

INSPECTION REPORT

STURMINSTER MARSHALL FIRST SCHOOL

Sturminster Marshall, Wimborne

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113675

Headteacher: Mrs J Davies

Reporting inspector: Mr M S Burghart
20865

Dates of inspection: 21st – 23rd January 2002

Inspection number: 197559

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Street Sturminster Marshall Wimborne Dorset
Postcode:	BH21 4AY
Telephone number:	01258 857348
Fax number:	01258 858439
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Bennion Pedley
Date of previous inspection:	September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20865	Mr M Burghart Registered inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language; Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage; English; Information and communication technology; Music; Physical Education.	How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9426	Rev L Barley Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2756	Mr M Barron Team inspector	Science; Art; Design and technology.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
25554	Mrs J Watson Team inspector	Equal opportunities; Mathematics; Geography; History; Religious education.	The school's results and pupils' achievements.

The inspection contractor was:

MSB Education Ltd.

Broomhill
Wimborne
Dorset
BH21 7AR

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sturminster Marshall First is a smaller than average primary school in the village of the same name near Wimborne in Dorset. The school provides good accommodation for five classes, one for each year group. There are 119 children on the school roll aged from four to nine. There is an average of 24 pupils per class. Pupils are drawn from the local surrounding area from a mix of private and rented accommodation. Most of the pupils attend some kind of pre-school group before starting Year R. Their attainment on entry to the school, aged four, varies, but overall is average for the local education authority. The headteacher has been in post for five years. She is supported by five full time teachers. There are 17 pupils on the special educational needs register. This accounts for 14 per cent of the school roll, and is below the national average. Two pupils have formal statements under the terms of the DfES Code of Practice¹, which proportionally is about average. Ten children are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average of 20 per cent. No pupils require extra support as a consequence of having English as an additional language and no pupils come from minority ethnic groups. This is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sturminster Marshall First is a very good school with excellent features. Staff, pupils, parents and governors get on very well, and, together with good planning, very good assessment, record keeping and teaching, this successfully contributes to the school's very good ethos. There is a strong commitment to raising and maintaining standards under the very good leadership and management of the head and deputy. Standards in most subjects are consistently above national averages and expectations. Higher attaining pupils are particularly successful, with high proportions of pupils achieving above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Although expenditure per pupil is above average the school continues to give good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good with very good features.
- Standards are above average and national expectations.
- More able pupils achieve particularly well.
- Procedures for assessment, and its use, are very good.
- The school takes very good care of pupils.
- Provision for moral and social development is excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- The school is very well led and managed.

What could be improved

This inspection raises no key issues for improvement. Minor areas for future development already known to the school include further developing provision for the Foundation Stage; and improving procedures for monitoring attendance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

¹ The Department for Education and Skills Code of Practice gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities to ensure that all pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

The last report in September 1997 raise three key issues for improvement. The school has made very good progress in addressing the development of improvement planning through monitoring, and in implementing assessment procedures which can be evaluated to measure pupils' progress. Following considerable improvement there is now a good range of extracurricular activities (clubs and additional curriculum opportunities). In addition to these issues the school has successfully introduced national strategies for literacy and numeracy and has considerably enhanced the learning environment with a recently completed building programme. Improvements to resourcing, especially for information and communication technology (ICT), and outdoor space and equipment for the Foundation Stage², are having positive effects on learning. Overall the school is judged as having made very good progress since its last inspection, and as being well placed for future development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	A	A*	A	B
Writing	C	A*	B	B
Mathematics	C	A*	A	B

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table shows the school is performing well compared with all primary schools nationally and similar schools³. The trend over a five year period for those in Year 2 has been upward and matches the national profile. The school is particularly successful in enabling pupils to reach higher levels, with the proportions of seven year olds reaching Level 3 in Year 2001 being well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards currently for those in Year 2 and Year 4 are above average, with noted strengths in English, mathematics, science, ICT, history and religious education. In design and technology, geography and physical education standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils' attainment in English at the end of Year 4 is well above national expectations. The school has identified aspects of reading and writing as areas for further development. Against national expectations these elements are already above average and as such are only 'weaknesses' relative to the school. Overall, pupils make good progress from an average starting point when they first enter Year R.

At the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of children exceed the national expectations of the Early Learning Goals⁴ in personal and social education, communication, language and literacy, and mathematics. They meet those for physical and creative development, and for knowledge and understanding of the world.

² The Foundation Stage refers to children from entry, up to and including age six when they complete the reception year.

³ Schools with more than 8 per cent and up to 20 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals.

⁴ QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals' for children in this stage of education. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the age of six. There are six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.

Throughout the school standards of literacy and numeracy are above national expectations and these skills are used well to support other subjects. Standards for seven year olds appeared to dip in 2001 but the year group in question (now in Year 3) has a much higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and less than half of the whole year group has attended the school from the start of Year R. The school received an excellence award in 2000 for the performance of the now Year 4 pupils, when they were in Year 2, as being in the top five per cent of all primary schools nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils enjoy coming to school and readily take part. They are interested and keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good throughout the school with excellent features. Pupils respond very well to being very well managed. They know right from wrong and can be trusted to behave, even when not directly supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils are helped to become mature. They show very good consideration for others and get on well together. Relationships are judged excellent.
Attendance	Good being above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory with good features.	Good with very good features.	Good with very good features.

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.

In over four-fifths of lessons the quality of teaching was good or better, with almost a quarter very good and in two cases (a Year 4 circle time⁵ and a Year 2 gymnastics lesson) excellent. All teaching observed for Year 1 and Year 2 was at least good and in Year 3 and Year 4 often good. Teaching is a strength of the school and has very positive effects on pupils' learning. Teachers plan well, make very good use of assessment, manage pupils well and maintain very good relationships. As a result, pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well. Particular strengths in teaching are in literacy and numeracy, very good questioning, and presenting work at a variety of levels to include all pupils in all activities. Teaching and learning support assistants make a good contribution to teaching, especially for pupils with special educational needs. Staff know pupils well. Few weaknesses in teaching were noted, but areas for development are in: maintaining good pace; keeping to the school marking policy; and extending learning through play for the Foundation Stage even further. All teachers were observed, and all had at least two good lessons, with five teachers having very good sessions, and two excellent. Higher attaining pupils are well challenged and as a consequence their learning is often very good.

⁵ In these lessons, pupils sit in a circle and through agreed rules, have the opportunity to speak and listen to each other talking about issues, which touch them all.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: broad, balanced and relevant. The curriculum meets all requirements and is enhanced by a wide range of visits and visitors and the use of homework. There is a need to develop further (as intended) learning through more play opportunities in the newly introduced Foundation Stage curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision and support. Good planning for work at different ability levels complements good individual education plans. Teaching and learning assistants make a strong contribution to such support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, with excellent provision for moral and social development. Spiritual and cultural developments have been improved to good, with multicultural opportunities now satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: the school presents a safe, very good learning environment. Very good assessment leads to effective target setting for individual pupils. The school's ethos is very good. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good.

The school has very good links with parents and the community, and is particularly well supported by an active School Society. The school's reputation in its locality is high. It is seen as an integral part of village life.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the head very effectively leads the staff as a good team to promote the educational direction of the school. She manages the good school improvement plan very well to bring about change. Co-ordinators manage subjects effectively through good planning and monitoring.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors give good support. They make a positive contribution to management, especially in finance and developments to the building. Most statutory requirements are met with the minor exceptions of data in the brochure and the governors' report to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good review and analysis used effectively to identify strengths and areas for further development.
The strategic use of resources	Very good links between finance and educational priorities. Much improved planning. Staff, accommodation and resources used well to support the curriculum. Best value principles followed effectively. High financial carry forward suitably earmarked for further developments and to protect staffing.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is approachable.• It is well led.• Teaching is good.• Children like school.• Standards and progress are good and parents are kept well informed.	There was no consensus of negative views, but a small minority expressed concerns about homework and extracurricular activities.

Eighty-two parents completed the Ofsted questionnaire. At 68 per cent this is a very high return. The overwhelming response of parents is very positive. Inspectors are pleased to support parents' views. Provision for homework is judged good. Extracurricular activities in terms of clubs are now satisfactory, and when all additional opportunities which enhance the curriculum are taken into account, provision is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The good standards of attainment reported in the last inspection have been maintained and in some subjects there has been significant improvement. Standards in writing and speaking are above national expectations for seven year olds and well above for nine year olds. Standards in these aspects of English were judged as average in the previous inspection. Taking into account the broadly average levels of attainment on entry to the school, current results represent very good progress in English since the last inspection. Good standards have been maintained in mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 where judgements are formally made in this inspection.

