

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **GRASS ROYAL JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Yeovil

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123729

Headteacher: Richard Ledger

Reporting inspector: Geoff Burgess  
OIN: 23708

Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2002

Inspection number: 198735

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Grass Royal Yeovil Somerset
Postcode:	BA21 4JW
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Alan Perkins
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

## Information about the inspection team

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Grass Royal Junior School is housed in a converted secondary school building not far from the centre of Yeovil. It serves a wide spectrum of families of mainly British heritage with most coming from homes in the streets surrounding the school. The number of pupils on role has fallen from over 350 to around 300 and of these about a fifth are entitled to free school meals. More pupils leave and join the school mid-year than is usual. Nearly a quarter of its pupils are on the special needs register of whom four, an average number, have statements of special need. Most pupils join the school from two nearby infant schools and attainment on entry as indicated by results in national tests for seven-year-olds is well below that found in most schools.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a much improved, good school, very well led and managed, where good teaching is helping pupils to achieve well and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Given the very low attainment of its pupils when they join the school and its average funding, it provides good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- Consistently good teaching with much of it even better, and good work by learning support staff, ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve well throughout the school
- Standards in information and communications technology are better than in most schools
- It makes good provision for pupils who need help with their learning or support with behaviour
- Pupils' personal, moral and social development have a high priority. They enjoy school, behave well, understand their responsibilities in the school community and get on well together
- It does all it can to ensure that boys and girls are safe and happy and able to do their best
- The farsighted determination of the head, well supported by the efforts of staff and governors has ensured that the Grass Royal community now has a school to be proud of.

#### What could be improved

- National test results do not yet reflect the many improvements to provision the school has made
- Detailed shared planning means that pupils in each class in a year group cover the same ground but the way this is applied, expectations and outcomes are sometimes very different
- Physical education is not providing the outlet for pupils physical and emotional energy it could

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

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

Grass Royal School was at a particularly low point with a poor reputation at the time of its last inspection in July 1997. Since then, the new head has overseen a dramatic improvement in almost every aspect of provision from the quality of teaching to the quality of the environment. Apart from music, which is in hand, every issue identified then has been thoroughly sorted out. Teaching is now good; subject managers are playing a fuller role in improving their areas; assessment and special needs are well managed; very good use has been made of national schemes in greatly improved curricular planning. Although outcomes in the form of national test results have not yet caught up with improvements in provision, pupils are achieving well throughout the school in most subjects. A massive improvement has been made in provision for information technology and standards achieved. Overall improvement is good.

### STANDARDS

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

	compared with	Key
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Performance in:	all schools			similar schools		
	1999	2000	2001	2001		
English	D	E	E	E	well above average	A
mathematics	D	E	E	D	above average	B
science	E	E	E	E	average	C
					below average	D
					well below average	E

Although mainly well below what is expected in all three subjects in the past few years, standards had been improving at the same rate as most schools until last year which saw a fall in each subject. However, school assessments using optional national tests show that this year group made good progress over time from a low base. With pupils achieving well in each year group, this also applies to the current years five and six where standards are better but still well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. In year three, well below average standards indicated by Key Stage 1 test results taken in feeder infant schools in reading, writing and mathematics have shown a good improvement over the year. Standards in year four are approaching the literacy and numeracy levels achieved in most schools. Information technology is a strength of the school with pupils in years three to six working at the challenging levels expected in the national scheme. Pupils' skill levels, knowledge and understanding in most other subjects broadly match what most pupils achieve but a lack of basic literacy skills limits the amount and presentation of pupils' recorded work in some. Boys and girls who find learning difficult are making good progress towards their individual targets.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Boys and girls are very proud of their school and especially the many recent improvements to the facilities. Most listen attentively, respond positively to their work, join in enthusiastically with what is offered and are willing to contribute their own ideas and suggestions. They have good attitudes to school and much improved attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' good behaviour around the site helps to make school a positive experience for everyone. Play and lunchtimes are happy sociable occasions with little need for adults to intervene. Behaviour in class is often very good and usually good but occasionally, when their powers of concentration or self-control are stretched, inappropriate behaviour by a few pupils wastes time for the rest. Behaviour overall is good.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships throughout the school are a key factor in its ordered, calm feel. Most pupils act in mature and sensible ways and, as they get older, are very happy to take on any responsibilities when they are offered. They respect their environment, work well together and are taking increasing responsibility for their own work and behaviour.
Attendance	Despite the school's best efforts, poor attendance by a small number of pupils means overall levels are below average.

A great deal of time and effort has gone into improving all these aspects to good effect. Thanks to this and to substantial improvements to the accommodation, the school is now a much more pleasant and productive place for adults and children to work in.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The majority of teaching is good with a substantial percentage even better and a small number of unsatisfactory lessons. More than half the teaching staff achieved at least one very good lesson in one of eight different subjects with one excellent music lesson. Most pupils make a good contribution to their own learning but teachers often have to work hard to ensure that enough work

is completed in the time available. Over four-fifths of lessons in English and mathematics are good and better, much helped by the school's arrangement for teaching pupils in literacy and numeracy groups of similar attainment. While very good pupil management is a feature of most lessons, problems with class control accounts for most of the less effective teaching. Almost all lessons are well planned and prepared. Learning support assistants make a good and sometimes very good contribution especially in the areas of special needs and information technology.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils are given a sound range of learning experiences covering all the required elements with literacy and numeracy appropriately emphasised, information technology a strength but with provision for physical education relatively low-key. Good shared planning procedures ensure progression and coverage and that pupils in parallel classes have a similar diet. Very good attention is given to promoting their understanding of themselves & matters of health and safety. Pupils have some opportunities to enhance their learning in addition to normal lessons but this is not a strong area partly because of cost.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good procedures for identifying, monitoring and supporting special needs pupils have been established and all the necessary paperwork is managed effectively. Experienced, well-trained classroom assistants are closely involved with teachers in planning and providing necessary support as a part of normal classroom work or in focussed extra provision. Pupils with very special needs are well catered for and included in all the school has to offer. Provision for pupils who find learning or conforming difficult has improved greatly and is now good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Staff make good provision for promoting pupils' personal development with sound arrangements for pupils to study and appreciate the arts, their own cultural heritage and to celebrate the cultural diversity of others. Provision for the development of pupils' social skills and attitudes and moral awareness are good with satisfactory attention given to helping pupils to reflect on the more spiritual aspects of their growth.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers and other staff know the children well and take good care to ensure their well-being. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are safe, happy and not at any risk and formal procedures for these aspects are satisfactory. Attendance and behaviour are monitored carefully and high standards are actively promoted. Personal development is well monitored. Good assessment procedures are in place for the core subjects with foundation subjects coming on stream in a rolling programme. However, better use could be made of the information gathered to set targets and modify planning.

Parents' responses to school are mixed. While the parents association does a great deal of good work in organising events and providing funds, the response of parents to homework, parents evenings and special needs reviews is sometimes disappointing. Information provided is generally sound but many parents find reports confusing and little information about what their children will be studying next is sent home.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher & other	The contribution that the head has made to the enormous recent improvements in the school is outstanding. He has shown admirable determination in managing the very full agenda he inherited and great



key staff	resilience in coping with various difficulties along the way. Other leaders and managers have become much more effective and influential in their areas of responsibility. Staff receive very good support from the administrative staff in the day-to-day running of the school which is very well led and managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive, keen for the school to succeed and proud of its achievements. They have developed good arrangements for fulfilling their responsibilities, know the school well and are aware of its strengths and concerns. The head has ensured that they are much more involved in identifying and prioritising what needs to be done to improve and as a group and individually they are providing the school with necessary practical and moral support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Procedures for monitoring and evaluating planning and standards have improved over the years and are now good. The whole school community is involved in the process and this leads to a good deal of informed debate. Information from national assessment is regularly used to identify trends and priorities for inclusion in school planning. Staff development has assumed a much higher profile with the school integrating performance management into its monitoring and planning processes. However, subject managers have few opportunities to monitor what is happening in lessons in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school has little room for manoeuvre with its budget but has been very effective in securing extra funding. Substantial very effective and carefully managed improvements have been made to the buildings making good use of this and the remarkable carpentry talents of the caretaker. These have made very much better use of the available space and improved working conditions and staff and pupil morale. Where the school has choice, funds are spent on what staff and governors agree is important. Good use is made of all teaching and non-teaching staff and a generally good supply of teaching resources are effectively stored and well used.

The head has, with optimism, a clear vision for the future and the will-power to see it through, transformed a school which had gained a very poor reputation in the area. Pupils, governors and staff are all enjoying the very much improved learning and working environment this has produced.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children enjoy going to school</li> <li>• teaching is good and their children are making good progress</li> <li>• the school is helping pupils to grow up sensibly and behaviour is good</li> <li>• pupils work hard and do their best</li> <li>• the staff are very approachable and the school works closely with parents</li> <li>• the school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the range of extra activities the school provides</li> <li>• information about how well their children are doing</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. Fewer extra activities are provided than seen in schools of a similar size and some information in school reports is difficult to interpret.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the year following the last inspection, as a result of a 'management vacuum', multiple staff changes including the head and deputy, and a high percentage of unsatisfactory teaching, national test results in English and mathematics fell to their lowest level for Grass Royal School. From that level, they improved at the same rate as most schools over the next two years but fell away, especially in English, in 2001. The improvement in science results from 1997 to 2000 matched most schools but these also fell away in 2001. However, the school's detailed records of optional national tests and other assessment information shows that pupils in this year group who did not arrive late from other schools made satisfactory progress in their time in the school.

