - 42, 46 - 47)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	6	10	16	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	na	182
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	na	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	na	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	na	46

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	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	[1998]	[14]	[26]	[40]
	1999	16	19	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	[7] 9	[10] 10	[13] 13
	Girls	[22] 16	[19] 16	[22] 18
	Total	[29] 25	[29] 26	[35] 31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	[73] 71	[73] 74	[88] 89
	National	[77] 82	[81] 83	[84] 87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	[9] 10	[14] 13	[13] 14
	Girls	[22] 16	[25] 18	[23] 18
	Total	[31] 26	[39] 31	[36] 32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	[78] 74	[98] 89	[90] 91
	National	[81] 82	[85] 86	[86] 87

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	182
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21:1
Average class size	26

Education support staff: Y R - Y4

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Financial information

Financial year	99-00
	£
Total income	313, 613
Total expenditure	328, 012
Expenditure per pupil	1822
Balance brought forward from previous year	10, 790
Balance carried forward to next year	- 3, 609

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	182
Number of questionnaires returned	80

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	30	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	43	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	50	10	4	0
The teaching is good.	63	36	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	53	9	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	21	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	51	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	35	6	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	56	41	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	49	0	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	41	26	6	14

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49. The children aged under five are accommodated in two classes in the reception unit. One of the classes also has Year 1 pupils. All the children are admitted to these classes in September on a part-time basis and become full time as the year progresses depending on their age. Overall provision for the children aged under five is good. Children enter the school with a broadly average range of attainment. Half of the teaching in the reception classes is good and this promotes effective learning by all the children, including those with special educational needs. The samples of previous work, work on display and that seen during the inspection show the children to be on course to attain the expected levels in all areas of learning at the age of five and to exceed the expected level in personal and social development.
50. The children's personal and social development is above expected levels. They dress themselves quickly and efficiently after a PE lesson, take turns when playing a game, are polite to adults and are enthusiastic to learn. They play well together in the playground and accept responsibility for tidying up and putting various resources away correctly. The children sit and listen very well during literacy sessions and join in enthusiastically by answering questions about their work. Behaviour is very good and they move around the school in a quiet, orderly way.
51. In language and literacy, the children's attainment meets expectations. They place a set of pictures in the correct order to tell a story. They know that print conveys meaning and is read from left to right. They handle books correctly. They recognise their own name, many initial sounds, read an increasing number of words by sight and understand simple texts. The more able children are already reading their reading books fluently and accurately. Their writing skills develop well as they start to learn to write. Most children can write their own name unaided. They learn to form letters correctly and many can copy a simple sentence. They are always very keen to answer questions, talk to adults about what they are doing and have an expanding range of vocabulary. They use role-play effectively, for example in the garden centre.
52. Most children meet the expectations for their age in mathematics. The children develop their counting skills, number recognition and mathematical language appropriately. The children can count forwards and backwards between 0 and 20 and recognise numbers up to 10. The children can name shapes such as a square, triangle and circle correctly. They can count accurately the number of edges on a triangle, square and rectangle and know that a circle has no corners. The children are aware of bigger numbers and know the meaning of "more than" and "less than". A significant number of the children can add and subtract numbers up to 10 and are ready to start the National Curriculum.
53. The children develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the world around them and standards meet expectations. They have explored how materials such as plastic, wood and metal are used in everyday objects and they are seeing how tadpoles grow and develop into frogs. The children have looked at daffodils and made and painted paper flowers for a display. They operate cassette recorders

confidently when listening to stories and rhymes during the literacy hour and manipulate the buttons on the mouse when moving items around a computer screen and when selecting pages in a story. They use scissors, glue, paint, card and paper with increasing control to make, for example, models of different types of transport and a large collage of Goldilocks and the three bears.