2. The results attained by seven year olds in the 2001 national tests were well above average compared with all schools in reading and mathematics, and above average in writing and science. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average in all of the areas tested. The results in 2001 fell slightly compared to the previous year, due to increased levels of pupil turnover with a few low attaining pupils taken on roll just before the assessments and because there was a much higher percentage of special educational needs in this year group.

3. Inspection findings indicate that by the age of seven and when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 they achieve standards above expected levels in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, history, art and music. Attainment in design and technology, geography and physical education is in line with that expected nationally. This represents an improvement since the last inspection in art and history throughout the school and Years 1 and 2 in religious education. Standards in design and technology are no longer above expected levels at the end of Year 4. Taking into account the successful introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies since the last inspection, these high standards are creditable. The school has set targets to raise standards even higher: for example in writing. Pupils have their own individual targets for English and mathematics. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys.

4. The results of the school's assessment of reception children, and inspection evidence, show that attainment on entry is broadly average in all the areas of learning that are

assessed. Children settle into school life well. The consistent expectations of behaviour and the caring attitudes of all adults make a significant contribution to the children's sense of security. An example is the very positive, orderly start to the day. Progress is sound in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and by the time they are ready to start in Year 1, the majority of children will have met most of the Early Learning Goals and exceeded them in personal and social education, communication, language and literacy, and mathematics.

5. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. They make good progress against their prior achievement. Their individual learning plans are well matched to their needs and reviewed regularly. Teaching support assistants help to ensure that all pupils are focusing on their learning and contributing to oral work and discussions. All pupils are fully included in lessons. An example was an exercise in listening and memorising when lower attaining pupils were given early turns to promote success and build self esteem.

6. Progress in speaking and listening is good in Years 1, 2 and 3, and very good in Year 4. Listening is given a high priority from Year R and most pupils listen carefully to what is said. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to verbalise their thinking. For example, in mathematics pupils explain how they have solved a problem. In class discussions they express their opinions with clarity. In some lessons pupils make group presentations, and in others they compare different texts that re-tell traditional stories. Progress in reading is good throughout the school. Most pupils enjoy reading and the majority of parents support their children at home. Pupils recall details from favourite books and most average and higher attaining pupils read competently by the time they leave the school. Many pupils write fluently in a joined up style. Teachers provide good structure and many opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills effectively. An example in Year 2 was when pupils wrote a description so that others could identify the characters. Older pupils write for a variety of purposes and make very good progress in response to the lively approach adopted by teachers and tasks that are well matched to their abilities.

7. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of mathematics throughout the school. They develop their understanding of number bonds, recognise coins and can explain their strategies when calculating numbers mentally. They develop a good understanding of shape and measures. By the end of Year 4, pupils confidently define appropriate operations to solve problems and their ability to calculate using two and three digit numbers increases. The teaching methods, content and coverage of mathematics as recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy are having a positive effect on progress throughout the school.

8. In science, pupils make good progress. They are keen and curious and teachers use this effectively to stimulate lively discussions and promote thoughtful predictions prior to experimentation. An example was in a Year 4 lesson when pupils gave reasons for plants needing roots. One pupil said, "They soak up water just like a sponge." Younger pupils are excited by the opportunities to explore their sense of touch using materials such as clay, cotton wool and jelly. In science, pupils are encouraged to explore different senses, to observe closely and to think about their observations. They develop a good understanding of the properties of materials and develop their scientific language well as they move through the school.

9. Pupils make good progress in ICT. The subject is now considered in its own right, as well as a tool for supporting other areas. Improvements to resources have had a significant effect on learning and standards.

10. In religious education, art, music and history pupils make good progress. In design and technology, geography and physical education, progress is sound throughout the school. Where progress is good: well planned lessons, which motivate pupils; clear learning objectives, which pupils are made aware of; together with tasks which are well matched to the needs of pupils; contribute positively to good learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good with excellent aspects in physical education and circle time. Pupils are keen to come to school and most pupils show a good level of interest in their work. Many are involved in the range of lunchtime and after school clubs provided by the school. Even young children are able to sustain high levels of concentration. Pupils contribute readily in class and in whole school assemblies. Most are willing to express their views and pupils show respect for these views. They have highly developed speaking and listening skills and follow instructions accurately. Most are keen to make progress and complete tasks. Where they are given sufficient opportunities pupils show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning.

12. The behaviour of pupils is very good with excellent features. Occasional incidents are appropriately dealt with by staff. Pupils show a high degree of respect for property and equipment. Pupils are friendly, show courtesy and are trustworthy. The behaviour policy promotes good behaviour very effectively. All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, play an important part in promoting high standards of behaviour. The introduction of staggered times for eating lunch, basic play equipment, and playground markings, beneficially promote positive play. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are very well managed by the school and there have been no exclusions.

13. Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent and continue to be a strength of the school. They are based on mutual respect and positively promote learning. Pupils listen well to each other and show consideration for other people's feelings and values. This is particularly promoted by circle time held regularly in each class where pupils have the opportunity to reflect on what they do. Pupils are mutually supportive with older pupils supporting younger ones. Pupils are positively developing skills in collaborative working particularly in Year 4 and through the annual Christmas production.

14. The school is an orderly community where pupils readily take responsibility for their own actions and express themselves with considerable confidence. Pupils are developing an understanding of common values through, for example, their involvement in compiling class rules. They are keen to take responsibility and show initiative, particularly in the playground where pupils quickly collect the play equipment at the end of break and lunch times. Older pupils assist, for example, at lunch times and during assemblies.

15. Levels of pupil attendance at the school continue to be good and above the national average. Pupil attendance for the last reporting year is 95.1 per cent and the level of unauthorised absence was 0.2 per cent which is below the national average. There are isolated instances of persistent lateness among a few pupils. However, registration provides an orderly start to the morning and afternoon sessions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is a strength of the school. No lessons observed were unsatisfactory. All teachers were seen at work and all had at least two good lessons, four had very good sessions and two had excellent. Overall four-fifths of lessons were good or better with almost a quarter very good.

17. All teaching for Year 1 and Year 2 was at least good and most for Year 3 and Year 4 was good or better. Just under half of lessons in the Foundation Stage were good or better. The quality of teaching from teaching assistants and learning support assistants is good and this gives good support to pupils with special educational needs. Communication is good and all staff are clearly aware of the targets and objectives of such pupils' individual education

plans. All staff know pupils well and offer sensitive support as well as maintaining high expectations.

18. There are good features in all subjects. However, teaching is particularly noteworthy in literacy and numeracy, science, ICT and history. Teachers plan well and make good use of information derived from very good assessment procedures to provide good learning opportunities for all pupils. Work is very often set at a variety of ability levels and this benefits all pupils, but especially the more able, who consistently achieve above national expectations.

19. Clear strengths in teaching are in:

- Excellent relationships, establishing a secure atmosphere of trust where pupils are not afraid to make mistakes to learn from. Together with a strong commitment to raising and maintaining standards, this contributes to the school's very good ethos;
- Very good management of pupils, encouraging learning through praise and constructive criticism. This results in a very positive response from pupils;
- Good questioning techniques which require pupils to give reasoned opinions in full sentence answers and are directed at individuals to include them in activities and discussions: for example, "Why do you think it is important to have school rules?"
- Good knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum;
- Good use made of homework and extracurricular opportunities, such as visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum.

20. Few weaknesses in teaching were observed, but areas for further improvement, only relative to the school, include:

- Ensuring all lessons move with good pace and that activities are neither too short (such as only half an hour for physical education) nor overlong (for example: some religious education sessions are timetabled for an hour);
- Reviewing how teachers observe the school's marking policy to ensure consistency;
- Extending still further, indoor opportunities for those in the Foundation Stage to benefit from play activities, where children make choices and develop their independence and initiative.

21. Overall the good quality of teaching, improved since the last report, makes a significant contribution to the good and very good standards pupils achieve, both personally as well as academically. This quality is sustained not only through the hard work of staff, but as a result of good monitoring by head, subject co-ordinators and the local education authority advisor. This plays a major part in the success of the school in highlighting its own strengths and relative weaknesses in order to continue to improve.

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

22. Overall the school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which more than meets statutory requirements. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall and meets the requirements of the Code of Practice, and the school's provision for religious education fully meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school conducts a daily act of collective worship for its pupils that meets statutory requirements, and sex education is provided as part of a broader programme of health education.