2. With pupils joining from two feeder schools and a fair amount of coming and going, records of national test results in year two are incomplete for pupils currently in years four, five and six. What evidence there is suggests that years five and six were well below average when they entered the school especially in mathematics where they could well have been in the bottom five per cent. Year four pupils were better especially in their reading and writing. Complete records for year three show that they were indeed, well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Again the school's records show that pupils in each year group have made sound progress in their reading and writing skills and good progress in mathematics while they have been in Grass Royal School. Literacy and numeracy are taught in groups of similar prior attainment which helps to ensure that lower and higher attainers achieve as well as the majority. Progress in science is good with pupils achieving below average standards in year six. No significant differences were observed between the achievements of boys and girls.

3. However, this means that overall standards in English and mathematics in years three, five and six remain well below average while attainment in year four is below average. Listening skills are good throughout the school as demonstrated in whole school assemblies and most pupils are very willing to contribute to discussions but a significant proportion of pupils have difficulty expressing or explaining themselves orally or in writing. Immature handwriting and untidy presentation contribute to low standards in written work. This also has an impact on subjects such as geography, history and religious education where written work in pupils' books is limited and often of poor quality. However, these books do show that pupils cover the full range of work planned for them and in discussions, they remember information they have learned during the year. Pupil's knowledge and understanding in geography and religious education are just about as expected with attainment in history lower.

4. The numbers of pupils with special needs, mainly in reading and writing, joining the school as seven-year-olds or later in their school careers, is higher than in most schools. Good provision ensures that they make good progress towards the clear targets set out on their individual plans. These are reviewed regularly and several pupils move off the register in year three but most of the rest need continued help and support throughout their time in school.

5. A considerable investment in equipment, training and support has seen very good progress in information technology so that pupils in the younger classes are exceeding national expectations and those in year six are meeting them. A long standing lack of expertise and subject management in music has meant that pupils understanding and performance levels are well below those in other schools but the appointment of a specialist teacher is seeing good progress being made to put this right. Performance levels in art, design technology and physical education are broadly appropriate for the ages of the pupils concerned with strengths and weaknesses where teachers are more or less confident in teaching the particular subjects. The exception is in swimming where no provision is made so the school has no means of knowing how many pupils can swim 25 metres in year six.

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

6. Pupils generally have good attitudes towards their school. They enter school in an orderly fashion and settle down quickly to whatever activities are usual for the start of the day without needing any direction to do so. Most are enthusiastic about learning, expect to find their lessons interesting and are always willing to contribute their own ideas and suggestions. They are very proud of their school, particularly of the various improvements that have been made to the accommodation, such as the changes to the playground, the library and the new computer suites. The school has noticed a marked drop in vandalism by pupils from the time of the last inspection. Boys and girls respond well to good teaching, becoming absorbed in the tasks they are given as in a design and technology lesson for year six pupils. Following experience of the difficulties they found when joining particular materials together, they changed the designs they had made for slippers without prompting. Pupils were keen to talk about their work and are proud of their achievements. Many pupils find it hard to concentrate on a single task for more than about 20 minutes but they will then throw themselves enthusiastically into something new.

7. Behaviour is good overall. Attitudes and behaviour were judged good in the majority of lessons, with some judged very good and a few excellent. Pupils behave exceptionally well in assemblies: even when the whole school is present no supervision is necessary to ensure quiet and attentive behaviour. They listen intently and join in enthusiastically with singing or any other activities. Behaviour at lunchtimes is generally good. Noise levels are noticeably low, most pupils follow the routines sensibly and they obey the instructions given them by the lunchtime supervisors. At playtime pupils mixed well together. Some were sitting in the alcoves on the new decking area, reading or playing with hand-held computer games. Older pupils were seen playing with younger ones, and girls as well as boys are encouraged to join in football games. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors, happy to talk about their work and their school and move sensibly around the premises. Although behaviour in the great majority of lessons is good, in some the behaviour of a minority wasted time and made learning harder for the rest of the class. Occasionally individual pupils try to challenge adult authority, calling out irrelevant comments, sometimes getting up and moving around the classroom. However, it is noticeable that even they have a good understanding of the school's behaviour management system, and respond to its low-key sanction system very well.

8. Personal development is good overall. Pupils show a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others, and respect other people's feelings, values and beliefs. Boys and girls always take part enthusiastically in activities to support the school's chosen charities. Some older pupils have organised activities to support Blue Peter. Pupils carry out the responsibilities they are given around the school satisfactorily, although these are limited below year six. The school councillors are very proud of having been elected to their position, although at present the council is simply a means of conveying suggestions. It has not yet begun to see itself as a body that could initiate action, perhaps by organising fundraising events, or presenting assemblies. Relationships are good and sometimes very good between children and adults. Pupils know that they will be treated with courtesy and that their opinions are valued, which encourages them to be more confident about expressing themselves in class discussions. In a number of class registrations, pupils choose to reply to by hoping their teacher will have a happy morning or afternoon. Relations between children are nearly always good as well: they work together well, both in and out of the classroom. Year three pupils were kind and welcoming towards the year two pupils who came in for an induction session during the inspection. Younger and older pupils are paired together for weekly reading sessions.

9. Attendance is below the national average (92.6% as against 93.9%). However, the deputy head has analysed the figures and demonstrated that ten pupils' individual attendance rates had a disproportionate effect. If these are removed from the calculations the attendance rate of the rest of the school is above average at 94.5%. During the inspection a steady trickle of pupils arrived late every day, causing some disruption to assembly and first lessons.

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

10. This was a key issue at the time of the last inspection in 1997. The report stated that there was 'a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching across the school' which in fact amounted to nearly a quarter of all lessons. Low expectations, a lack of class control and insecure subject knowledge were all mentioned as causes. However, hardly any of the present staff were teaching at the school then.

11. Teaching is now consistently good throughout the school with at least two-thirds of lessons in each year group and four fifths of teaching in English, mathematics and science good and better. A quarter of all lessons is at least very good with more than half the staff teaching at least one very good lesson. This covers all subjects except art and history, where only one lesson of each was observed, and physical education. Teaching is not good enough in a small number of lessons mainly where inexperienced teachers have problems with class management and control.

12. Several whole school developments, some stemming from the last report, have contributed to this much more consistent and higher quality picture. These include:

- A series of good appointments to the teaching staff
- Performance management procedures that have added structure and focus to existing monitoring and professional development procedures.
- The impact of the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies on teaching styles through the focus on learning objectives, balance of whole class and group teaching, emphasis on strategies and use of the final summing up session
- The adoption of national and local schemes of work in other subjects which has provided a detailed agreed planning structure to ensure consistency and progression
- The good use made of subject strengths in planning and of joint year group planning meetings to ensure that learning objectives and activities in parallel classes are the same
- An increase in the number of learning support assistants (LSA) and the enhancement of their role especially in supporting pupils with extra needs and in 'booster' sessions plus:
- the expansion of the use of ability groupings (sets) in the core subjects with extra staffing to reduce group sizes which has helped teachers to focus more closely on the needs of groups of pupils and provide more support in the classroom
- The introduction of an information technology (IT) specialist to work alongside class teachers in the upgraded computer suites which has had a profound effect on the confidence and competence of both teachers and pupils in the use of IT
- By enclosing the corridors around the courtyard, it is much easier to move around the building. Classrooms are now not so isolated in inclement weather and each of the eight classrooms has a quiet working area just outside the door.
- Consistently applied whole school and class policies and procedures for improving pupils' behaviour, self-image and confidence which have been very successful in creating a much more ordered and optimistic ethos where the great majority of pupils want to learn, do their best and please their teachers and helpers.

13. Many very good examples of the impact of many of these factors were observed during the inspection week. A prime example of a very good appointment was the excellent music lesson taught by the part-time music specialist who has recently returned to the staff. In a subject which has been a problem since she left, pupils were totally engaged and focused on matching pulses and tempos leading to a two part ostinato and the teacher's confidence and enthusiasm rubbed off on all of them. With the class teacher observing and making notes for when she teaches the unit next term and the music teacher building up the planning for all classes based on the national scheme, the impact of three other factors can be seen.

14. Combinations of many other of the factors helped in making much teaching in the core subjects very good. In a year four literacy 'top set', pupils were able to operate at a much higher level and pace than seen in much class work while editing their stories and introducing paragraphs. With the teacher making very good use of questioning to remind pupils of the learning objectives and what they had done to redraft a shared story the previous day, they quickly settled to the task of redrafting their own stories. A very well managed plenary or summing up

session enabled pupils to see just how well they had achieved the objectives set. At the other end of the scale, the special needs coordinator works with a much smaller set of year three lower attainers, all with individual plans. She is able to structure the session, pitch the work and, with the very good help of the LSA, provide the level of support necessary to ensure that they are able to learn. With the teacher in the lead, they provide patient, caring support, prompting lots of talk and encouraging boys and girls who have considerable difficulty expressing themselves to 'have a go'. Very good use is made of the plenary with the LSA making notes on the responses of individual pupils for assessment purposes.