54. By the age of five, the children's physical development meets expectations. They are developing the use of space during warm up times and the skills of hand-eye co-ordination, for example, when throwing and catching large balls in a physical education lesson in the hall. The children also have the opportunity to develop the use of movement during dance sessions and have access to outdoor climbing equipment in the adventure playground. They use tools, such as scissors, with reasonable control.
55. The children's creative development is also appropriate and meets expectations for their age. They work imaginatively in painting, drawing, modelling with dough and in using a variety of materials to make collage pictures. They respond positively to opportunities to sing and move. A good quality role play area set up as a garden centre, allows the children to develop their imaginations, creative ideas and expressive language, as well as their social skills.
56. The children respond very well to the teaching. They enjoy the activities, listen carefully to the teachers and to each other and are keen to answer questions and make a contribution. The children are always busy and interested in what they are doing. They behave very well, share the resources and handle them with care. They relate very well with all the adults who come in contact with them.
57. All of the teaching in the reception classes is satisfactory and half is good. There are lively interactions between adults and children, which result in good learning as well as enjoyment, involvement and the promotion of high standards of behaviour and other social skills. The teachers have a good understanding of the needs of the children which leads to a range of well-matched activities. The children work well, often with the learning support assistant and other adults, in purposeful explorative activities, such as with sand, water, in role play and painting. Full account is taken of the expected outcomes for children aged five, of the National Curriculum as the children progress towards it, and of the expectations of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy in the reception year.
58. The school uses initial assessment information on children's attainment to plan and inform the curriculum. Staff have just begun to use this data to set targets for the children's attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. Individual children's record of achievement provides useful examples of what they know and understand and this is annotated to assess their progress. However, these processes are still developing and the outcomes of the initial assessment and the progress that the children make during the reception year need to be closely monitored.
59. The quality and quantity of resources are good in all areas of learning. The teachers and other support staff provide a high quality, stimulating and exciting learning environment. It is safe, secure and challenging for the children, promoting high

standards and good progress. Relationships with parents are satisfactory. Home visits are made before the children start school and informal contact is made with parents at the beginning and end of every session as necessary. The parents are kept regularly informed of their children's progress and any concerns the teachers might have.

ENGLISH

60. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in English broadly meet expectations for the present Year 2 pupils and for those who leave school at the end of Year 4. In relation to standards in the last inspection report, reading results at Level 2 have remained static over the last 4 years and have not kept pace with improvements nationally. Eight per cent fewer Year 2 pupils reached the national standard in 1999 compared to the national average for that year. This trend is counterbalanced by a high proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment; Forty per cent of the 1999 cohort reached Level 3 last year. National tests indicate that standards in writing have dropped since the last inspection. Eighty-six per cent of pupils reached Level 2 or better in 1996, compared to seventy-four per cent in 1999. No pupils reached Level 3 in writing over the past 2 years. Improvements in standards since September are attributable to several factors: the impact of the National Literacy Strategy; the introduction of target setting and a change in policy regarding support for pupils with learning difficulties in Key Stage 1. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress.
61. The school has incorporated the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy well to raise standards for pupils with different attainment. The adoption of the Additional Literacy Strategy has enabled pupils with learning difficulties in Key Stage 2 to improve. The support for pupils with special educational needs is generally of a high quality and is having a very positive effect on improving their basic language skills.
62. At the end of Key Stage 1, speaking and listening skills develop well as pupils are encouraged to participate in class discussions. They offer their ideas in clearly articulated sentences and with confidence. The teachers value what pupils say and this encourages them to participate with confidence. Pupils in Year 1 talk enthusiastically about books and those in Year 2 explain what they are doing in lessons and their reading experiences. In Key Stage 2, pupils explain clearly what they are doing and discuss their work in small groups sensibly. Throughout the school pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other, take turns to talk and give thoughtful answers. Pupils enjoy drama lessons where they have the opportunity to practise their oracy skills and devise ways of expressing themselves in action and mine. During these lessons, insufficient emphasis is placed on pupils evaluating the work of others to enable everyone to learn from each other.
63. In Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress in reading. At the end of the key stage, standards are as expected nationally. The youngest pupils in the reception class respond very well to books and make very good progress in reading. They understand that text tells a story, the sound to symbol relationship of letters and recognise a good range of words by sight. The majority of pupils have made a good start in reading and most of these have reading skills higher than those expected for their age. Reading skills are further developed at Key Stage 1. Pupils read both

fiction and non-fiction books with understanding. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to use an index and how to find information quickly in a reference book. In Year 2 pupils study non-fiction texts in the literacy hour and use their reading skills to express opinions and discuss moral issues identified in the text.