23. The previous inspection reported that there was a need for monitoring of the curriculum and that the weak and unsatisfactory provision of extracurricular education was regarded as a key issue for future development. Both these concerns have now been addressed in full.

24. The curriculum is monitored on a structured and regular basis by the headteacher whilst the delivery of the curriculum is monitored by subject co-ordinators who are given time out of their classrooms in order to fulfil their duties effectively. Monitoring information is used to inform planning in English, mathematics and science and so aids progression and continuity of learning.

25. The quality of the curriculum and the range of learning opportunities offered to pupils are generally good, but satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. The school is aware that work to further enhance the Foundation Stage curriculum would improve provision and is planning for this. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are very good throughout the school. The previous inspection noted that teachers worked co-operatively to plan the curriculum carefully on a termly basis. The evidence gained during this inspection found this still to be the case. Overall the match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good and assists pupils to make at least satisfactory, and normally good, progress in all classes within the school.

26. The school successfully endeavours to ensure equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils so that they are included in all activities as far as possible. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and individual education plans are detailed and meet individual needs.

27. The previous inspection report considered pupils' personal development and relationships to be a strength of the school. Evidence gained during this inspection confirmed that pupils' personal development is good overall and that pupils were often excellently behaved. During the inspection pupils seemed to enjoy each other's company and would happily help other pupils if the need arose. There was a total absence of any oppressive behaviour, including bullying and sexism, and pupils showed that they had an excellent understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They respected each other's feelings, values and beliefs and their individual relationships with other pupils and with teachers, and other adults in the school was excellent overall.

28. The provision for extracurricular activities, criticised in the previous inspection report, is now good, when clubs and other additional opportunities such as visits, are taken into account, with some very good aspects. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities including football, learning to play recorders and violins, dance club and badminton. These activities are open to most older pupils regardless of gender. In addition pupils are given opportunities to take part in, for example, cycling proficiency courses and maypole dancing, and the school takes part in several outside events including the local Wimborne arts festival. During the inspection two school governors and a teacher took charge of a group of pupils learning to play badminton in the nearby village hall. The session, which was safe and well managed, was well supported by pupils, and both boys and girls made rapid progress at understanding the rules of the game and the techniques involved in playing it at an acceptable level.

29. The school is looked on as an integral part of the village and the community as a whole. Guest speakers from the locality, including the vicar and evangelical minister, have regularly addressed the pupils in assemblies and the school has combined with local clubs and societies to enhance curricular opportunities for pupils. For instance, pupils grow plants to be judged by the gardening club and perform for the over-sixties. The flourishing School Society organises the annual Maypole Spectacular, which has become a well known annual attraction in the area.

30. Relationships between the school and partner institutions are very good. The school belongs to a cluster of small schools around the Wimborne area and, although the cluster is only in its second year, it has already provided pupils with several additional learning opportunities. Relationships with the two middle schools to which most pupils transfer are

good overall. Transfer procedures are good and communication of information to and from the middle schools is generally very good.

31. The school makes very good provision overall for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. This represents an improvement since the last inspection which reported that, whereas the spiritual development of pupils was soundly promoted and the provision for social development was good, pupils' awareness of cultural diversity and their preparation for the multicultural nature of life in Britain was not well developed.

32. The school has recently updated its policy and presently, the provision for pupils' spiritual development, is good. It is promoted in classrooms and through shared assemblies and acts of collective worship. Religious education is used in part to promote spiritual awareness. The school's policy for spiritual development emphasises the importance of appreciating how people have individual and shared beliefs, and how these contribute to personal identity.

33. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils fully understand the difference between right and wrong and the whole ethos of the school is based on respect for others and taking personal responsibility. The school's core values of telling the truth, respecting the rights and property of others, self discipline, acting considerately and respecting the environment, are all embedded in the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, which are often excellent. Pupils are friendly towards adults and each other and an atmosphere of trust and openness exists within the school.

34. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent and this is linked in many ways to the moral development of the pupils as they are taught awareness and respect for others from the time they enter the school until the day they leave. They have good role models in the adults who work in the school. Pupils work together co-operatively and help each other when required and all age groups mix well in the playground at break and lunchtime when they do not seem to act in any way unsociably towards each other. Overall, pupils are polite and friendly and eager to be of assistance. Good use is made of circle time to reinforce positive attitudes. In these lessons pupils sit in a circle and through agreed rules are given the opportunity to listen to each other and talk about issues that concern them.

35. There is good provision for pupils' cultural development, but pupils have limited multicultural awareness. However, although there is quite limited contact between the school and people from other cultures, the school teaches about other ways of life and this represents improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are given opportunities to study different cultures within subject areas. Year 1 pupils, for instance, have studied Indian culture and had made Divali bowls in design and technology. In addition many pupils had studied the native culture of Australia and examples of Aborigine shields and boomerangs as well as a wide variety of Aboriginal paintings made by pupils, were on display throughout the school during the period of the inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Teachers have a very good knowledge of pupils and their families and monitor personal development informally. Procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress have significantly improved since the last inspection and are now a strength of the school. They are based on targets which are regularly reviewed with parents and pupils. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and appropriate individual education plans are in place. Circle time is very effectively used in each class to promote personal and social education.

37. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and very supportive. Induction procedures into the school are good involving a Year 3, Year 4 and Foundation Stage buddy system and a transitional programme of visits which build on the close links with the pre-

school group. Pupils are well prepared for middle school education and transfer to middle schools is smooth. Pupils make several visits, Year 5 teachers visit and staff from middle schools liaise regarding pupils' learning.

38. The behaviour policy provides clear expectations and includes a brief statement regarding bullying. The emphasis is on positive behaviour through a scheme of rewards and sanctions where whole classes are rewarded with 'golden time' or 'privileged play'. The policy is consistently implemented and there is very good support from all staff, including lunch time supervisors. A range of strategies is in place to promote good behaviour, but whilst the school has a policy on pupil restraint in place, it has no formal strategies with regard to racial issues.

39. The management of pupils' attendance is satisfactory and strategies are being developed to monitor and promote good attendance. Registers are accurately marked with the exception of the incorrect authorisation of extended holidays. Liaison with the education welfare officer is good but day to day monitoring of pupil absences by the school is informal, too infrequent and over reliant on class teachers.

40. The headteacher is the designated person responsible for child protection. The school child protection policy has been developed from the recently updated county policy. Staff are aware of basic procedures, but have had little training and guidance with regard to child protection issues. The school buildings and equipment are in very good condition and procedures are in place to monitor pupils' health and safety. These are effective with the exception of a few aspects of pupils' safety of which the school is now aware. Procedures for school visits are satisfactory. Staff, including appropriately trained first aid personnel, are on duty at key points of the school day.

41. Visitors come into the school from the community: for example, local clergy, the school nurse and drama groups. Each class undertakes several visits linked to the curriculum, for example, to exhibitions, a synagogue and for activity days at outdoor education centres. Good use is made of the local community and its resources. Links with other schools are very good and are primarily through the local cluster group. The school participates in headteacher forums, in sporting events, in specialist dance, art and music events, and in a Caribbean celebration. Teachers in training come into the school.

42. The school's links with the community have significantly improved since the last inspection and are now very good. There are strong links with the village and a close working relationship with the neighbouring pre-school group. The school uses the village hall for badminton in Year 4 and for the annual Christmas production. It invites members of the local community to events and celebrations, distributes harvest parcels among those in need, and has participated in local arts events. A number of community groups use the site, for example, a holiday play scheme, yoga, football and swimming clubs, and funding is being sought for an after school club. The school supports several national charitable causes.

43. Assessment has been significantly improved since the last inspection and it is now a strength of the school. The school successfully uses assessment to inform planning and teaching in subjects including literacy, numeracy, science, ICT and religious education. Assessment procedures to determine pupils' attainment on entry (known as baseline assessment) are used effectively to provide appropriate tasks to match the needs of the Foundation Stage children and to track progress through the school. Statutory assessment data is carefully analysed and the results used to inform strategic planning. An example of this is the school's planned emphasis on improving number after Year 3 non-statutory mathematics tests showed a number of pupils experienced difficulty with calculation using three digit numbers. This was subsequently developed by improved planning. Ninety-three per cent of parents reported that they felt well informed about their children's progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The school's links with parents are very good. Very good regular newsletters and letters inform parents about practical matters and specific events. Regularly updated curriculum information is on display and distributed to parents. Parents of children in the Foundation Stage participate in excellent regular literacy and numeracy workshops with their children. The home school agreement is successfully in place and parents are regularly consulted through focused questionnaires for their views. Reading record books and homework folders provide a valuable communication channel between home and school and homework is consistently monitored. Parents find the headteacher and staff approachable and feel that complaints are appropriately dealt with.