15. In a very good year four lesson in the computer suite, thanks to the skilled intervention of the teacher and the technician, pupils were successful at a challenging activity creating a branching database to sort and classify a range of objects. Very good work habits have been established in the suite and pupils are very confident and focused when working with the computers. It is very noticeable that pupils who need 'pushing' to complete work in class, work much faster and complete much more in IT sessions.

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

16. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school is satisfactory. National Curriculum and religious education requirements are well met in most subjects, however the coverage of physical education has suffered from not having a regular planned programme for the teaching of swimming. The effectiveness of the strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy are good. Good examples of cross curricular links include religious education, where pupils in year three design a pointer which is used to follow the words in the Jewish Torah and in year four, where they design and make a poster to promote the work of Christian Aid. In literacy, year five pupils design book covers and make posters to try to persuade people to recycle waste materials and save energy. Pupils use their information technology skills to maintain an Email link with a literacy focus with two other schools; this involves pupils at Grass Royal composing a verse of a poem and the link school replying with the next verse. At the last inspection the school was criticised for an imbalance of time allocation to subjects, particularly music. This has now been well addressed with music featuring regularly on the timetable and a specialist music teacher taking many of the lessons.

17. Planning is effective for the long term and medium term. The school has adopted national guidelines and schemes of work for each subject and this has successfully addressed the concerns in the previous inspection that there was insufficient guidance to support teachers with their planning and to ensure that the curriculum was systematically covered. Short term planning takes place weekly in year groups which ensures consistency across the years.

18. Provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good. A carefully planned programme of work has been drawn up for all year groups and all classes have one lesson a week when they sit quietly and discuss feelings and issues which affect them and their lives. For example, year five pupils discussed how they felt about moving into a new class and were encouraged to have positive feelings about the impending change. Sex education and drugs education are well addressed through this programme of work and the science curriculum. Year six pupils were observed in a science lesson talking about the safe use of drugs and discussing the dangers of taking unknown substances.

19. Staff provide a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities including sports, art, chess, drama and a once a week lunchtime club to help pupils who have difficulty with coordination skills. Regular visits are made by the local priest and assemblies often include a visiting speaker. The school makes some visits to places of interest such as the local church and Dartmoor Wildlife Parks and the oldest pupils go on a residential visit each year. This year pupils stayed in a Youth Hostel for the week and a very successful visit was made to the science and technology exhibition in Bristol. Links with the local community are good and the school has worked very hard on this aspect. The community has been encouraged to take part in refurbishing the school grounds and the school buildings. Local businesses have made very valuable contributions. The

navy helped to clear the outside space ready for the huge community effort which vastly enhanced the playground area. Pupils now have attractive places to sit and play as a result of this project and the area is respected and well cared for. Other organisations are encouraged to use the premises after school such as a community education course for parents, an after school club for children and activities such as Keep Fit and Tae Kwon Do.

20. The school is working hard on its links with partner institutions. It regularly meets with colleagues from the local secondary school and sometimes uses the expertise of people such as the secondary science technician to give extra advice and support. During the week of the inspection, year six pupils spent a day at their new secondary school which made it possible for pupils from the two feeder infant schools to make a successful morning visit to Grass Royal.

21. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. They acquire knowledge and insight into Christian values and beliefs, and those of some of the world's other great religions through religious education. Space is provided for pupils to share their own thoughts and ideas and concerns. For example, year five are taken on a journey of the life of Cliff Richard and share their thoughts on the effect being famous could have on his family. Opportunities for reflection are provided within collective worship and religious education lessons through a time of thoughtful quietness. The personal, social and health education programme provides opportunities for pupils to understand how feelings and emotions affect people. For example, the way that year six pupils opinions about each other helped to raise their self-esteem and some showed surprise that others liked them. Pupils are encouraged to recognise that we are all different with differing qualities and to show respect for other people. However, there is little evidence of real opportunities for spiritual development and time for reflection being planned or identified across the curriculum and, as a result, opportunities are missed. Themes for collective worship are planned but some assemblies do not include an act of worship and therefore do not meet statutory requirements. Little recognition is made of a supreme deity and time given for reflection did not aid their spiritual development. Links have been forged with the local church and the minister visits the school regularly to share in collective worship, which adds to the spiritual dimension offered.

22. The arrangements made to enhance pupils' moral and social development are good. A moral code is being positively and sensitively encouraged and the school is successful in teaching the difference between right and wrong. Pupils discuss and agree their class rules each year. They know how to achieve rewards and are made aware of the consequences of their actions, which helps to promote fairness and consistency. The gaining of house points and teacher awards support self esteem and is greatly valued by the pupils. Boys and girls are involved in and contribute to a nominated charity each year. The personal, social and health education programme is a strong contributor to the provision of moral education through the use of circle time, which enables pupils to share problems as well as helping to find solutions. Science makes a good contribution and further aids understanding on environmental issues such as recycling and making right choices. However, no opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about and debate larger moral issues like the Holocaust, war and racism. Adults within the school provide very good role models through the provision of a caring ethos and the respect and concern they show for one another.

23. Good opportunities are provided to develop pupils' social skills and attitudes. They are encouraged to work cooperatively by working in pairs or small groups, sharing ideas and helping each other. House points are on offer for achievements in work and behaviour, and worked for as a team. The opportunity for older pupils to share and read books with younger pupils provides good cross age links. They are good at accepting responsibility in class and members of the school council take their role seriously, which provides good support to other pupils within the school. At lunchtime, older pupils take responsibility in the library for helping others and in the issue of books. Other year groups have responsibilities within their classrooms and help to clear away after lunch. The installation of the decking in the playground was done partly to create different areas where pupils could pursue different kinds of play. Giant snakes and ladders and draughts boards will be installed over the summer. However, neither school councillors, nor any other pupils, play any role in organising playtime, for instance through a buddy system or by

responsibility for playground toys. Residential visits provide opportunities for further team building and the value of working together is emphasised. Boys and girls with special educational needs are well integrated into the school.

24. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. An awareness of their own culture is gained through visits to places of educational interest related to the curriculum such as museums and stately homes. Our English cultural heritage is studied through such areas as literature and the study of works by Shakespeare and Dickens. An appreciation of the natural world is gained by seasonal visits to Nine Springs supported by looking at the work of other artists. Boys and girls also have opportunities to appreciate the art of ancient cultures through the study of Ancient Greece and Egypt. Opportunities arise within the curriculum, for example in the study and comparisons of other faiths, to extend their cultural development. Pupils study literary texts from other countries and begin to recognise that the content of different writings is based on other cultures. The school reinforces its cultural values through the use of good quality displays and artefacts related to pupils' learning, and reviews the nature of opportunities offered to extend their cultural development across the curriculum.

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

25. Procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are very good, largely because the coordinator for personal, social and health education has planned a meticulous programme for all year groups, including individual lesson plans. This programme is of outstanding quality, and ensures consistency of subject and progression throughout the school. It will be expanded to include citizenship education next term. At present topics include listening and concentrating, relationships, self-esteem, feelings and changes. Circle time is handled inconsistently by class teachers mainly because the coordinator has no opportunity to monitor or support her colleagues. Some teachers have good general class rules which promote discussion and listening skills. In a year five science lesson, groups working together used 'group rules', that one person speaks at a time, everyone listens to everyone else, and everyone has to be ready to accept each other's ideas.

26. Arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The deputy head does a detailed analysis of the figures for attendance and punctuality and the school has appropriate links with the educational social services. Class teachers mark attendance data onto forms which are fed into the computerised system weekly and office staff keep lists of pupils who are late or absent because of medical appointments and of telephone calls from parents concerning absence. Unexplained absences are not followed up until Fridays when teachers write asking for clarification from parents unless there is some particular cause for concern about the pupil. If no reply is received then the school telephones parents during the following week. This could mean that a pupil was absent for an entire school week before any explanation was sought. Late-arriving pupils are asked to go directly to the office but, owing to the need to keep more than one outside door open, several were seen not to do so. This could lead to irregularities in recording attendance and unpunctuality.

27. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour and eliminating bullying are good. Class teachers note any problems and the action taken in a classroom behaviour log. Any problems referred to the deputy head are also recorded in writing. Analysis shows that a steady reduction in the number of incidents in these log books over the last four years. Behaviour is managed with fair consistency in the classroom, although some teachers find it hard to maintain control without raising their voice. Pupils face a tiered discipline system beginning with self-assessment sheets, then report cards and targets as part of an individual behaviour plan. They work towards achieving bronze, silver and gold targets in housepoints, receiving certificates and a medal for the gold award. Each week every teacher gives one or two awards for work, effort or behaviour and the headteacher gives an award for outstanding achievement. The school ensures that parents and other staff are made aware of any behaviour problems at an early stage. Policies on behaviour management, bullying and racism are well thought out and regularly reviewed by all the staff. The headteacher and/or the deputy head meet the lunchtime supervisors termly to discuss any problems they may have. At present the supervisors confine their role to a

supervisory one of walking about and dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour. They do not join in or initiate children's games, and have received no training in behaviour management or play promotion. Currently no playtime toys apart from footballs are available, although pupils are encouraged to bring in books and small toys of their own.