64. Reading skills are further developed at Key Stage 2. Pupils maintain the standards achieved at Key Stage 1. By the time they transfer to the middle school at the end of Year 4, the majority are becoming fluent readers and developing the level of competency expected nationally for their age. They use their skills to access information books and most read for pleasure. All participate in guided reading in the literacy lessons and enjoy reading at home. They write interesting book reviews in their reading diaries that demonstrate an understanding of plot and characters in the story. Pupils who receive additional literacy support are developing satisfactory skills for reading unknown words and in this way are gaining confidence in their reading. This level of special educational need support is effective in accelerating progress for those pupils who are finding it difficult to read to a level expected for their age. Pupils who have even greater difficulties are well supported in reading by the peripatetic language support teacher. These pupils are making steady progress.
65. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are now achieving satisfactory standards in writing. There is an indication that the school is beginning to reverse the pattern of recent years in which national test results showed that standards in writing were well below the national average. Pupils in Key Stage 1 vary widely in ability and this is reflected in their achievement in writing. Most pupils develop a legible cursive style of handwriting through regular handwriting practice and the use of guidelines. Pupils in Year 1 have satisfactory knowledge of vowel sounds and spelling patterns, which they use to help them spell unknown words when writing their own stories. In the literacy lesson in Year 2, the majority of pupils make good use of planning sheets before writing stories. They write sentences with confidence and many are writing to higher standards where the writing is imaginative and lively. Generally, pupils punctuate their work using full stops, capital letters and speech marks showing an understanding of direct speech. Lower attaining pupils progress less well in their writing than their more able peers because of the specific support they receive.
66. At Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate good understanding of punctuation, which they use correctly when writing. Pupils write for a wide range of audiences, often using ICT for the final copy. In literacy lessons, pupils learn to scan texts for information and write interesting reports about the appearances of small creatures and their habitats. Evidence from pupils' previous writing shows that the standards they achieve are as expected nationally. Pupils' work on display demonstrates a broad range of descriptive, poetic and narrative forms of writing. These are mostly short in length, but provide evidence of satisfactory writing skills. However, pupils do not write at length to develop discursive writing skills. Writing is not well developed in cross-curricular work either.
67. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. In Key Stage 1, literacy lessons are well planned, taking account of the abilities of the pupils. There are good introductions that provide opportunities for pupils to discuss what they are to do and enable them to work sensibly and purposefully during the group activities. In all classes, the pupils are introduced to phonics to help them with reading and writing. However, the teaching of phonics lacks sufficient precision and clarity of explanation

to move pupils on briskly in their learning. Group work is well organised and good use is made of support staff who are deployed to work with specific groups of pupils. The literacy strategy is used effectively in Key Stage 2 to keep lessons purposeful and pupils respond by trying hard and often making good progress. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are sound in all classes. This is linked to sound planning based on assessment procedures, which have been recently introduced across the school. Good use is made of the 'First of the Month' books for assessing pupils' writing. Pupils have good attitudes towards their work, but are given insufficient opportunities to reflect on their work, particularly in the plenary sessions, which are too short. In some lessons at both key stages, teachers do not ask questions in a way that encourages extended discussion. This limits the progress made by the less able pupils in each class, as they do not readily offer their own ideas.

68. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. The school library is well-organised, located centrally and accessible to staff and pupils. There is a satisfactory range of reference books in the library to support work across the curriculum, but the school has insufficient modern dictionaries and thesauruses for pupils' use. There is a balance of non-fiction and fiction books available to be used in classes. Insufficient use is made of ICT yet to support and extend pupils' work in English. The co-ordinator monitors pupils' work and observes teaching in the classrooms to enable the school to try to raise standards in English, especially in writing. The head recognises that standards need to be raised further and supports the co-ordinator very well in her role.

MATHEMATICS

69. Mathematics is the strongest of the core subjects in terms of pupils' performance since the last inspection. Present standards in mathematics are average throughout the school and pupils make sound progress overall. End of Key Stage 1 results have been consistently maintained and are presently close to the national average; eighty-nine per cent reached Level 2 in 1999. There was a marked improvement in the number of Year 2 pupils reaching higher standards (Level 3) last year. These results compare favourably to schools with a similar intake of pupils. The trend is one of improvement with staff predicting a rise in the proportion of Year 4 pupils likely to reach Level 4 this year. Individual and cohort targets have yet to be established formally but the numeracy strategy has been adopted effectively and this is having a positive impact upon standards. Through the use of the numeracy framework, the pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum for mathematics. Number skills are given a strong emphasis but investigational activities are comparatively limited and are mostly worksheet rather than practically based.
70. In Year 1, pupils' mathematical skills are in line with expectations. During the mental maths starter session, they were observed using number fans to add single digit numbers up to 20 in their heads. The least able pupils receive practical support from a classroom assistant or parent helper working with concrete materials to help them with addition concepts. This aids their confidence and understanding. Counting objects in a class florist shop was a good example seen. Pupils would benefit from greater use of practical apparatus to consolidate their understanding of number mathematical relationships in older year groups. The most able (higher attaining) children in Year 1 can add on and take away 10 from different starting points up to

100. Lesson observations and an analysis of Year 2 work indicates that pupils in different attainment groups make satisfactory progress. Simpler tasks are often given to pupils who are slower to learn but average and the most able pupils tackle work at a similar level of difficulty. Mathematical tasks given to bright children at the beginning of the year were too low. A wide range of work is covered throughout the year. For example, Year 2 pupils can estimate using handspans, recognise features of solid shapes, and undertake simple division.