45. Parents receive information about their child's progress through end of year written reports and through consultation meetings held each term. End of year reports provide an annual attendance record, subject based assessments, an assessment of personal development, and specific targets focused primarily on English and mathematics. Assessments of attainment and progress are very good and measured against pupils' individual targets. Parents and pupils are involved in the setting of pupil targets. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily involved in their annual reviews.

46. Parents are very supportive of pupils' learning and a number are actively involved in school life. They make a valuable contribution on the governing body as well as in daily school life. Parents and other volunteers help in classrooms, with activities and on educational outings. The School Society is organised by parents, and the headteacher and staff are very supportive. The society is active in its promotion of social and fundraising events making an excellent contribution to the life of the school and the local community, most noticeably though the annual maypole celebration, the summer fair and the swimming club. Parents are very committed to the school and the reputation of the school in the area is excellent. The swimming pool is entirely funded as a result of the involvement of the society. Some parents expressed concerns about homework and extracurricular activities. The inspection team found homework to be good and extracurricular activities including clubs and additional curriculum opportunities, to be of good quality.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The leadership and the management of the headteacher (ably supported by the deputy) are very good. She has established a clear educational direction for the school and co-ordinates and manages developments through the very good school development plan.

48. Improvements since the last report have been very well managed. Very good progress in development planning means priorities are clearly identified and supported financially, as well as through establishing timescales and responsibilities. Criteria for success are established well in advance to judge progress and the success of initiatives are closely monitored for effectiveness. Assessment procedures have been improved to very good, accurately measuring the impact of provision, adding another dimension to monitoring.

49. The head leads the staff as a good team. There is a good range of expertise and experience to support and manage the curriculum and this is regularly updated through in-service training. Systems for performance management of staff are well established. Subject co-ordinators manage effectively making good use of finance to ensure there is a very good, well resourced learning environment. A notable exception being that the library is inadequate as a centre to support the curriculum. The school already knows this and plans are being considered to improve the situation.

50. Together the staff are good at identifying strengths and relative weaknesses, and planning appropriate action. As a result this inspection raises no key issues for improvement. Without exception minor issues highlighted were already appreciated by the school.

51. Governors continue to give the school good support. The governing body is well organised in committees which regularly review the success of provision. This is especially successful in terms of efficient financial management following the principles of best value and in developing accommodation. Currently the school has a relatively large surplus in its carry forward (approximately 18 per cent of its base budget). This money is earmarked both to protect staffing ratios until school numbers begin to rise, and to provide further improvements to resources and accommodation. All grants are used very effectively for designated purposes: for example to support special educational needs.

52. Governors maintain good links with the school especially with regard to special educational needs, and a variety of governors help with reading and extracurricular activities: notably in excellent badminton teaching. However, some subject areas are without designated governors and this is not as successful as it once was in developing understanding. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities with regard to the curriculum and health and safety (although some minor issues of security and outside lighting were drawn to their attention). However, neither the governors annual report, or the school brochure, contains all required information. Currently some elements of the governors report are still written by staff rather than governors. Reversing this process will further develop communication.

53. The school manages provision for pupils' personal development well and keeps good records, but there is a need to further improve procedures for monitoring attendance and authorising absence to avoid sanctioning inappropriate absence.

54. Although overall special educational needs have a lower than average profile in the school, this is subject to fluctuations: for example only four per cent of pupils in Year R are on the special educational needs register whilst 34 per cent of those in Year 3 are supported in this way. Provision and support for such pupils is very well managed with the result that pupils make good progress and achieve well for their abilities. Individual education plans and communication with parents are good and this adds to the school's very good reputation and ethos.

55. Overall the school is well run. Standards are at least above averages and expectations; staff, very good accommodation and good resources are used very well. The quality of provision is good (not least of which is teaching). However, current arrangements for caretaking leave the headteacher with too much to do in this direction.

56. Although costs per pupil are above the national average for primary schools, they match the school's income and Sturminster Marshall First School continues to give good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In the context of this very good school there are no key issues for head, governors and staff to address.

Minor issues, which are only weaknesses relative to the school, are in:

- Further developing the curriculum for the Foundation Stage;
Paragraphs: 25, 65, 68, 69, 73.
- Further developing some aspects of teaching, including pace of some lessons and attention to the marking policy;
Paragraphs: 20, 89, 94, 139, 140, 146.
- Improving procedures for monitoring attendance;
Paragraphs: 39, 53.
- Improving caretaking arrangements;
Paragraph: 55.
- Attending to matters of health and safety brought to governors' attention, minor omissions in the annual report and school prospectus, and raising still further staff awareness of child protection procedures.
Paragraphs: 38, 40, 52.
- Improving library provision.
Paragraph: 49, 89.

It is acknowledged that the above issues have already been identified by the school as part of its ongoing development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	7	25	7	0	0	0
Percentage	5	17	61	17	0	0	0

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 two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	119
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	10

Special educational needs

	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	17

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	12	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	11	12	12
	Total	23	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (94)	92 (94)	96 (94)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	12	12	11
	Total	24	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (94)	92 (94)	92 (94)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	119
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR–Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.3
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR–Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 – 2001
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	£
Total income	289090
Total expenditure	283622
Expenditure per pupil	2100
Balance brought forward from previous year	48078
Balance carried forward to next year	53546

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	120
Number of questionnaires returned	82

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	37	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	44	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	56	9	1	1
The teaching is good.	68	29	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	33	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	16	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	41	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	39	54	5	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	66	27	1	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	45	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	61	11	0	1

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

58. In the previous report provision for those children under five was satisfactory with strengths in personal and social development and mathematics. Since then children up to and including six years of age have been redefined as being part of the Foundation Stage of education and a new national programme of learning and skills in the form of Early Learning Goals has been identified. Planning derived from these goals is being introduced in the school and deficiencies in resources and space raised in the last inspection have been addressed.

59. Children, whose attainment on entry is assessed as average by the local education authority, receive a satisfactory grounding for future work when they begin Year 1. They achieve good standards in literacy and numeracy when considered against the expectations of the National Curriculum. All children begin school in the academic year in which they are five, attending part time until Christmas when they become full time. All children have attended some form of pre-school group (many actually on the school site) before coming to the school.

Personal, social and emotional development

60. The good situation described in the last inspection has been maintained. Children get on well together and with staff, sharing and taking turns. They behave very well and show consideration for each other, resources and the building. The school integrates Foundation Stage children well, involving them in all activities such as assembly, school productions and the use of the hall and music room. Very good links with playgroups and parents help the school to be aware of individual children's needs. This is consistent with the very good level of care throughout the school. The teacher and staff working in Year R know children well and are sensitive to their experience and needs. Teaching for this aspect is good and has positive effects on learning.

61. By the time they move into Year 1 children exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals for personal and social development. The overwhelming majority having completed the recognised Stepping Stones in this aspect: for example being able to dress and undress themselves for physical education, and following school routines and lunch arrangements. Children respond well to school and most enjoy coming.

Communication, language and literacy

62. Because the school introduces Year R children to the style of the National Literacy Strategy before it is recommended in Year 1, children experience and fulfil some of the early expectations prior to completing the Foundation Stage. In this respect their skills of speaking and listening, reading and emergent writing are above national expectations and Early Learning Goals for this age group. From these points of view teaching and learning are good.

63. Children listen well and, when prompted, take part in discussions. Average and high attaining children often take the initiative and readily volunteer news and suggestions. By the time they are six most children can recognise and write their names and are reading and sequencing familiar stories accurately. A minority of higher attaining children are able to read at Level 1 of the National Curriculum, beginning to associate sounds with letters and blends.

64. Children are encouraged to commit themselves to paper leading from drawing and painting to 'writing' which conveys some meaning. More able children are able to make recognisable marks which represent words, and show that they understand the link between

sounds and letters. No role play or dressing up activities were observed during the inspection but planning shows they do take place.

Mathematical development

65. Children are introduced to the style of the National Numeracy Strategy early in Year R which is before normally recommended. They demonstrate that they are enthusiastic to join in mathematics activities and learn and use appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Children are involved in activities which help them to learn to count and see patterns in number which help them towards understanding simple addition and subtraction. Because activities are planned more in terms of mathematics as a subject for this age group as opposed to providing opportunities to experiment and learn through play, children are not all secure in their understanding of comparative concepts. For example limited opportunities to explore shape, size and texture, and explore the properties of materials of their own choice, means that some children, although well behaved, do not yet show sufficient initiative which would develop into problem solving. However, children make satisfactory progress overall and most receive a good grounding for future work in Year 1.