28. Child protection and pupil welfare procedures are good overall. The child protection policy conforms to local authority guidelines with the headteacher as the child protection liaison officer, briefing all new staff verbally on their arrival but no guidance on child protection or health and safety is given in the staff handbook. He is also aware that he needs to update his training. The school is represented at case conferences and maintains appropriate relations with external agencies. First aid provision is very good with a dedicated first aid room and a second first aid post on the other side of the school. Separate first aid packs are taken on offsite visits. Medicines are kept in locked cupboards and their administration is carefully recorded. The headteacher and one class teacher are fully-qualified first aiders, the latter to a particularly high standard as he is a part-time fireman, and training sessions have been arranged for all staff during the coming term.

29. The health and safety policy gives good guidance on fire precautions, handling electrical equipment and safety considerations in art, design and technology, science and physical education. Appropriate contractors check all electrical equipment, physical education and stage equipment, and fire-fighting items annually for safety. The school has taken various measures to discourage intruders from climbing onto the roof and is currently reviewing its security arrangements. Owing to various problems relating to the building and the site, the school has not undertaken a standard risk assessment walk for the last two years. However, it has good arrangements in place to ensure the reporting and eliminating of any perceived hazards as they arise. No member of staff has been designated as the health and safety officer and no one on the staff has had any specific training in health and safety matters. A number of health and safety issues have been notified to the governing body for their consideration.

30. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection and are now good, although some elements, particularly in the foundation subjects, are still being developed. Procedures used include the statutory assessments for pupils in year six, the optional tests in years three to five, and additional nationally accepted standardised test in reading in years three and six. These are recorded electronically and the information analysed. This is related to a score of 100 as a norm, rather than clearly identified National Curriculum levels. Although this is a measure of pupil progress, it does not readily help the school monitor its progress against whole school targets. In addition, progress in English, mathematics and science is tracked through the pupil assessment folder, which travels with the pupil through the school. The most developed aspect of this is in pupils' writing. Teachers have worked hard at matching writing throughout the school against National Curriculum levels and annotated pieces of work are in each folder. Pupil progress is very well recorded in pupils' individual information technology logbook where levels are clearly stated and pupils know what they need to achieve to reach the next level. However, tracking in mathematics and science is less well related to similar levels.

31. Assessment is used effectively to guide planning. The headteacher and the deputy head manage the assessment process and have good systems in place, such as work sampling, the monitoring of teachers planning and the movement of pupils between sets in literacy and numeracy, to ensure progression in what they are taught. However, the use of this to monitor individuals pupils' progress is only satisfactory because the fullest use is not made of the existing procedures to provide a mechanism by which the school can easily record pupils' attainments compared to national standards, monitor progress in these over time and set individual and group targets for improvement. Insufficient attention has been paid to assessing pupils' work against National Curriculum criteria with teachers in year groups levelling and moderating samples and pupils, in particular the older ones, knowing what they need to do to achieve a higher level. The recent target setting for individual pupils in writing is a good start, but this needs to be extended to mathematics and science, with targets clearly related to National Curriculum levels, so that pupils and teachers can record pupil progress more easily.



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

32. Parents' views of the school are good. All of the 20% of parents who responded to the questionnaire were very happy with the high expectations the school has of its pupils and the good progress their children were making. All felt the school was approachable and nearly all that their children enjoyed school and the school was helping them to become more mature. Parents were also pleased with the standards of leadership, management and teaching, and with the standards of behaviour at the school. Some parents would like the school to offer a wider selection of extracurricular activities, and some did not feel as fully informed about their children's progress as they would like to be.

33. The involvement of parents has a good impact on the work of the school which is an improvement since the last inspection. Parent governors are enthusiastic and working hard to encourage others to take part in school activities. About six parents now come in regularly to hear pupils read while others help with food technology lessons and on offsite visits. Some parents have volunteered to help run a football club from next term. Parents are always willing to help during special events (for instance, 'Egyptian Day') or with school drama productions. Most parents support fundraising and social events well. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association run by a committee of twelve parents is very active on the school's behalf. Recently it has raised funds to buy video and television equipment, a digital camera, library books, and to help towards the refurbishment of the art, design and technology room. The most important parental involvement to date has been the construction of the new decking and roofed area in the playground. So many parents came in to help that some were redirected to paint a corridor and to make a start on weeding and tidying the central quadrangle. Many had never come in to help in any way before and have found a new enthusiasm as a result.

34. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning. About 80% of them attend parents' evenings and some send in items to support topic work and help their children research on the Internet at home. A majority hear their children read regularly. About fifteen parents bought a mathematics software package through the school for their children to use at home. However, a significant minority of parents do not hear their children read and appear to show no interest in supporting their learning either at home or at school.

35. The school has good, effective links with parents, who can arrange to see the head or the deputy head at short notice. Clear guidance on what is expected of parents and what homework will be given to each year group is provided. Each pupil has a school log book in which to record their homework and important messages. This also includes guidance on hearing children read. Homework is marked and teachers make constructive comments. Two parents' evenings are held each year and parents are invited to attend assemblies and school productions. A year six statutory assessment test information evening is held for parents and another one informs them about the residential trip. The school ran two computer 'tasting' sessions with the Community Education Department which were well received by parents. This year an open meeting was held to discuss the behaviour policy and circle time. The school is experimenting with different ways to inform and involve parents. Seventy parents of year two children came to the information evening held this term, whereas last September only forty came to a similar event held after the start of term.

36. Satisfactory information is provided for parents. The prospectus and governors' report fulfil statutory requirements, are attractively laid out, and written in clear, comprehensible language. Monthly newsletters give details of important dates, after-school clubs, social and fundraising events. Parents are asked if they can help in various ways, for instance by making bunting for the Jubilee celebrations. The school tells parents their children's targets for literacy and numeracy every term and discusses progress at parents' evenings. Reports include attendance data and give a very brief summary of the work covered in each subject area during the year. Pupils are given a grade for effort and the number of their set is stated for English and mathematics. Pupils in years three to five are graded for achievement in English, mathematics and science using a standardised score system which many parents find difficult to interpret and which can be demotivating for lower attaining pupils. The results of statutory assessment tests are given for

year six pupils. Comments on pupils' personal development show that teachers try hard to get to know them as individuals. Parents are informed about the curriculum in broad terms in the prospectus but the school does not give parents any information about the topics that their children will be covering at the start of each term. This would enable them to help children prepare for the work in advance, perhaps by finding relevant books or Internet sites, or visiting places of interest related to the topic.

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

37. At the time of the last inspection, the school was being run by a temporary senior management team in what was described as a 'management vacuum' with little sign of effective planning for the changeover. Staff turnover was high and governors were described as 'supportive' but criticised for their lack of strategic planning. Links between the budget and the school's development plan, which was said to be 'succinct', were described as 'not entirely clear'. Coordinators had neither the management training nor the time or other resources to do their jobs. This was a key issue.

38. All this has changed thanks mainly to the hard work and determination of the head who has put in place policies and procedures that have built professional expertise, self-confidence and the reputation of the school. Through his efforts the physical and professional environment has been greatly enhanced and a positive ethos focusing on the needs of pupils and improvement has been built up. With a settled staff achieving many more good and very good lessons and much improved working conditions for staff and pupils, the school has come a long way since its last inspection. Aply assisted by the deputy head and senior staff and very well supported by the governing body, he has successfully managed a very full workload and made very good use of the opportunities presented by staff changes, national initiatives and a variety of sources of funding to revitalize the school.

39. An important factor in this has been the way the leadership roles of other members of staff have been built up in order that they can make their own contribution to the development of the school. This was an issue at the last inspection and is now much better. Curriculum and other leaders are now strong influences for good in their areas of responsibility, which has already had a noticeable effect on standards in many areas. A good example of this is in information and communications technology where the substantial investment the school has made in resources and teaching support is paying very good dividends. However, to increase their impact, subject managers will need sufficient planned time in other classrooms to monitor and support what is going on in their area of responsibility.

40. Governors are very supportive and committed to the school. They have a well-defined and understood structure of committees and individual responsibilities with a clear programme related to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Many bring considerable expertise to the governing body, training has a much higher profile and all are very keen for the school to succeed. Their efforts on behalf of the school in enabling the improvements in the accommodation to be made deserve special mention. They take their monitoring role seriously, visiting regularly and receiving feedback on the effectiveness of various developments from the staff responsible. As individuals and as a body they know their school and their responsibilities well. Governors linked to subject areas are well informed and very involved in the development of their subjects with some having attended relevant training. For instance, the very specific expertise of governors responsible for the property was very useful when decisions were being made about developing the accommodation.

41. Aspects of planning for improvement were an issue in 1997 and at the time the present head took over it was not very effective. With the very full agenda the head inherited, the impact of actions already taken is obvious. As the agenda became more manageable and staff and governors more used to the process, the school development plan itself developed into a practical and useful management tool involving governors and the whole staff. Current priorities are appropriately centred on standards and provision and derived from the analysis of relevant

data and other forms of monitoring. Hence the current focus on improving writing skills, improving liaison with parents and feeder schools, developing teaching and developing the environment.

42. Good overall financial planning to support the school's educational development is generated through open consultative procedures. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) provides a sensible framework to identify priorities, costings, timescales and the person responsible for each action. Agreed success criteria make it possible for judgements to be made about the effectiveness and value for money of improvements. The headteacher delegates appropriate levels of responsibility for spending to staff with management responsibilities. Arrangements for financial control and administration are very good and audit recommendations have been addressed. The school's administrative secretary's effective financial procedures provide valuable support to the headteacher and governing body and the secretaries provide a welcoming 'front of house'. Good use of information technology supports the management of the budget and the school is beginning to store individual pupil information electronically to record academic progress. Specific grants are used effectively for designated purposes.