71. There was a good match of tasks to different pupils' abilities in the numeracy lesson observed in Year 3. The quality and range of pupils' work confirmed that about one-third are working at Level 3 (above average standard) and the class grouping arrangements reflect this. Most pupils could figure out with confidence different mental strategies for adding three digit numbers together. The spread of attainment of Year 4 pupils is commensurate with their abilities. Recent test evidence confirms that the most able pupils are achieving higher standards. However, this outcome is contrasted by early work undertaken at the beginning of the year, which involved low-level activities. The balance between the use of commercial worksheets and pupils recording their own work needs to be reviewed throughout the school. In some classes there is too heavy a reliance on worksheets. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons; they listen carefully, follow instructions and offer answers to questions.
72. The overall quality of mathematics teaching and learning is sound; observed lessons ranged from very good to less than satisfactory. Most teachers are confident in teaching mathematics and the numeracy strategy introduced this year has reinforced good practice. Mathematics planning is good, although its delivery is variable in its effectiveness. The quality of display in almost all classrooms is very high; each has an attractive and stimulating area dedicated to mathematics. The best lessons are illustrated by clear explanation of tasks and the appropriate use of mathematical terms. Mental arithmetic at the start of lessons is developing pupils' mental ability well. However, in some lessons the pitch and level of questioning is too low and the introductory starter session goes on for too long. In other lessons, the closing plenary session was short and lacked a thorough review of what pupils had learnt. The effectiveness of learning is reduced as a result. When there are high expectations of pupils, they are stimulated into thinking mathematically, giving reasons for their answers. Few examples were noted of pupils being encouraged to use and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects; for example, the tallying of references to story characters in ICT database work.
73. The subject has been soundly led by the co-ordinator for the last eight years. The policy and schemes of work were written some time ago. It would be timely to review these to take account of the Numeracy Strategy termly programme which the school is following. Mathematics assessment is in a transitional phase with former individual pupil portfolios being discarded. A systematic tracking system to monitor each child's progress is being explored, but neither this nor explicit target setting has taken hold fully. However, over the last year staff have become more aware of the need for regular and detailed assessment. Mathematics resources are sufficient, of good quality and are well organised. The co-ordinator and headteacher acknowledge the need to raise standards further by observing and sharing good teaching practice more widely, putting greater emphasis on investigational mathematics and accelerating the development of tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress.

SCIENCE

74. Standards of attainment in science meet expectations. By the end of Key Stage 1 the majority of the pupils meet the national average and a significant proportion reach higher levels of attainment. By the end of Year 4, the majority of the pupils meet the expectation for nine-year-old pupils which is Level 3. The attainment of the majority of the pupils in experimental and investigative science is above average at the end of Year 4. Results in science, from the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 over the last four years have been broadly in line with the national average and in line with other schools with a similar intake. The number of pupils reaching Level 3, which is higher than expected at the end of Key Stage 1, has been erratic over the last four years. In the last inspection, the attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was deemed to be above the national average and at the end of Year 4 was judged to be below average. The overall rise in attainment at the end of Year 4 is largely as a result of the rise of attainment in experimental and investigative science. Since the last inspection, the key issue of ensuring a balance of science takes place in Years 3 and 4 has been satisfactorily addressed.
75. The pupils achieve satisfactorily during their time at the school. In a Year 1 lesson, the pupils carry out a simple investigation to understand how a seed will germinate. This followed from the reading of a story called "Jasper's Beanstalk". The pupils discussed with their teacher where the best place would be to put the seed and whether it should be watered when it had been planted. Year 2 pupils know about the main conditions for the growth of a plant and begin to suggest ideas about how they can test other conditions such as warmth. They name the main parts of a plant and are beginning to suggest ways of ensuring their investigation is a fair test. After a class discussion, the pupils set up investigations linked to different conditions for growth selected by the teacher. They begin to record their investigation before they plant their seeds and make a simple prediction about what might happen.
76. The range of work undertaken over a two-year period covers the full programmes of study in science. In Year 3, the pupils know a wide range of conditions for growth and are developing their knowledge about fair testing. In a previous lesson, they have discussed in groups how they can plan their investigation about plant growth, what equipment they need and made a prediction about the outcome. As a class, they discuss the need for keeping the test fair, what amount of water would be suitable for the size of containers they have, and the need for accurate measurement of the amount of water and of the plant as it grows. They decide in their groups what will be the best method of recording their results. In Year 4 the pupils know that their investigation into plant growth must be fair and, in groups, they plan their investigation, recording what they intend to do and making a confident prediction about the outcome. They measure quantities carefully and accurately and have a lively discussion about whether placing a planted seed in a fridge deprives it of light as well as warmth. In all the lessons observed there was a clear focus on investigative work which has helped raise standards in this particular aspect of science.