66. In the best teaching, interaction between staff and children is good. Adults use terms such as 'bigger than' and 'less than' to encourage children to estimate and compare, with positive effects on learning.

67. By the time current children will complete Year R they are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals for mathematics and most show that they enjoy working with numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

68. The last report criticised children's attainment in this aspect. Improvements have been made to provision especially to include the use of computers to support reading and enable children to follow and control simple simulations. As a result children's early information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good. However, although there have been improvements to resources and space for outdoor play, children still have relatively few opportunities to be independent in their learning. For example they do not often choose activities or materials and equipment. There are clear intentions in school planning to encourage children's learning through play, but as yet these are still being developed in this, the Foundation Stage.

69. Although the basic requirements of the Early Learning Goals are met by the time children move to Year 1, because the six areas of children's development are considered separately on the timetable, opportunities are sometimes missed to make the most of links in firsthand experience. For example when children are involved in building with construction kits, opportunities are not always created to make connections with designing and making of children's own choice.

70. During the inspection good work was observed with children being directed to look at building materials in an extension of the 'Three Little Pigs' story. Children responded well and good relationships were noted. This constituted a good teaching situation with clear objectives and very good control and children learnt a lot about the properties of such materials.

Physical development

71. Children have a satisfactory range of opportunities to explore the potential of their bodies. Satisfactory teaching means that:

- Children are extended mentally and physically in the wider space of the hall in physical education sessions;
- Children make use of ride-on and balancing large toys in the secure area outside. Although this is not an easy area to supervise when adults are focusing on activities in the classroom and this tends to restrict outdoor use;
- Children enjoy using a range of large and small construction kits and learn to use a variety of tools and small objects. This has positive effects on hand/eye co-ordination skills such as cutting and making techniques.

72. By the end of Year R children meet the Early Learning Goals in terms of their physical development.

Creative development

73. Children respond well to opportunities to draw, make, paint, explore and express their feelings. Although sometimes a lack of structured play negatively affects opportunities to explore and experiment with ideas and materials, children do demonstrate that they feel secure and can try new experiences. For example they mix colours well and use their imagination effectively to produce paintings and collages.

74. Teaching is sound with good features in helping children to express their thoughts in response to what they see and touch. For example in group work on building materials children were successfully encouraged to describe texture and give their preferences, whilst predicting which would be strongest. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall, being at its best when children experiment for themselves.

75. Overall the reception is a well ordered, secure area, where relationships are very good and children's response is positive. Behaviour is very good and this is a successful beginning to formal school life.

76. A particular strength is the quality of support from parents. The parents' workshop every Wednesday, where adults join children for a wide range of activities is not only fun, but informative for parents. This has very positive effects on learning, and communications between home and school. It is an excellent feature which has been developed over several years.

77. The quality of assessment and recording in both academic and personal terms is good and feeds target setting, both for the individual child and planning overall.

ENGLISH

78. The last report judged standards in English to be average for seven year olds and above expectations for those aged nine. This positive profile has been built on and pupils' attainment is now above average at the end of Year 2 and well above national expectations at the end of Year 4. Throughout the school standards are good with pupils achieving well to move from average attainment on entry to Year R (measured by the baseline assessment of the local education authority) to very good by the time they leave.

79. Results of national assessments for seven year olds show the school's results to be consistently very good in reading over the four year period 1998 to 2001. This is mirrored by the trend in writing which is nearly as good. Over the whole period it is clear that pupils with special educational needs are helped to do well considering their ability and experience and that higher attaining pupils do very well. In 2001 the proportion of Year 2 pupils achieving the

higher level (Level 3) in reading was well above average (42 per cent compared with 29 per cent). In writing a very creditable 23 per cent reached Level 3 compared with only 9 per cent nationally. When seen in the light of high levels of special educational needs (34 per cent) in this year group and that over half of the pupils had joined the school other than in Year R, this is a substantial achievement.

80. Results for pupils who are currently in Year 4 when they were in Year 2 put the school in the top 5 per cent of all primaries nationally. Their performance has been maintained (albeit that from the school's comments pupils did not make such good progress when part of a mixed age class in 2000 to 2001) and standards for nine year olds are well above expectations. Comparisons with similar schools based on eligibility for free school meals, confirm that the school continues to do well in English both for boys and girls.

81. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils build successfully on the good standards of communication, language and literacy achieved in Year R. Pupils listen well and are developing confidence in speaking. They take part in discussions and demonstrate good levels of vocabulary. Pupils are learning to express their feelings and show that they are considering those of others. For example in a Year 1 literacy lesson on creative writing pupils explained how characters felt, making good use of full sentence answers. Year 2 demonstrated very good use of high quality literacy, communication and reasoning skills in both their discussion of each others' performances in balancing on equipment; and when analysing key concepts of Jesus' parables in religious education.

82. Years 3 and 4 continue this very good profile. An excellent example being a very mature discussion of the need for rules in Year 4 circle time. By the time they leave most pupils (especially higher attainers) are able to communicate very effectively orally, with those with special educational needs gaining in confidence and achieving well for their ability.

83. Reading skills are developed well throughout the school and are above average by the age of seven when pupils read accurately and fluently and appreciate a variety of texts. Pupils express opinions based on their preferences, Harry Potter being a particular favourite, and demonstrate that they have strategies to decipher unfamiliar words. A variety of parents and governors regularly hear pupils read in school. The school successfully encourages pupils to sound words out (phonetically) and establish word meanings logically from the gist of the text. Standards are above average. Good progress is maintained and by the age of nine most pupils are well above national expectations. Their understanding of sequences, significant ideas and characters is good, with higher attainers showing very good inference skills. For example a Year 4 boy demonstrated sophisticated reading skills, drawing on examples from a variety of different books to explain the author, Roald Dahl's style.

84. Throughout the school boys are doing as well as girls in reading and writing which is better than the national trend and is a credit to the school's efforts to present reading in particular, in an interesting way.

85. Most pupils currently in Year 2 are on line to be above average in writing by the end of the school year. This builds well on work started in Year R and continued throughout Year 1. Pupils' books demonstrate consistent progress in handwriting, spelling and use of punctuation. In Year 2 pupils are already using connectives and higher attainers are writing in complex sentences. Work in the style of Samuel Pepys about the Fire of London in history, and writing instructions: for example 'planting a bean' in science, are of a good standard.

86. By the end of the current Year 4 writing is likely to be well above national expectations. There are very good examples of pupils having drafted and redrafted Year 3 work in character as Vikings to support topic work; and of Year 4 pupils' very good structure and consideration of the audience when writing their own versions of the myths and legends surrounding Daedalus and Icarus. Pupils achieve very well with a high proportion already at or near the

level expected for eleven year olds and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, now in Year 4 at least in line with national expectations.

87. It was not possible to see drama during the inspection, but discussions with staff, parents and pupils show that formal drama for much appreciated school productions, and improvised drama: for example arising from history topic work on Vikings, does take place.

88. The quality of English teaching is consistently at least good in all classes with over a third very good. Particular strengths are in the quality of questioning, class management, provision for those with special educational needs and extension work for higher attainers. Work is underpinned by good subject planning, very good assessment and its use to analyse areas for improvement, and excellent relationships. Throughout, support staff (who make a strong contribution to support for special educational needs), accommodation and resources are used well and the pace of English lessons (consistent with the National Literacy Strategy) is good. Pupils' response and learning are of good and very good quality, as a result of good teaching. For example Year 3 pupils' performance was enhanced by each interaction with the teacher in developing written analysis of traditional writing 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Pupils began to make good reference to the text and compare their own work with it. One child declared, "Mine was different because I did not describe the smell of the wolf!"

89. The subject is very well co-ordinated by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic teacher. She provides advice and support for other staff and monitors planning, teaching and standards very effectively. Resources have been systematically improved making good use of funds and grants since the last report. The school is aware that the library is too small and does not lend itself to promoting research skills. Planning to overcome this is being considered. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that although work is marked, school policy is not consistently applied. However, targets are set for individuals and this, together with good use of homework, helps pupils to make progress.

MATHEMATICS

90. Pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 attain standards which exceed those expected nationally for their ages in numeracy and all areas of mathematics. These inspection findings confirm that the school is maintaining the above average standards reported at the last inspection.