43. Resources in all curriculum areas are generally good (although only satisfactory in physical education and below that expected in most schools in music) and have been provided in line with priorities in the SIP. Particularly impressive are the two information technology suites, one with an interactive whiteboard.

44. While spacious, the former secondary school built in 1939 is now, according to a local authority report, in need of costly repairs as the ties in the walls need replacing and the vast area of flat roofing is constantly springing leaks. It has a large gymnasium but no playing field or grassed area. Since the last inspection, the school has been very effective in securing extra funding. Making good use of this and the remarkable carpentry skills of the caretaker, substantial, very effective and carefully managed improvements have been made to the buildings. In addition to the computer suites, developments include the administrative area, library, technology and food technology area, and teachers' resource room. Outside, the large quadrangle has been cleared and developed as an environmental area with help from the Navy stationed locally, and the playground has been recently developed with decking, seating and shaded areas. These have made much better use of the available space, and improved working conditions and staff and pupils' morale. Where funds are available, they are spent on what staff and governors agree is necessary.

45. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good and the school budgets very well for a generous number of learning support assistants (LSA) specifically appointed to contribute to raising standards. Examples include the setting arrangement for literacy and numeracy, with smaller numbers and often an LSA supporting pupils with special educational needs in the lower ability groups. Pupils' standards in information and communication technology are high in comparison to most schools through very good provisions in the form of hardware, planning and the active involvement of an excellent information and communication technology technician. Some use is made of teachers' expertise in other classes such as in religious education in year four, but there is scope to use this more, especially in the area of physical education.

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

46. To build on the many improvements in provision already made, and ensure that the results and achievements all the effort and investment deserve are generated, the governors, headteacher and staff of Grass Royal School should:

- (1) Make the most of each pupils' potential and each member of staff's skills and talents so that year six pupils can achieve the best national test results in English, mathematics and science of which they are capable by:
  - minimising the disruption caused by moving from the infant schools by negotiating for the provision of much more detailed information about pupils achievements in reading, writing and mathematics before they transfer

- using existing assessment information to set challenging but attainable targets for each year group specifically related to National Curriculum levels and national schemes of work (Paragraphs 30.31, 53 & 59)
  - breaking this down into the set, group and individual targets which will be necessary to achieve these targets, monitoring progress in these over the year and evaluating and modifying provision appropriately
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning in each set is good enough for these targets to be met (Paragraphs 11, 15, 58, 64, 78, 96 & 97)
  - familiarising pupils with what will be expected of them when they take the tests as a part of normal school work such as writing for forty minutes / working independently in silence on extended tasks / knowing what it will take to achieve the next level (Paragraphs 3, 47, 50, 53 & 57)
- (2) Ensure that pupils in each class in a year group not only cover the same work in the foundation subjects and religious education but do so in a comparable way, with the same level of expectation and with the same levels of confidence and competence by:
- making sufficient time available for subject coordinators/ year group leaders to monitor and evaluate what is happening in parallel classes and provide support where necessary (Paragraphs 25, 39, 65, 79 & 101)
  - expanding the practice of teachers making best use of any subject expertise by using it in other classes (Paragraphs 44)
- (3) Increase the opportunities for pupils to experience regular and varied, vigorous and challenging physical activity in and out of school by:
- applying all the strategies listed in (2) above in physical education
  - ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory obligation to give all pupils the opportunity to learn how to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave
  - exploring all avenues for increasing the opportunities for pupils to experience sports, games and other physical activities outside lesson time (Paragraphs 5, 16, 92-95)

#### **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

- weaknesses in literacy skills, handwriting and presentation limit standards in other subjects (Paragraphs 3, 49, 60, 75 & 77)
- parents find the format of reports difficult to interpret (Paragraphs 32 & 36)
- it provides little information for parents about what their children are going to do next and many parents do not support their children's education (Paragraphs 3, 36 & 49)
- some assemblies do not meet national requirements (Paragraph 21)
- more could be done to involve lunch time supervisors and the school council in developing playtimes (Paragraphs 23 & 27)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	15	35	13	3		
Percentage	1	22	52	19	4		

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y3– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		308
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		58

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		77

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.17
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 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	45	41	86
<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	28	30	
	Girls	28	24	28	
	Total	46	52	58	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	53 (64)	60 (59)	67 (76)	
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)	

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	28	26	
	Girls	27	24	26	
	Total	45	52	52	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (61)	62 (58)	62 (74)	
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)	

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	
White	286
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	3	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y3– Y6

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.1
Average class size	26

#### Education support staff: Y3– Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	195

### Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	737760
Total expenditure	709831
Expenditure per pupil	2268
Balance brought forward from previous year	-17710

Balance carried forward to next year	10219
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**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	61
Number of questionnaires returned	308

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	48	2		
My child is making good progress in school.	52	48			
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	57	7		2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	59	11		
The teaching is good.	61	39			
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	42	12		
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	31			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	39			
The school works closely with parents.	44	44	11		
The school is well led and managed.	52	46			2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	48	2		
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	48	15		16

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

### **ENGLISH**

47. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 attain well below average standards, which is lower than the findings in the previous report. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school at the age of seven is well below those expected nationally, which is also lower than the last report. The school has worked hard to raise the standards over the past three years. However, following a positive improvement during 1999 and 2000 a further dip in overall standards has followed due to the attainment of pupils on entry. Pupils with special educational needs are well below national expectations, although they make good progress in relation to their individual education plans.

48. Throughout the school pupils attain below average standards in speaking and listening. Their diction is usually clear and they are eager to answer questions in class. More able pupils sort out their ideas logically and speak with greater expression. Specific vocabulary linked to subjects is used but general vocabulary is limited. Older pupils are confident within role-play situations and use their knowledge of situations and language to good effect. For example, year six pupils sketched the feelings of two girls within a family with conviction and understanding. Pupils listen attentively, concentrating on what teachers and pupils say, as well as to video recordings and music.

49. The attainment of eleven-year-olds in reading is well below the national average. By the end of the key stage the average and higher attainers read accurately for a range of purposes. Lower attaining pupils are less confident and their reading lacks expression. They understand the purpose of punctuation and use a variety of strategies to help with pronunciation of unfamiliar words. Pupils have a growing knowledge of books, which they enjoy talking about, but many read infrequently other than at school. Older pupils offer comparisons of the characters within books. Book reviews encourage pupils to identify reasons for choosing a book as well as identifying the main characters, the best part and what happens in the story. Year five pupils study stories from other cultures, and link them with creative work. Pupils throughout the school read books for information and understand the value and use of the contents, index and glossary pages. They know and understand how to find books in the school library, including the use of the catalogue system. Older pupils skim and scan text efficiently to remind themselves of the story and self-correct their reading when the meaning is inappropriate, as well as explaining the story.

50. Standards in writing are well below average at the end of year six. Throughout the school, grammar, spelling and punctuation continue to be taught systematically and pupils make good progress from a low base, extending the range of formal and informal writing. They develop their awareness of how writers use words and varied sentence structure to hold the reader's attention. The presentation of work in English and across the curriculum is well below that expected from pupils of this age. A significant number of pupils have not succeeded in developing a handwriting style that is fluent and legible in well-formed script and work is often untidy. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of well-focused teaching and good support. The targeting of pupils, using a range of assessments and carefully structured work, has a positive impact upon standards.

51. Most pupils write for a wide range of purposes using suitable formats including stories, poetry, letters and descriptions including non-fiction recording of facts and the sequencing of instructions as well as questionnaires and biographies. Year three pupils use information technology to email poems they have created based on their topic of the planets. After listening to the story of 'The Magic Finger' by Roald Dahl and focusing on the character of 'the girl', they write down their ideas on a worksheet, which provides a useful prompt for ideas to be included. Pupils in year four use a story planner which fits into a well-defined structure to aid their writing. Time is



spent on drafting, and editing skills are a focus to improve interest for the reader. Year five work on extending sentence structures into more complex writing and understand the effect that changing the order of words has on the meaning. Information technology is used very effectively in the drafting process. Year six enjoy reading stories by different writers and begin to describe and evaluate the style of individual writers. Homework in year five provides pupils with the opportunity to produce magazines for others to read. They are well organised and good use has been made of information technology.

52. Overall, the quality of teaching is good throughout the school with some very good teaching within all year groups. A very important factor in this is the way the school has made it possible for pupils to be taught in smaller groups of similar attainment (sets) in each year group. Additional literacy support provided effectively with the help of the learning support assistants has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers understand the content and requirements of the curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy. Lessons are well prepared and teachers' plans have clear objectives, which if shared more regularly with pupils would help to focus their learning. Subject knowledge is good and good questioning by teachers well matched to the ability of pupils promotes active responses and encourages pupils to think about the subject. Clear explanations have a positive effect on pupils' confidence and interest. They settle promptly to their tasks working independently when required in a very calm atmosphere. The pace of lessons is usually good with suitably challenging work for all pupils. Teachers use praise to reward pupils' efforts and to encourage pupils to achieve as well as they are able. On the rare occasions when teaching is less than satisfactory, pupils do not behave well or achieve appropriately. Most marking of work is good, supportive and analytical with reference to individual targets which also has a positive effect upon pupils' progress.