77. The overall quality of teaching is good at both stages. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of science. The best teaching is based on thorough planning and careful questioning of the pupils. This has a positive effect on learning as shown with Year 1 pupils when they watched the teacher plant a seed and had to suggest the best way to do this. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were also challenged to provide explanations for their answers by the use of the word “why?” when they offered answers to questions. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 were also challenged to offer simple explanations for their predictions about plant growth. The pupils learn well when teachers, for example, stop the lesson to review the work covered so far, reinforcing learning and reminding the pupils of the objectives for the lesson. This is done particularly well in Year 3, where the class discussions are summarised on sheets of paper stuck on the board and are constantly referred to by the teacher and used by the pupils as they carry out their investigation. When teaching is only satisfactory, questioning is not specific enough or challenging and a significant minority of pupils are not engaged in the discussion. As a result, these pupils lose concentration and their learning is no better than satisfactory. The pupils’ attitudes to learning in science are at least good and they behave very well. Their co-operation in groups is always good and they carry out practical work carefully and safely. The pupils’ good attitudes and responses help them to get the most from lessons and to learn effectively.
78. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is taught as part of a cycle of topics often linked to other areas of the curriculum, especially design and technology. A policy and scheme of work were devised after the last inspection. It is intended to review these during this year but no specific date has been agreed. Subject leadership is one of the responsibilities the headteacher carries. She monitors the teachers’ termly and weekly planning and has monitored the teaching of science in the classes. From this monitoring, individual targets for pupils have been set using National Curriculum levels. This system has only been in place since last September and further time is needed to refine the target setting process and base it firmly on what the pupils know, understand and can do. It can then be evaluated to assess its impact on standards. The quality and range of resources is satisfactory and well organised although much of the teachers’ reference material is old and out of date. The use of information and communication technology in science has yet to be developed. Overall, science has improved since the last inspection and has the capacity for further improvement. This depends upon the good teaching seen during the inspection being used as a model of good practice elsewhere as well as the careful assessment of pupils’ levels of attainment to plan what they should learn next.

ART

79. Standards in art are above expected levels. There has been a slight improvement since the last inspection when art was seen to be in line with expectations with some above average achievement in Key Stage 1. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 use a variety of techniques including paint, marbling and collage. They record well both from experience and from their imagination. Pupils work in 2 and 3 dimensions, using everyday materials to make models to support their topic work. They use painting techniques well, making careful observations when painting a garden scene in the style of Monet. Pupils talk openly about their work using appropriate language and express opinions about it and how it could be improved.

80. Pupils in the reception classes and in Year 1 are making good progress in their art. In addition to the work with paint and 3D modelling, they explore light and shade in their charcoal drawings and use collage well in a classroom display for a fairy tale story. Pupils in Year 1 use the computer well to generate some fine abstracts for a theme on a kite on a windy day and for bonfire night. Art is used well to support other areas of the curriculum, in patterns for mathematics, models for topic work and recording visits, for example to Brownsea Island. Pupils in Year 1 consider the work of other artists, such as Jason Pollock and produce some pictures in the style of Lowry.
81. The progress made in Key Stage 1 is maintained in Key Stage 2 so that, by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of year 4, the standard of their work is above expectations. They continue to develop painting techniques and are introduced to water colours; some of this work is particularly good. The pupils are now introduced to a wider range of techniques and materials including printing and pastel, where some fine work exploring reflections was seen. The opportunities to work with visiting artists in water-colour and in fabric have enabled pupils to explore other aspects of the subject. The work of other artists is studied in particular that of Mondrian and William Morris. Pupils use these opportunities well and have produced some fine abstracts in the style of Mondrian and some patterns inspired by the work of Morris.
82. No lessons were observed during the inspection so no comment can be made about the standard of teaching. However, from the scrutiny of the work, the care with which it is displayed and from conversations with pupils it is clear that they enjoy their art and take a pride in their efforts. The pupils observed are able to talk freely about their art, commenting on work and helping each other; for example when discussing how to darken a particular colour when it was needed. They are also able to work for an extended period of time; one group of Key Stage 1 pupils for over 45 minutes until the painting was complete. Additional adults provide good support and help with small groups of pupils. It is clear that pupils of all ages enjoy their work and treat the resources provided with care.
83. Art in the school is co-ordinated well by an experienced and well-qualified member of staff who has done much to raise the standards in the subject. Good use is made of visiting artists and of a week when art was a focus for the whole school. A school portfolio contains examples of pupils' work for monitoring purposes and their work is displayed well throughout the school. There are sufficient resources needed for the subject, including 3D work and clay, although there are no opportunities for firing clay work. The school makes good use of work by a variety of artists and how art contributes to other religions, for example in the decoration of the cover of the Qur'an. There is now a need to extend this provision to include examples from other world cultures for example Aboriginal and Asian art. The emphasis on the subject, the scheme of work and the efforts of the co-ordinator have done much to raise the standards of art within the school. The policy is clear and created in response to the last inspection, the scheme of work now needs to be reviewed in the light of the new curriculum and the revised statements in the programmes of study. Overall art makes a good contribution to the spiritual and cultural aspects of personal development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