91. The results of 2001 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds show attainment is well above average. When compared with similar schools, results are still above average. The percentage of pupils exceeding the expected level is consistently well above average. These results represent good progress in the subject from a starting point that is broadly average in the county assessments for reception children. There are no significant differences in the performance of girls and boys. The good progress is maintained until pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 and includes pupils with special educational needs, who are supported well. Trends over time are consistent with the national profile.

92. By the age of seven, most pupils have a sound knowledge of place value to 100 and beyond. They confidently use a series of terms that means 'plus' or 'minus' and the teacher's good questioning techniques ensure that all pupils contribute to mental mathematics sessions. Year 1 pupils practise looking for doubles when adding a series of numbers. They discover that their answers are all even numbers. All pupils participated in the session with enthusiasm because the teacher matched her questions to draw out pupils' learning at appropriate levels. Pupils make rapid progress and in Year 2 they explore ways of rearranging a series of numbers to facilitate addition. They work co-operatively with partners and one pair was very excited to discover that addition can be done in any order and the total remains the same. Pupils use mental strategies to solve simple problems set in money or measurement contexts. They use the mathematical names for common two-dimensional

and three-dimensional shapes such as triangle, hexagon, cylinder and pyramid and describe some of their features.

93. Pupils in Year 3 recognise the coins in our monetary system and can work out what coins are needed to pay for different items. Pupils consolidate and extend their learning well as they solve simple problems. Their teacher's challenging strategies promote good learning and keen pupil participation. Estimation is used well to develop mathematical concepts. In Year 4, pupils discover how to calculate the area of simple shapes by multiplying the length and breadth. The teacher gave a clear explanation to the pupils who were confused by the terms perimeter and area. Those pupils, who grasped the concepts easily, enjoyed an extension challenge constructing their own shapes with a specified area. There were good gains in learning for all pupils because the teacher had organised the lesson well and the tasks were well matched to pupils' needs. In topics about space and shape, learning is supported by a computer program whereby pupils give instructions to a programmable toy using everyday words to describe position and direction. Data handling is supported by the use of computers to represent the results of data collected.

94. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2 some lessons are very good. In those lessons, pupils' thinking is extended well, they use practical apparatus and they are encouraged to set out their work for themselves. All lessons seen were good or better. In a few lessons the pace slackened when the mental mathematics sessions were over long. The school had identified this situation during its own lesson monitoring and recently changed the length of most numeracy sessions. Teachers are familiar with the National Numeracy Strategy and they apply it effectively. The three part lesson structure is soundly established. Pupils use mathematics to help learning in other subjects. For example in oral and mental sessions, pupils explain their thinking clearly which helps to develop speaking skills.

95. Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics and their behaviour are very good. This is primarily because of the good teaching and positive relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers nurture pupils' self esteem and confidence in the subject. Support staff are particularly effective in monitoring that all pupils are following the lesson. This has a positive impact on learning by ensuring that all pupils are fully included.

96. Teachers assess pupils' attainment twice yearly using nationally recognised tests to track attainment. The results are used well to track pupils' progress from year to year. Individual and group targets are set and adjustments made to curriculum planning. Management of mathematics is good. The subject is co-ordinated by the headteacher. Teaching is regularly monitored and evaluated which is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

97. Standards of attainment in science are above national expectations both at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 4. This is a direct result of good teaching and planning in science. This represents a maintaining of standards since the previous inspection which reported that: pupils made good progress through the school; that pupils with special educational needs were well supported; and that standards of attainment in science were above national expectations.

98. All pupils, of both genders, including those with special educational needs, presently make good overall progress throughout the school in science and attainment is above average in all year groups. Most work in science is based on the acquisition of knowledge and, more importantly, the development of scientific understanding. The school's scheme of work emphasises the need for a 'hands-on' approach to the subject and the importance of methodically building up the investigative skills of pupils to enable them to undertake scientific

enquiry in a meaningful way. Long term, medium term and short term planning fully reflect this.

99. Standards of work seen in classrooms and an analysis of work in pupils' books indicated that many pupils were working at levels appropriate to their ages and abilities. Most made good progress and achieved well although, in a few cases, work was not always clearly matched to pupil ability and therefore the progress of some pupils was less well defined. On the whole, work from all year groups was of a high standard and contained evidence of coverage of all areas related to the National Curriculum programme of study, especially in relation to investigative science. Pupils had been given opportunities to observe and explore a variety of living things, materials and phenomena. Year 1 pupils had investigated a selection of scientific topics including magnetic attraction and the properties of materials. They had been introduced to the concept of a 'fair' test and the importance of using knowledge and understanding when predicting outcomes. Year 2 pupils had completed a topic on electricity and were able to build electrical circuits which included bulbs and switches, whilst the Year 3 class had carried out investigations on, for example, absorbency and hardness, and had completed work on the importance of a good diet. Within these topic areas pupils had built up their understanding of the importance of fair testing and of justifying predictions. Year 4 work continued to build on this and showed evidence of some well planned experiments and investigations. A majority of work produced by these pupils showed evidence of a good level of scientific understanding.

100. In every class pupils' attitudes to science are good and pupils seem to enjoy the subject. They look forward to science lessons and sometimes the younger pupils cannot contain their excitement. Pupils in all classes work well together and support each other when required. The structured build up of skills in scientific enquiry throughout the school for all ability groups has resulted in all pupils being included in all activities in lessons in this subject.

101. The quality of science teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall. There was evidence that teachers planned together and shared ideas and good practice. Most teachers displayed good subject knowledge and their planning and lesson delivery reflected this. When teaching was very good it captured the interest of the pupils. In addition, planning was effective, objectives clearly stated, pupil expectations were high and resources were well used. In an observed Year 4 lesson investigating how water rises through plants, planning was very effective and the content of the lesson was very well linked to the previous experiences of the pupils who were encouraged to join in all activities, especially the well structured question and answer session which probed pupils' knowledge. The teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject was evident and made the pupils keen to complete the activities, and so aided learning. By the end of the session lesson objectives had been achieved, learning had taken place and pupils' work reflected this.

102. Management and leadership in science are good. The co-ordinator, who is not a science specialist herself, has held the post for several years and in this time has developed the school's scheme of work well to reflect the needs of pupils and maximise the expertise of the staff, many of whom have not been given the opportunity for further professional development in this subject for several years.

103. The present scheme, which is followed in every class, is linked well to the National Curriculum and to whole school planning. It covers all aspects of science and emphasises the importance of building up skills in scientific investigation. Teachers' planning and delivery of science is monitored and supported on a regular basis by the co-ordinator and the subject generally enjoys a high profile within the school. Individual pupil progress in all areas of science is closely monitored and assessed systematically on a regular basis by class teachers who use the school's three tier assessment scheme, presently under review, when making their judgements. Assessment is then used to inform future planning.

104. Resources for teaching science are generally good and support all areas of study associated with the National Curriculum. Most are up to date and are easily accessed and well used by all teachers. In addition pupils have opportunities to use the school's pond and wildlife area to study habitats and living things. ICT is used to reinforce learning in science and pupils, for instance, use computer programs when learning about how animals live.

ART AND DESIGN

105. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall in developing their skills in art and design during their time at the school. Although only a limited number of lessons were observed during the period of the inspection, a high proportion of evidence, including the scrutiny and analysis of displays of pupils' work in classrooms and throughout the school, indicated that, by the end of Year 2 attainment in art was above national expectations. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 made similar good progress. This represents an overall improvement in standards since the last inspection, which reported that attainment was satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and above national expectations by the end of Year 4.

106. In Year 1 work in art is linked to design and technology although in Year 2 art is taught as a separate subject. Pupils in both year groups have been given opportunities to use a variety of materials to design and make artefacts such as those associated with the Aborigine culture of Australia. Displays of pupils' work in these two classes confirm that pupils have been given good opportunities to explore and develop their own ideas. Pupils' use of colours is especially vivid, particularly in Aboriginal paintings. In addition Year 1 pupils have been given the opportunity to study the work of different artists and have painted pictures in various artistic styles. Work on display in the Year 2 classroom links art to ICT with computer generated paintings.

107. By Year 4 pupils have continued to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject and overall progression is evident in the work they produce. The Year 3 classroom is decorated with full size Aborigine shields and realistically designed boomerangs. Year 4 pupils have completed similar work to a higher standard and are able to communicate ideas and meaning well through the medium of art and design. Overall progression in building up skills could be seen throughout the school and this was generally reflected in the work scrutinised from different age groups.