53. The coordinator has a clear view of her role and has managed and monitored the successful implementation of the literacy strategy effectively. She checks on planning and standards of pupils' work through moderated work samples and the analysis of the optional tests in years three, four and five. Individual assessment sheets identifying targets are discussed with individual pupils but these are not related to National Curriculum levels or consolidated to create year group and 'set' targets. The coordinator has worked to increase staff confidence in agreeing standards against the National Curriculum levels and a portfolio of work at agreed levels is being collected for reference. Pupils are encouraged to be in control of their learning through the use of target sheets in their Log Books and to use their initiative by adding helpful hints to the target sheet as they occur. Standards in spelling have improved and staff are more aware of opportunities for extended writing but pupils have few opportunities to spend time on their writing and produce substantial pieces of work. Resources have been reviewed and bought in to support the revised curriculum and the Library restocked. Pupils make very good use of the school library, both as a centre to read fiction and to research for information with the help of the librarian. Year six pupils make a valuable contribution to the effective running of the library at lunchtime by providing support for younger readers and in issuing books using the computerised system.

## **MATHEMATICS**

54. When compared to schools in a similar situation, attainment in mathematics by the end of year six is below the national average, and when compared with all schools it is well below. However, school assessments using optional national tests show that this group has achieved well over time from a low base.

55. Through the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the associated improvement in provision, particularly teaching, pupils throughout the school are making good progress and achieving well. The strategy has brought necessary attention to detail in the planning and proper progression to the development of the subject. Teachers have concentrated on improving the quality of teaching and learning to raise standards and improve results. Pupils are set in ability groups for mathematics and in years five and six an extra fourth set is created from the three classes. This arrangement is well focused on raising standards.

56. Attainment of pupils on entry is well below average with very few of them attaining higher standards. Pupils' knowledge, skills and ways of working in mathematics increase and refine as they work through the school and they begin to develop good work habits. In year three, pupils improve their ability to calculate by developing appropriate strategies. For example, those in the higher sets work out the multiples and division facts of 3 and 4, while those in the lower set work at multiples of 2 and 10. In year four, the higher set are beginning to know and use multiplication and division fact for 6,7,8 and 9. In a year five lesson, pupils wrote down factors of a number in timed sessions. By year six pupils use a variety of methods to write down multiplication calculations. They construct and interpret charts and graphs and calculate the area of simple and compound shapes. Many measure and draw angles accurately, although some find this difficult, and use their mental mathematics well to calculate, for example, the third angle of a triangle given two. Although pupils clearly make progress throughout the school, many start from a very low base. As a result, while approximately 60 % are achieving the nationally accepted levels others remain below that and some well below.

57. Pupils' attitude to mathematics is good, and the behaviour observed in lessons is nearly always good and sometimes very good. They willingly volunteer answers and most participate well but the amount of work they produce and pace at which they do it is only satisfactory. In lessons most respond enthusiastically, particularly in 'mental maths', when they can write answers quickly on their individual whiteboards and explain their strategies. When required, they can work independently or with a classmate, share resources and cooperate well. They respond very well when using information and communication technology to support mathematics, especially in lesson using the interactive whiteboard.

58. The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good. Apart from one unsatisfactory lesson where problems with behaviour slowed learning, the majority of teaching was good or better. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Where teaching is better the pace of the lesson is brisk, with a good mix of direct teaching, explanation and questioning, and opportunities for pupils to use practical activities to reinforce their learning. Teachers use well thought out questions to challenge pupils to explain and demonstrate their thinking to the rest of the class. Recent training on the use of the interactive whiteboard has given teachers great confidence. In a year three mathematics lesson, pupils could, after tackling the question first on their own whiteboard, see quickly how numbers were partitioned into sets of 3 and 4 and what the remainder was. In another, lower ability lesson, pupils understood quickly how to move numbers that are multiples of 2 and 5 and over 30, into a Venn diagram. Their learning in both these lessons was very good. However, in some lessons teachers did not share the learning objectives with pupils or focus on key vocabulary. While all lessons included a 'mental maths' session, a few were short and lacked pace and plenary sessions were also short and rushed.

59. The headteacher is currently coordinating the subject well and has identified assessment as an area for development. Much information is kept on pupils' progress but teachers are not systematically matching work to National Curriculum levels across the school and pupils do not have short-term achievable targets based on their individual weaknesses, such as, to learn a multiplication table by the end of the week. Nor do pupils understand, particularly as they get older, how to achieve a higher National Curriculum level.

## **SCIENCE**

60. Standards of attainment in science are below the national average with fewer pupils achieving higher standards than might be expected. However, boys and girls are provided with a comprehensive programme of science activity that enables them to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world around them and of the scientific processes. They develop sound investigative skills and are able to write down and measure their observations. However, limited literacy skills mean that the quality of much recorded work does not reflect their understanding of the science involved especially in the older classes. Most make comparisons, identify patterns and relationships and offer explanations based on this. Pupils gain confidence in making predictions and have a good understanding of fair testing.

61. From their earliest year in the school, pupils are given the opportunity to develop science skills through practical investigation. Year three pupils learn that materials can be transparent, translucent or opaque and discover that 'it took 73 sheets before tracing paper becomes opaque'. The absorbency of paper, the durability of different surfaces and the hardness of materials are tested and compared. Pupils understand how seeds germinate and grow and they investigate and compare what happens when leaves are taken off a plant and write up the experiment to a standard format. Year three pupils learning about the earth's rotation gained good understanding from linking hands and replicating the spinning motion in the playground before writing this in their books, some with difficulty but with good support from the class teacher. Clear explanations, the provision of word lists and focused questioning to test understanding all helped pupils to learn and understand the vocabulary and ideas involved.

62. From studying teeth, year four pupils know that teeth and bones contain calcium which is found in milk and cheese. In making a "mouth map" they observe and record the number and type of teeth and learn that incisors are for cutting, canines for tearing and molars are for crushing food. In investigating the properties of materials they discover that some changes, like the melting of chocolate, are reversible, and that others, such as concrete made from sand, gravel and cement, are not. In a lesson preparing for a 'fair' test on the drainage of soils, pupils work together, well prompted by the teacher, on using magnifying glasses to look closely at a variety of soil types that have settled out of suspension in clear beakers. Most are able to say that a mystery sample is loam because the layers are even and the teacher showed her good subject knowledge by explaining when asked that the thin layer of silt on the top came about because of particle size.

63. Pupils in years five and six cover all the required elements of the planned curriculum but the scheme of work in use before the present coordinator took over two years ago had gaps and was not as focused on 'hands on experience'. Consequently, pupils experience of science in their first two years was not as coherent or progressive as it is now. For instance, year five books show how information technology is put to good use by exploiting data loggers and in year six, by using old national test papers obvious evidence of the value added between September and April can be seen. Further evidence of this was seen in a year five lesson following up some research work on recycling by planning an investigation which required pupils to work together and think for themselves. In an ordered, constructive lesson, they showed they were obviously aware of the subject matter, the way to construct a test and the need to make it fair. During the inspection week year six pupils were continuing work on drugs by listing all the information, such as dosage and side effects, given on the packages of actual prescription medicines leading to a mature discussion of the reasons why it is provided. By bringing out unlabelled packages of fake 'medicines', pupils quickly understood the dangers of taking 'unknown' substances. By this means, they learned a lot about drugs and medicines in an interesting, practical way.

64. The teaching of science ranges from satisfactory to very good but is good overall. Well structured planning, shared across year groups, has a good balance of explanation, discussion and investigational work. Teachers' knowledge of science is inconsistent and this means that parallel lessons taught to these plans are not always delivered with the same level of confidence. A clear focus on the practical and investigative nature of science makes for an enthusiastic response from pupils and enables them to predict and explore ideas. However, in a few lessons pupils were given less opportunity to discuss their work and to predict the outcome of investigations and responses were more muted. Although boys and girls learn well, the task in some lessons could be more challenging for able pupils. Boys and girls are well managed and given encouragement and praise and, in most classrooms, the tone is of a purposeful working environment with pupils listening carefully and keen to answer questions. The progress of pupils is regularly reviewed with assessments at the end of each unit of work. Learning support assistants provide good support for those pupils who have learning difficulties and for whom concentration and the ability to listen is a challenge.

65. Science is very well led and managed by a well qualified coordinator who has, over the past two years, revitalised the subject after two years without a coordinator. During this time she

has revamped the scheme of work to ensure balanced coverage and a new set of course materials has been introduced to ensure that investigations and practical work are appropriately emphasised. She has also drawn up detailed medium term plans with related end of unit assessment tasks using photocopiable sheets to support her colleagues. Through these she is gaining a very good grasp of what is going on in the school but she now needs to spend time in other teachers' science lessons to monitor provision and provide support where it is needed. A necessary investment in resources for science has been made but some gaps still remain. The coordinator is very aware of what needs to be done to build on the improvements made as demonstrated in her subject action plans and there is good reason to believe that standards will build through the school as these are put in place.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

66. The way that the curriculum is organised for the teaching of art and design and design and technology meant that only two art lessons both in year three were seen; all other year groups were studying design and technology for this half of term. Standards are judged to be broadly as expected of pupils of this age. This judgment is made from looking at pupils' previous work, teachers' planning and displays throughout the school.