84. No lessons of design and technology were planned for the inspection. However, evidence from the scrutiny of work both on display and provided by the co-ordinator, from photographs and from discussion with the pupils and the teachers, indicates that the pupils reach appropriate standards and make satisfactory progress throughout the school. This has been maintained since the last inspection. At both key stages, the pupils are completing work that is expected for their age. The teachers provide a balanced range of activities through a two-year cycle of topics planned by the co-ordinator and often linked to other areas of the curriculum. This is having a satisfactory effect on the pupils' progress.
85. At Key Stage 1, the pupils design and make vehicles and space ship models from construction kits and other materials to carry their toys to the moon. They cut, shape and join the materials for these models in various ways. As part of their work about local services, the pupils make "lollipop" warning signs for the road crossing patrol. In religious education, the pupils have made a model of Noah's Ark from a mixture of lego and card. In their topic on transport, the pupils made vehicles using various ways of joining wheels and axles to the body of the vehicle. They used clay to make satisfactory model figures from the story of the Iron Man. The pupils also have the opportunity to work on food technology with a parent helper. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils made papier-mache models of air balloons after first designing them on paper. The pupils had to modify the designs on their finished models because the balloons were in three dimensions and not flat as were their paper designs. They used a variety of appropriate materials and methods of cutting and joining to build different types of bridges. They used levers and flaps when making Christmas cards and large Father Christmas heads. The pupils are learning to use tools with increasing accuracy and care and learning various methods of joining different materials. As they get older the pupils select from a variety of tools and materials provided as well as the best method to cut, shape and join these materials. They are learning to use a design brief. However, this does not include a section on evaluating what they are designing and making.
86. The teachers use the planning provided by the co-ordinator to provide a balanced range of work that effectively motivates the pupils. They expect the pupils to make a finished product of reasonable quality. The teachers use resources well to develop the pupils' skills. Additional adults are appropriately deployed to ensure the pupils have due regard for health and safety issues and have access to help when it is required. There is no method of assessing pupils' progress in the subject.
87. The design and technology curriculum meets the current recommendations for the foundation subjects in the National Curriculum. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The subject policy is clear and the planning in schemes of work contains suitable guidance on what to teach and the resources to use for each year group. The quantity, quality and range of resources available for design and technology are satisfactory and are reviewed by the co-ordinator. There is a breadth and balance of activities planned for the pupils that are contained in the guidance provided for the teachers.

HUMANITIES (history and geography)

88. Although neither subject was being taught at the time of the inspection, analysis of pupils' work and discussions with pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 indicate that by the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Year 4 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations in both subjects. Pupils' current achievements match those at the time of the previous inspection.
89. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a sound grasp of chronology, recognise the difference between the past and the present and use time lines. They talk in depth about Egyptian and Victorian cultures recognising the differences in geographical environment and the social organisation of each. They recognise the similarities between their own age and that of the Victorians and understand how the industrial inventions of the Victorians have been further developed in their own technological culture, giving reasons why some features change.
90. Pupils have undertaken weather surveys which they record appropriately using charts and graphs. They have a sound understanding of seasonal changes and the broad geographical climatic zones, but have little knowledge of the geographical features of their locality. From their study of the Egyptians, they are able to describe a hot desert and ways of travelling in sandy areas. Pupils can name and locate the countries of the United Kingdom on a map of Europe and name their capital cities. However, the standard of written work and mapping is generally unsatisfactory in geography. By the time they leave school at nine, pupils have acquired appropriate information and knowledge about deserts and rainforests, use atlases to locate countries and areas and make their own maps and locate places using grid references. Their knowledge of the local area is better and they are able to talk about changes in the area over time. All can communicate their ideas about history well as their knowledge has been built securely on previous learning. They relate events in the past to their own lives and have good understanding of chronology, social organisation and change.
91. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress in both subjects are unsatisfactory. Whilst the school, in general, has suitable resources for teaching geography, there is a lack of globes and up-to-date atlases for pupils to use. Adequate resources have been made available to support pupils' learning in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

92. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4. The same judgement was made at the last inspection. However, the curriculum organisation that supports the subject has strengthened over the past four years. A part-time teacher has taken over the co-ordination of ICT and with effect from this term, teaches the subject discretely in the new PC computer suite. Pupils are now making good progress in their understanding of ICT. This follows an erratic pattern of progress using older machines in the classroom. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) new scheme of work is being phased in but it is likely to take some time and additional whole-staff training before these revised expectations can be met fully.