108. The quality of teaching and learning in the limited number of lessons observed during the inspection was satisfactory. In one Year 3 lesson, linking art to ICT, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, were enthusiastic and displayed positive attitudes towards the subject, but a small minority generally wasted time and worked only intermittently. A majority of pupils seemed keen to do well and for most of the session were engrossed in the task of drawing and painting a Viking character. They displayed good painting skills and one pupil, having run out of the sky blue paint she had mixed from other colours, was able to mix nearly the exact colour again! The work seemed challenging enough, but still within the capabilities of the pupils. Overall the class teacher's planning and delivery of the lesson was satisfactory and the session flowed smoothly. By the end of the observation many pupils had already produced good work whilst others were still deeply engaged in their tasks. It was noticeable that all pupils were included in all activities.

109. The subject is satisfactorily led by the co-ordinator and her areas of responsibility have been agreed with the headteacher. The school's art and design policy links in well to the whole school scheme of work, which has recently been reviewed in order to make it more challenging and interesting for pupils. Resources for teaching art and design are generally good and easily accessed by teachers.

110. Displays of pupils' work in classes and around the school are at least good and usually very good. This reflects the continued high profile and importance of the subject to pupils and teachers. Links between art and design and other subject areas, including ICT and design and technology are good. There is however little evidence of the use of assessment to inform planning in art, or the use of assessment procedures in general, even though the teaching and delivery of the subject is monitored by the co-ordinator.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

111. Owing to timetabling arrangements it was not possible to observe any design and technology lessons during the period of the inspection. Evidence drawn from both the scrutiny of pupils' work on display, and from teachers' planning, indicated that the subject was satisfactorily covered during the course of the school year. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations both at the end of Year 4 and at the end of Year 2. This represents a slight lowering of standards since the last inspection, which reported that pupils' attainment in Year 4 was above that expected nationally, although attainment at the end of Year 2 was in line with national expectations.

112. Design and technology is presently taught as a stand alone subject in Years 2 and 3 and combined with art in Years 1 and 4. As pupils move through the school they are given opportunities to use an increasing range of tools and materials and this is evident in the work they produce. The school's scheme of work, which is linked well to the National Curriculum, is detailed and comprehensive and emphasises the importance attached to building up pupils' skills gradually in designing and making as well as evaluating.

113. Work on display in Year 1 showed that pupils had been given the opportunity to design and make Divali bowls. They had, in addition, completed tasks designing and making models of houses with hinged doors and windows. By the number of these models on display it was evident that they represented the work of nearly all the pupils and were not just examples of best practice. Many of the models had been very well made and contained evidence that pupils had used skills such as measuring and marking out when constructing their houses.

114. Year 2 pupils had designed and made moving vehicles. Digital photographs of their completed models were on display in the school's 'Art Gallery' together with examples of how pupils had planned, constructed and evaluated their vehicles. The display was impressive but may have not been typical of the general standard of work. However, compared with the work of Year 1 pupils, it showed clear evidence of progression in designing and making as pupils progressed through the school.

115. Work of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils was linked well to the school's scheme of work. Some of the work in Year 3 was based on food technology and the pupils had been given the opportunity to make sandwiches. Impressive Aborigine shields and boomerangs decorated the walls of the classroom. Overall evidence showed that pupils had continued to develop their skills in designing and making and had been given opportunities to further explore their own ideas. Many of the artefacts they had produced showed that they had used tools and equipment with some accuracy to cut and shape materials. Year 4 work was similar to that produced by Year 3 pupils, but the standard of finished articles was higher. Planning and evaluation seemed more realistic and there was evidence that reflection had been more a part of the overall process than in Year 3. In all year groups pupils' attitudes to design and technology were good.

116. The subject is effectively led and managed by the co-ordinator and resources for teaching all aspects of the subject are good overall, easily accessed and well used. The co-ordinator has recently reviewed the school's policy for the subject and, as a result, the present policy is an improvement and is detailed and covers aspects such as equality of opportunity and special educational needs as well as health and safety.

117. Links between design and technology and other subjects, such as art and multicultural education, were evident from teachers' planning and pupils' work. However links to ICT were not as evident. In addition, there was little evidence of the use of assessment to inform planning or the use of assessment procedures in general.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

118. Standards in geography have been maintained since the previous inspection and pupils' attainment meets national expectations at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4. However, since the last inspection, standards in history have improved and they are now above expectations for seven and nine year olds. The improvement is due to the high profile given to historical enquiry skills and practical first hand experiences. History projects are covered in sufficient depth and the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. All pupils are fully included in the humanities curriculum and those with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards in both subjects.

119. By the age of seven pupils develop sound understanding of how geographical features are represented on plans. In Year 1, pupils describe and draw simple routes around their classroom with a developing awareness of mapping skills. Well devised practical activities promote good learning that is well extended in Year 2 during an environmental walk from Hengistbury Head to the beach. Orienteering skills and geographical vocabulary are developed well when pupils examine the features of their surroundings. For example, pupils devise their own symbols and keys to mark physical features.

120. Nine year old pupils use a widening range of geographical skills to investigate other localities in Dorset. Outdoor education facilities are used well to develop appropriate fieldwork techniques such as the use of instruments and maps with varying scales. Pupils develop geographical enquiry skills and extend their knowledge of the world during history projects. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 identify the parts of the world where Vikings invaded and later settled. They use atlases, maps, reference books and computers to study the effects of climatic conditions on crops and people's employment. Pupils build profiles about the Ancient Egyptians by researching materials used to build homes, means of transport, food crops and the skills of craftsmen.

121. The quality of teaching is good in Years 1 and 2. Although it was not possible to see any geography lessons in Years 3 and 4 during the inspection, discussion with pupils and scrutiny of work samples showed good planning across the school so that pupils make steady gains in geographical skills. Lessons are carefully designed to extend pupils' learning through enquiry and practical investigations. Pupils respond positively to the subject and they are eager to participate in activities. Behaviour is good and pupils work together well sharing ideas and information.

122. By the age of seven, pupils understanding of a sense of the past and its difference from the present is developing well. They are beginning to develop an understanding of chronology by sequencing events in their own lives and the lives of others. Pupils' learning is enriched by well planned curriculum support days such as a recent drama day about the Great Fire of London. As they re-enacted scenes of the everyday life of shopkeepers on London Bridge trading their goods such as fish, bread, fabric, meat and pies, pupils gained a powerful insight into the rapid spread of fire through the buildings. The impact of such a major historical event on the lives of men, women and children amazed pupils. Literacy skills are practised when pupils discuss and write about historical events. There was evidence of seven year olds' written work showing standards well above average levels.

123. By the age of nine, pupils are beginning to apply historical enquiry skills to the study of different projects. For example, they ask and answer questions about the Viking raids and

settlements and the effect on ways of life in Britain. Pupils' learning was enhanced by a drama day during which pupils explored skills such as pottery, metal and woodwork which Viking settlers brought to Britain. Pupils learned effectively about the impact of war and peace as they re-enacted historical scenes. They acquired good knowledge and understanding of historical events and a growing awareness of chronology.

124. The quality of teaching in history lessons is effective throughout the school. Although it was not possible to see any history lessons in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection, judgements are based on discussions with staff and pupils, the work in pupils' books and on display around the school, and photographic evidence. The good teaching is well illustrated by a Year 2 lesson when the teaching of key events at the time of the Great Fire of London focused on role play and collaborative group work. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 develop pupils' historical enquiry skills particularly well. Pupils enjoy the variety of approaches that teachers encourage them to use, they are keen to learn and many of them visit the library and use computers to extend their knowledge.

125. There is a clear policy and updated scheme of work for both subjects which is followed by all teachers. The subjects are well managed by the subject co-ordinator who has rewritten the policies and schemes of work. She has not yet had an opportunity to monitor the teaching of geography and history and she is aware of the lack of an assessment structure for the humanities subjects. Resources are satisfactory although some need updating such as the globe. Geography and history are well supported by visits and field work experiences which enrich the curriculum. These are well organised to stimulate pupils' interest in new projects.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

126. Information and communication technology (ICT) was described as above national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 in the last report. Since then National Curriculum requirements have been changed and are far more demanding. However, considerable improvements to provision now mean standards are above such expectations and pupils' achievement is good.

127. The school has significantly improved resources for the subject both in number and quality over the last two years and has clear plans to provide more. ICT is now considered as a subject in its own right by the school as well as a tool for supporting other areas. Staff training has been effective in improving teachers' and teaching assistants' confidence and expertise and the effect on pupils' learning is very positive.