67. In year three, the art lessons were among a series that looked at shape and form in design. Pupils had previously looked at some of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's designs using flowers. Boys and girls had done some well-observed sketches of flowers and incorporated these into the design of a tile. The lessons focused on transferring the design sketches from paper onto a tile made of clay. Most pupils made good progress in these lessons and created simple and interesting flower designs by indenting the clay. They were proud of the results and eager to move onto the next step which involves painting the tiles.

68. Some good examples of pupil's art work are on show around the school and a number of well presented displays of art brighten up shared areas such as the hall and corridors. These cover a wide range of skills and techniques, such as printing on fabric, batik, collage with different materials, paintings, drawings and sculptures in clay. In the information technology suite, pupils are designing colourful stained glass panels with tissue, which brighten up the skylight window. Very well observed paintings by year six in the style of Picasso's cubist period are on display. In the hall, most of the work displayed is from the highly successful art week, which took place last half term to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. All teachers took a different aspect of art and design and worked with mixed age groups to produce a variety of work around symbols and aspects of the Jubilee.

69. As only two lessons were seen, it is not possible to make a secure judgment on the overall quality of teaching. In those observed, teachers taught the techniques and rules associated with working with clay carefully and encouraged pupils to experiment with their designs and improve their work. Good planning for art shows a clear progression to the gaining of skills and knowledge. Many classrooms have attractive displays of art work and some teachers display the work of other artists such as Gauguin and Picasso. All pupils have a sketchbook which is helping to encourage pupils to value their work and feel a sense of pride in what they do. Good links are made with other subjects; for example in information technology pupils have explored graphic modeling and in literacy have made and designed book covers.

70. The art coordinator has worked hard to improve planning for the subject and now has a scheme of work which is more detailed, encourages further cross curricular links and suggests more opportunities for exploring the multicultural aspects of art. An art, design and technology room, almost ready for use, will further enhance work in the subject by providing a special, well resourced place for pupils to carry out extended art work and develop a wide range of skills and techniques. The art coordinator has successfully set up a well-attended art club which takes place at lunch times.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

71. Standards in design and technology are as expected of pupils of this age and remain similar to those found in the last inspection. Boys and girls make steady progress over time with good and very good progress observed in lessons. In year four, pupils make very good progress when they design money containers. They carefully consider what features they need to incorporate in their purses, the shape, the material and fastenings they will use. Boys and girls draw and label their designs and make a prototype in paper. They identify potential problems relating to size and shape and those who have selected leather as a material to use are encouraged to try to sew this; as a consequence a number adapt their design in favour of using an easier fabric to work on.

72. Year five achieve well when they work on step by step plans and produce prototypes for making moving toys using cams, drawing careful plans on prepared worksheets and labelling their sketches to give details of their ideas. They clarify and modify their plans through discussion and share ideas about the suitability of materials and designs. Year six are making and designing slippers and in a very good lesson they investigated different ways of joining materials. They experiment with sewing and other joining techniques to discover for themselves the problems they might encounter and consider how they might solve them.

73. Boys and girls work well in groups and listen respectfully to one another's ideas and opinions. They share equipment without fuss and enjoy the challenge of making and designing. In all lessons observed, teaching was good or very good and this is having a positive impact on achievement in the subject. Teachers prepare lessons well and explicitly identify at the beginning what they want the class to learn; this enables pupils to clearly focus their ideas on the objectives of the lesson. They introduce and explain new vocabulary such as prototype, cam, cam follower and off centre and effectively teach specific skills such as sewing and use of the glue gun. Teachers stress the safety aspect of the use of tools. They give pupils sufficient time to experiment with ideas and materials and ask lots of good questions which encourage pupils to reflect on the suitability of their designs.

74. Planning for the subject is good. Since the last inspection the subject coordinator has successfully produced a scheme of work and some very clear and helpful medium term planning which is giving teachers more confidence and ensuring that the curriculum is well covered. Food technology is a regular part of the design and technology programme and pupils talk enthusiastically about their experience when making bread, pizza toppings and Christmas cake. Assessment tasks have recently been successfully introduced and once a year pupils complete a self assessment sheet along with photographs of their finished designs. Good links are made with other subjects such as literacy, religious education and history when pupils design such things as book covers, posters and Tudor houses. A recent art, design and technology week with the Queen's Jubilee as the theme, gave pupils the opportunity to celebrate success in these subjects and good displays of a variety of work involving a range of design and technology skills and techniques, enhance classrooms and shared areas.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

75. The school organizes the teaching of history or geography into half term blocks; opportunities arise for the inclusion of English, mathematics, art, design technology and information and communication technology as well as history and geography skills to be developed in these topics. Sound plans for each year group cover the areas within the programmes of study for geography and history to ensure adequate coverage. Observation of geography lessons, discussions with pupils and the scrutiny of their work indicate that standards in geography are satisfactory. Pupils understand geographical terms and are beginning to develop their vocabulary: however as yet they do not use the words without prompting. They gain information from a variety of sources and are able to read charts, maps and graphs. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but in common with many of their classmates are inhibited by limited literacy skills.

76. Pupils in year three recognise the effect of change in the immediate locality through the observation of how the school playground has changed. They are also familiar with the effect of change in climate and seasons. Year four pupils use their mapping skills and knowledge of the

compass to identify Yeovil within the locality. Through investigation they recognize that the location of the town is important and can recognize places from photographs within the vicinity. Pupils in year five have some understanding of the water cycle. They are very aware of safety issues on the roads around the immediate school area and begin to place their town appropriately within the context of the southwest. Most are able to compare Yeovil and Poole noting similarities and differences and the importance of the sea and tourism to Poole. By year six pupils are aware of the varying physical features, which contribute to climate, and how they change over time. They recognise how the journey of a river can change the lay of the land and the effect different altitudes have on the climate. Boys and girls identify different views held by the people of Yeovil in the town's development and talk with confidence, respecting and understanding the needs of people of different ages.

77. Standards in history are lower than in most schools. Pupils recognize that the past can be divided into periods of time and use chronological conventions of BC, AD, century and decade. However, as yet they are unsure of when periods of time and events took place. Pupils in year four study Ancient Greece and conduct their research satisfactorily from a variety of sources but are unaware as to how the information gained can tell us what life was like at that time. By the end of year six pupils distinguish between ways of life at different times. For example, they recognise items used in Victorian homes that are no longer used. They are familiar with some of the history of Yeovil and make a comparison between the occupations on the 1851 census and today presenting their findings in graphs and charts. They demonstrate factual knowledge and understanding of life during the Second World War and the effect on families. Pupils experience a variety of sources from which to gain understanding, which include videos, artefacts, books and the Internet, and recognise that different sources provide different information. The presentation of work and the quality of written work are often of a poor quality.

78. The quality of teaching in geography is good and satisfactory in history. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. However, pupils are not always made aware as to the purpose of the lesson and its proposed outcomes. Good use of resources stimulates interest and provides opportunities for teachers to question and encourage pupils to find out more. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good which gives pupils the confidence to learn. Teachers use the time well and lessons move at a good pace maintaining pupil interest. Where lessons were less satisfactory pupils were not well managed resulting in insufficient learning and progress by pupils.

79. Since the last inspection by the end of year six standards in geography have been maintained. However, standards in history have slipped. A scheme of work has been adopted and is being reviewed and adapted to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school but with no in class monitoring having taken place, the way the various topics and activities are taught is not consistent. Resources have been reviewed in line with the revised areas of learning and are satisfactory. Good use is made of the local authorities Resources for Learning Centre and visits in the locality to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding. Residential visits to Bristol and day visits to places related to work studied are a strength of the subject and significantly aid pupils in their learning.

80. In the absence of the coordinator good work has been undertaken in the review and writing of medium term plans by the year group leaders. Newly appointed coordinators from within the school will commence their leadership role in September to continue the development of the subjects, which will include monitoring standards and highlighting assessment opportunities linked to modules of learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

81. During the inspection week all teaching of ICT took place in the computer suites. In addition to lesson observations, judgements on standards are based on the scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils, teachers, the subject coordinator and the ICT technician.
82. By the end of year six standards in all aspects of information and communication technology match challenging national expectations and are better than seen in most schools. Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well against their prior attainment. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good and they show high quality relationships when working together. The two new computer suites are having a very positive impact on the raising of standards, as a whole class lesson can now be taught, which ensures pupils have the skills needed to use computers and programmes. The improvement since the previous inspection, especially in responding to the rapid pace of change nationally, has been very good. The two computer suites each have a very clear focus. One is used for teaching ICT skills, while the other, with its interactive whiteboard, is used to support other areas of the curriculum through information and communication technology. They both contribute significantly to raising standards and pupils' awareness of the use of ICT.
83. Year three pupils combine text and graphics to support their Viking topic; they use a paint programme to make Christmas cards, databases in their study of mini beasts and manipulate sound in music. Current links with a local school and one in the north of England are encouraged through the exchange of verses of poetry sent by e-mail. Year four pupils collect information on local retail outlets for a database, word-process their work for different audiences, and combine graphics to support their study of Ancient Greece, and map work, including OS symbols. Current work includes using a branching binary database. Pupils in year five develop images using repeating patterns and use these on the faces of a cube to make attractive dice. They have used control technology to sequence traffic lights.
84. By the end of year six, pupils log-on confidently, manipulate screen icons using the mouse, select items from an on-screen menu, import clip art pictures, search the Internet and use the 'drag and drop' features of a program. They use the keyboard well to word-process their text, change the font style, colour and size and import pictures to enhance the text. For example, in a very good year six lesson, pupils experimented with a number of effects to present a linked series of slides on their chosen topic. They research and downloaded items from the Internet, and animate text and graphics, enhanced by suitable sound effects. One pupil presented her topic using the interactive whiteboard showing a good awareness of her audience. Most pupils use spreadsheets to calculate totals and averages, create and explain formula and use their experience of adventure games to tackle more complex problems.
85. The quality of teaching of information and communication technology is very good. Teachers are confident working in the subject, teach from well prepared planning and are very well supported by the excellent information and communication technology technician. Recent training on the use of the interactive whiteboard has given teachers great confidence in using this. In a year three mathematics lesson, pupils could see quickly how numbers were partitioned into sets of 3 and 4 and what the remainder was, after first tackling the question on their own whiteboards.
86. The very knowledgeable and enthusiastic coordinator has ensured the development of the subject. Staff training and the employment of a skilled information and communication technology technician has had an enormous impact on standards and made the subject the curriculum strength of the school. Individual pupil logbooks, with statements levelled against National Curriculum criteria, are both user friendly and a good assessment tool.