93. Pupils' ICT communication and control skills develop appropriately. The youngest children in reception control a mouse and select clothes on screen to dress a teddybear. Pupils in Year 1 use a concept keyboard to select key words to create simple sentences. Word processor programs such as Pendown are used appropriately in Year 2. Pupils began to type independently and change the font size and colour. By the end of Year 4, Level 3 criteria are met which is the expected standard for this age group. For example, some recent religious education work on the 'Pillars of Islam' indicated pupils' skills of centering, underlining and inserting graphics. The handling information component of the programme of study also develops satisfactorily. For example, in Key Stage 1, pupils sort and classify their pets according to popularity. In Key Stage 2, they create databases and follow straight forward lines of enquiry. When asked, pupils in Year 2 could describe simply how to control a programmable robot. Control and modelling is developed soundly in Key Stage 2 where, for example, 'LOGO' is used to create repeating patterns. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 were also observed searching for information using CD Rom encyclopaedias and dictionaries with reasonable confidence and competence.
94. All lessons observed were led by the co-ordinator in the ICT suite. The present teaching and learning opportunities are good. The co-ordinator has specialist subject knowledge, plans carefully and uses well-prepared resources. Pupils are very eager to use the new computers; they listen carefully and work co-operatively in pairs on the given tasks. Staff expertise as a whole ranges from expert to unsure. A training programme has been arranged from next autumn so that all teachers can be brought up-to-speed in order to meet the revised expectations of the new QCA scheme of work.
95. A policy and outline scheme of work was written by the co-ordinator in 1997. It has served its purpose and has been superseded by a rapid change of events. As it stands, it would not provide insufficient guidance to a new teacher joining the school and needs to be updated to take account of the latest QCA recommendations. The co-ordinator keeps simple assessment records showing approximate levels of pupils' attainment but there is no reference to assessment and recording in the ICT policy for others to follow. Assessment procedures are less than satisfactory overall. The quality of the new computers and the accommodation they are housed in are very good. An ICT development plan has been drawn up which maps out a sound way forward for the development of the subject. Although all classroom computers were switched on during the inspection, they were only seen in use in the reception class. A skilled parent helps small groups of children use the new PC suite on some of the days when the co-ordinator is not teaching. However, to maximise the potential of ICT to promote pupils' learning, computer use should be increased particularly during literacy and numeracy lessons.

MUSIC

96. Musical standards vary throughout the school. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in both the performing and composing and listening and appraising element of the programme of study meet national expectations. This judgement is similar to that made at the last inspection. However, the attainment of pupils in Year 1 and 4, when composing musical patterns and undertaking beat and rhythm work, is weak. This is mainly due to some staff not being sure of appropriate standards that should be expected. Pupils sing tunefully and from memory during assembly and music lessons in all year groups.
97. The quality of learning in lessons is dependent upon the confidence and expertise of individual teachers. In a recorder lesson led by the music co-ordinator, the expectation of what Year 2 pupils were expected to learn was challenging. The session was brisk and lively and pupils made good progress building upon their understanding of notes and simple tunes. They could, for example, recognise semibreve and crotchet time values and play recognisable tunes in unison. By contrast, pupils' percussion patterns created in Year 1 were loud, unco-ordinated and devoid of simple structure despite the best efforts of the teacher to achieve a pleasant effect. Pupils in Year 4 could clap out simple rhythms to their own names but were not asked to tackle the recommended work in the school's scheme of work, for example understanding duple time and listening to classical music extracts with different time values.
98. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to less than satisfactory. Although it is perhaps difficult to provide different tasks for pupils who have a wide range of musical ability, expectations of what pupils are expected to know are unclear and there is a general absence of probing questions to ascertain what the most capable pupils could do. However, all the staff have secure general teaching skills. For example, they control and manage the pupils well and lesson planning is sufficiently considered. Despite the low expectations in some lessons and absence of highlighting the work of more creative pupils, the children are well behaved and listen attentively.
99. The new co-ordinator is fortunate to have inherited one of the best policies in the school which was developed this academic year by the Ferndown Pyramid (the local schools' cluster group). The former music co-ordinator also devised a very helpful scheme of work, which is designed for the non-specialist teacher. There is clear central direction for the subject and the co-ordinator leads by example and with enthusiasm. For example, recorder clubs are led for Year 2, 3 and 4 as well as staff in-set on appropriate resources to be used. Musical resources are satisfactory and of good quality and the school has a studio in which to practice. Overall, the subject has good leadership and a secure framework to support it. However, non-specialist teachers need to become more familiar with the recommendations of the scheme of work for each year group and to raise their expectations as to what pupils might achieve.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