128. Children are introduced to computers in reception and by the time they enter Year 1 most can manipulate the mouse to drag and drop, and enter simple commands using the keyboard. Good use is made of listening stations with children controlling the equipment themselves: for example loading tapes and choosing the volume. Pupils have good opportunities to use computers and programmable toys in Year 1 and Year 2 and make good progress. By the end of Year 2 pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a good understanding of the relationships between keyboard, mouse, monitor and printer, and show good awareness of how ICT affects daily life.

129. Good learning and progress is continued throughout Year 3 and Year 4 and by the time they leave in terms of what they know, understand and can do, pupils are ahead of national expectations. Higher attaining pupils show signs of being well above: for example making use of digital cameras to record their own pictures on file before sending them as attachments by e-mail. Most children are able to follow and control programs which give information and simulate experiences: for example in history to find out about Vikings. All pupils are able to interrogate CD-ROMs for information and the more able are beginning to search secure sites on the Internet. Year 4 pupils are developing the skills which in Year 5 and Year 6 in the middle school will make it possible for them to produce multimedia presentations.

130. Throughout the school good use is made of pupils' good literacy skills to develop communication and this is suitably extended in ICT lessons. In turn ICT is used effectively to support other subjects. For example talking books and computer programs are used to develop the reading skills of younger pupils, and those in Year 3 and Year 4 present mathematical data in graphs and tables in electronic form. There are good examples of pupils using computers as word processors in English work, but more opportunities could be provided for pupils to compose their work directly on the screen.

131. Teaching is good with pupils, resources, time and support staff well managed. Staff, even those whose knowledge is just ahead of the pupils, ask good questions which prompt pupils to explain what to do next to solve problems. Teachers ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities and that everyone is included in all activities. Paired and shared work on computers makes a significant contribution to the school's excellent provision for pupils' social development.

132. ICT is well managed and co-ordinated. There are very good procedures for assessing and recording pupils' performance and information from this is well used to: set targets for individuals; review and modify the curriculum and organisation for the subject; and identify areas for future resourcing needs.

133. Overall the school is making good use of ICT: for example in presenting its policies and plans, and recently, to record and interrogate data regarding pupil attendance. It sets a good example to pupils, whose response to the subject is very positive. Pupils are keen and continually growing in confidence.

MUSIC

134. It was only possible to observe two music lessons during the inspection one each for Year 2 and Year 4. On the basis of these, teachers' planning and record keeping, discussions with staff and parents it is possible to judge standards are above expectations for seven and nine year olds. Singing, noted in assemblies as well as in lessons, is of good quality. Pupils sing in tune and time, sustain notes and phrases well and articulate words clearly. Strengths in music reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

135. Pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, respond well to music and join in enthusiastically: for example in the Year 2 lesson pupils concentrated hard in order to recognise and reproduce rhythms. The activity was fun as well as thought provoking and led very effectively to performing, taking note of a 'conductor' and improving performances as a result of self evaluation and observing others. Group work in music makes a significant contribution to pupils' social development and encourages sensitive consideration of other people.

136. From the two lessons observed it is clear that teaching is good. Staff have sufficient expertise to deliver the National Curriculum and all elements are planned for. Good use is made of the good quality and number of instruments available and the excellent facility of a designated music room is well used by all classes. Good use is made of music played on entry to and exit from assembly to encourage pupils to listen to, and appreciate music. In the Year 4 lesson pupils were successfully encouraged to follow the score and match words to music to explore melodic phrases as well as producing tunes with instruments.

137. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator who as 'music specialist' plays for songs in assembly, leads hymn practice and runs recorder and music clubs. She has provided support for non specialist staff in the form of good planning and very good resources, and she monitors coverage. A visiting peripatetic violin teacher supports 14 children, but this work could not be observed during the inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138. The last inspection reported standards of physical education to be in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This situation has been maintained despite the school's greater emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education which follows national directives. The school has done well to preserve a balance of gymnastics, dance, games and swimming for all pupils including those with special educational needs.

139. Pupils are keen to join in and, in all lessons observed, behaved well and listened to the teacher and each other. They learn well as a result of benefiting from evaluating the performances of others. For example, in an excellent Year 2 lesson pupils were given many opportunities to reflect on the balances and shapes that different groups and individuals created on apparatus as well as the floor. Teaching was excellent, learning was of high quality and standards achieved were above expectations. In all lessons the importance of warm up and cool down is emphasised and learning objectives are made clear. However, in some lessons the pace is alternately too slow and too hurried with protracted explanations and pupils not given sufficient opportunity to complete the task fully before the teacher reviews what they have done. Strengths of teaching are in questioning and use of space and equipment. Because of this pupils' learning is at least sound.

140. Relative weaknesses in teaching are when pupils are not required to change for activities such as dance, and where long hair is not tied back. Overall the quality of gymnastics teaching is good with excellent features in Year 2.

141. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 4 including those with special educational needs demonstrate appropriate levels of agility and control. They show a satisfactory awareness of space and have a good understanding of what happens to the body during exercise.

142. In the one dance lesson observed teaching was satisfactory with clear objectives and very good control of pupils. This resulted in pupils' sound learning, making good use of literacy skills to discuss and evaluate how pupils were moving and feeling.

143. Pupils benefit from games, developing their ball skills and their appreciation of rules and fair play. This is extended in extracurricular activities such as football and badminton (the latter making excellent use of both the village hall and expert volunteer instruction).

144. The school makes very good use of its own pool, with all year groups having weekly lessons in the summer term. From discussions with staff, parents and pupils, and school records, it is clear that most children can swim before moving to the middle school. This is above the national expectation.

145. Physical education is well managed by a co-ordinator who has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. She sets a good example to staff and ensures that all required elements are taught. Accommodation and resources make positive contributions to pupils' learning in physical education: for example there is a good hall and well maintained swimming pool; and a suitable range and quantity of small equipment is available for pupils to practise skills at break times.

146. Points for development in the subject include: ensuring there is sufficient time for sessions to include changing for all lessons, and further developing a system to record pupils' performance and achievement in each of the elements of physical education.

147. A small group of parents expressed concerns over the school's style of sports day. Discussions with staff and a review of the school's procedures show such organisation is satisfactory and supports the good equal opportunities policy.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

148. During the last inspection the report said that the religious education curriculum lacked structure and planning was criticised. This is no longer the case. Curriculum planning now corresponds to the locally agreed syllabus and assessment is now integrated into each unit of study.

149. At the age of seven years, pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education exceeds the expected levels of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Pupils in Year 4 have maintained the good standards reported in the previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in lessons and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices.

150. The quality of teaching is good for Years 1 and 2. During the inspection it was not possible to see any religious education lessons in Years 3 and 4. Judgements are therefore based on discussion with the pupils and the subject co-ordinator, scrutiny of pupils' work and planning documentation, and examination of resources in the school.

151. Younger pupils take pride in presenting their work. An example was in Year 1 when pupils made zig-zag books to sequence the story of the creation. Pupils worked at a very good pace and remained focused on their task. Year 2 pupils were given very good opportunities for responsibility and choices. Their task was to select one of the stories told by Jesus for a group presentation. The group work was well orchestrated by the teacher, the task was challenging and she had high expectations. Gains in learning were good, not only in pupils' increased knowledge of Bible stories, but in the practice of literacy skills and social skills. The teacher's questions were probing and helped children to relate Bible stories such as the Prodigal Son in correct sequence.

152. Pupils share experiences in class discussions where every pupil has an opportunity to contribute. They explore the responsibilities of belonging to the community such as maintaining the rules and caring for each other, and they relate these to key values in the religions which they study. Pupils' response to the subject is good.

153. From discussions with Year 4 pupils, there is evidence that they have a secure body of knowledge about Christianity. They know about Christian symbols and their meanings, about festivals and how Christians should behave. Pupils are developing an understanding of how Christians and those of other faiths draw on their religion in daily life to help them. Pupils' recorded work shows a reasonable variety of methods, which include some sensitive, reflective pieces of writing about their own views of God and a manifesto for living. Well planned visits to local churches and a synagogue help pupils to identify and describe some key features of the religions studied.

154. Co-ordination of the subject is very good, marked by the co-ordinator's influence in improving standards. The revised scheme of work provides a structure that teachers find very helpful in their planning and assessment. Resources are much improved since the last inspection and the curriculum is enriched by regular visits from ministers of the church. Until recently, the subject has benefited from support from a member of the governing body. His involvement over a four year period was a mainstay in assisting the co-ordinator to raise the profile of the subject.