## **MUSIC**

87. Standards in music were described as well below the national expectation in the last report in July 1997 with higher attaining musicians being actively held back in recorder lessons and teaching described as 'unsatisfactory or poor'. The music room environment was described as 'unstimulating' and the school did not 'fulfill statutory requirements'. This was a key issue at the time and music continued to be a difficult area to cover subsequently despite the school's efforts to appoint a teacher with musical expertise.

88. However, with the return of the coordinator in a part time specialist role, there are very good signs that the situation is well on the way to being resolved. By adopting national schemes of work, she has already ensured that the taught curriculum has much more structure and cohesion but very sensibly recognises that a considerable backlog has to be caught up with older groups and is phasing this in over two years. The school's strategy is two pronged with the coordinator taking the music lessons for two year groups each half term with class teachers observing to build up their expertise and confidence while class teachers in the other two year groups take their own classes using her plans. The objective, when teachers in years three and four are sufficiently confident, is for them to take their own classes while the coordinator uses her advanced skills with the two older year groups.

89. The impact she has already made is obvious. In a whole school singing assembly her enthusiasm and confidence rubbed off on the children and they sang 'Think of a World' and 'The Journey of Life' tunefully, making a 'good sound'. With year six at their secondary school, the coordinator only taught year five but this was enough to show the quality the school has brought in. Catching pupils' attention with music from Elvis Presley, the Funeral March and 'Thunderbirds', pupils quickly recognised and performed actions to match the various pulses and tempos. This they really enjoy and when the teacher introduces the idea of 'internalising' the beat, they understand and do this very effectively. When the teacher feels that pupils are comfortable with pulse and rhythm using a wide range of strategies, she moves onto the concept of the 'ostinato' and by the end of the lesson has the pupils managing a two part ostinato rhythm - much to their delight. All in all this was an excellent lesson but with limited equipment, some of poor quality, and little previous experience of good teaching, pupils performance levels and understanding are still well down.

90. Good use of some subject expertise by swapping classes combined with the impact of being able to watch the coordinator the previous half-term and use her planning, resulted in a good lesson using some of the same ideas in year four. Again, pupils showed enthusiasm for the active, practical approach used and the teacher was careful to use a range of ways of moving pupils about so that they would not get restive. Using several familiar rhymes such as 'London's Burning' and some unfamiliar like 'Clickety, Click', pupils showed they understood the differences between pulse, tempo and rhythm by the end of the lesson.

91. The coordinator is well aware of all that needs to be done and is looking forward to having a dedicated, well-equipped music area for herself and her colleagues to work in. It is also important that opportunities for keener musicians to learn the guitar and brass instruments will start in the autumn and that eventually a choir and school band are planned.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

92. Lessons observed during the inspection were limited to athletics and orienteering. Evidence from the school's scheme of work shows that pupils have opportunities to take part in games, gymnastics and dance, but pupils do not have swimming lessons and the school does not fulfil the National Curriculum programmes of study for physical education in this area. The planned curriculum is further inhibited, for games and athletics, by the lack of a playing field or grassed area. However, opportunities presented by its large gymnasium are not fully exploited for the benefit of all pupils, although a lunchtime football competition during the inspection proved very popular for those taking part.

93. No lessons were observed in year six but in two athletics and orienteering lessons achievements of boys and girls are appropriate for their ages and standards are broadly in line with national averages have been sustained since the last inspection.



94. The two athletics lessons based on throwing taken in the gymnasium were barely satisfactory. No consistent approach was made to warm up that focused on raising the heartbeat and stretching muscles, a criticism in the previous report. Although pupils enjoyed the throwing activities, year three with foam javelins and year five with quoits, the organisation lacked a clear focus on pupil activity. Explanations were over complex, groups were too large and systems for retrieving the thrown objects unclear. As a result pupils had no idea at the end of the lesson how well they had achieved. Orienteering and outdoor adventurous activities had been introduced only the week before the inspection. Pupils in both the orienteering lessons seen were very enthusiastic and understood the cooperative skills needed, but their enthusiasm overtook their common sense in searching for clues. This is an area for development.

95. While the school participates in local football and netball competitions and their teams do well, little other extra provision for physical education is made. Opportunities have not been taken to access government and local initiatives to provide coaching in sports after school, although there has been support from local business to purchase team kit. The coordinator is new to teaching, enthusiastic with many ideas, but the staff lack expertise in teaching physical education. The challenge is to bring outside expertise into this school, situated in an urban area, to give pupils the opportunities they deserve in physical education, and to introduce swimming into the curriculum to comply with the programmes of study for physical education.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

96. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Overall, pupils, including those who find learning difficult, make satisfactory progress in their learning, but other than in year four where all lessons are taken by the same teacher, differences in approaches by different year teachers means that this is not consistent. By the end of year six most pupils know the detail of some of the practices and beliefs of Christians and those of several other faiths.

97. Pupils in year three begin a topic about 'special books' by looking at their own favourite books and relating this to the importance of the Qu'ran to Muslims. They understand how the book has to be treated and that Muslims can only touch the book after they have washed their hands. Most also know that the Bible is important to Christians and the Torah to Jewish people. Good use is made of information technology to find information about the various special books and pupils take great care to produce their own 'special books' about them. In the year three lesson observed, the teacher made use of the stories pupils had come across in the Bible looking at the concept of a 'moral'. Most found this difficult but eventually came up with 'a message at the end of a story which helps us behave better' and were able to use this idea to make up their own morals for themselves. However, difficulties with class control meant that what should have been a quiet contemplative session was actually noisy and learning was slower than hoped for.

98. Year four compare the version of the creation story from the Bible with that of other stories. They talk about signs and symbols in their everyday lives and begin to relate these to symbols represented in Christianity such as the fish sign and in Hinduism including the Mendhi patterns. In a year four lesson on the current theme of what it means to be a Christian, pupils made good use of this information to interpret the Christian Aid symbol as a helping hand, love, care and concern. By explaining the work of the organisation, the teacher leads the discussion onto the Christian symbol of the cross and sets the task of designing a poster based on this with symbols and slogans about Christian Aid. Pupils listen and involve themselves throughout and learn a good deal about the practicalities of having a faith commitment.

99. This idea is carried forward into year five with work on special people such as Mother Theresa and Nelson Mandela with good use being made of web sites listed by the coordinator. Year fives also show good levels of understanding of what it means to be a Christian. For example they know that Christians follow the rules of 'The Ten Commandments' and can explain the meaning of most of them. They develop their thoughts and ideas well and invent their own such as 'If you meet someone, always be friendly'. Follow up work on other faiths includes the Moslem 'Five Pillars of Wisdom' and the Hindu pilgrimage to the Ganges. In a very good year five

lesson on the journey of life, very good use was made of the life and music of Cliff Richard to show how important Christianity is as a way to 'be right inside' for some people. Several realise that the 'Millenium Prayer' is actually the Lords prayer and all enjoy the task of designing a CD cover to symbolically and verbally illustrate the central theme.

100. Work in year six pupils' books shows that they have covered a great deal of ground on a wide range of faiths including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. By this age they are making satisfactory comparisons between religions and are able to reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. They recall information about Judaism satisfactorily, in particular the special family meal and prayers, and use the Hindu creation story as a model to 'create' their own. No lessons were observed in year six but planning and work seen shows that pupils make good progress over the year.

101. A good deal of effort has gone into improving provision for religious education over the past two years to good effect. By integrating the Agreed Syllabus, elements of personal and social education and other subjects such as art and design technology, the coordinator has produced a scheme of work that is much better suited to Grass Royal staff and pupils. Much more detail has been included in planning to support non-specialists and good use is being made of resources from the local authority resource base. IT is being increasingly used but the school is aware that more software is needed to make this possible. The latest innovation is the introduction of whole school assessment using materials supplied by the coordinator as part of the school's new programme for subjects outside the core. Although she is in the process of handing over responsibility, the coordinator has a sound understanding of what needs to be done to further improve standards. This, however, will require her successor to have sufficient time in other classes to ensure that all classes get the same high quality input as that seen in the best.