100. Two lessons of physical education, both at Key Stage 1, were observed during the inspection. However, evidence from the policy, the scheme of work and from the teachers' planning indicates that, at Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4, the pupils are undertaking physical activities that are expected for their age. Standards meet national expectations. The teachers provide a balanced range of activities by following the scheme of work that was devised in 1995.
101. At Key Stage 1, the pupils practice and develop their skills of moving and expressing their ideas through linking movements related to a story they have heard. They learn to hold their movements to demonstrate quality and to observe the performance of others to improve their own. The pupils practise their throwing and catching skills using a variety of balls, bean bags and quoits. They devise small games involving bouncing balls, clapping and catching and are encouraged to better their own previous best performance. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the attainment of the pupils in Years 3 and 4.
102. All aspects of the physical education curriculum are planned by the teachers; gymnastics, dance, games, swimming, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities. Subject leadership is barely adequate, as the supply teacher covering the maternity leave of the co-ordinator has been expected to lead the subject. There is no system in place to assess the pupils' progress, although some aspects of physical education have expectations included in the scheme of work. Resources for physical education are satisfactory. The pupils' skills and performance are enhanced by some after-school clubs and sporting activities such as football that are led by supportive parents.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

103. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils make satisfactory progress and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 4, their attainment is also in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards identified in the last inspection have been maintained but overall provision has been improved and now fully meets statutory requirements. Pupils learn about the world's major religions in addition to Christianity. They gain knowledge and understanding through celebrating festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest and linking them to major festivals in other religions, for example Passover. There are close links between religious education and personal and social education where the emphasis is placed on personal development.
104. All pupils make satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 1, pupils gain a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity and Judaism, celebrate major festivals and explore their origins. They learn about special meals, for example Christmas dinner and Shabbat, and special events such as the harvest and Sukkot festivals. Through listening to stories from the Bible and the life of Jesus, parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, pupils gain a sound knowledge of Christianity. Pupils learn about the importance of the Bible in the life of Christians and the Torah in the life of Jews. At

Key Stage 2, pupils continue their studies of Christianity and now include Islam, learning about the five Pillars of Islam and the importance of the Qur'an. They celebrate major festivals of Christmas and Easter and learn about the importance of Pentecost. Pupils learn about places of worship such as mosques and churches and how people of different religions pray and carry out their daily lives. The topic of the Victorians enables pupils to consider the lives of people who have helped others and lived out their Christian beliefs. They learn about reformers like Elizabeth Fry and the work of Florence Nightingale in the Crimea and how these people have committed their lives to helping others. Older pupils are also given opportunities to consider 'big' questions such as the creation, and how different elements of society and different religions attempt to explain them. Pupils gain a sound understanding of different rituals, including weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, and begin to explore the feelings of those involved in such occasions.

105. Pupils show an interest in their work and their response is good. They listen carefully to their teacher, contribute their own ideas and listen to those of others. They settle quickly to their tasks and produce some very good work, especially in books for Christmas and Easter and when using the Internet to gather information about Islam.
106. Two lessons were observed during the inspection and the quality of teaching is satisfactory in one and good in the other. Lessons are well planned and teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. The religious content is clearly identified and related to previous work. Teachers use questions effectively and monitor pupils well in order to maintain the brisk pace of the lesson. There is a good rapport between the teachers and their pupils where opinions are valued and all contributions treated sensitively. Discussion is used constructively, allowing pupils to express their opinions and listen to others. This is less effective when insufficient time is allocated to this aspect of their work.
107. The curriculum follows the locally agreed syllabus and is well planned, including explicit references to opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The work is based around particular themes on a two-year cycle and provides a sound structure on which the school can base its own programme. Religious education provides a good contribution overall to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are able to explore feelings and relationships, learn about the values and beliefs of others and also appreciate the relationships between cultural differences and religious beliefs. Time allocation for the subject is satisfactory.
108. The subject co-ordinator is well qualified and provides good leadership and support. Pupils' work is monitored well and examples kept in a school portfolio. Good use is made of local clergy and other visitors for morning acts of worship. There is a good range of resources to support the subject and the school is well placed to incorporate the new agreed syllabus into its current practice.