

INSPECTION REPORT

St MARK'S CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bournemouth

LEA area: Bournemouth

Unique reference number: 113843

Headteacher: Mrs Liz Budden

Reporting inspector: Geoff Burgess
OIN: 23708

Dates of inspection: 22nd to 26th January 2001

Inspection number: 209948

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Talbot Village
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Steven Coutiour

Date of previous inspection: January 1999

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				School improvement
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mark's CE Primary School occupies spacious accommodation in an idyllic wooded site in the northern suburbs of Bournemouth. It serves children from a wide spectrum of families of mainly British heritage, about an eighth of whom are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils on roll has fallen with the introduction of class size limits in the infant classes and is currently 450. Nearly a sixth of pupils are on the special needs register of whom five, an average number, have statements of special need. Attainment on entry is usually above that found in most schools but with a small drop in literacy related aspects this year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with no significant weaknesses which has improved immensely in the past two years. Academic standards and teaching are good, pupils' personal standards very good and leadership and management excellent. Current expenditure per pupil is similar to most schools and attainment on entry is above average. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Consistently good teaching with much of it even better and very good work by support staff, ensures that pupils achieve well in each class and eleven-year-olds attain good standards when they leave.
- Four and five-year-olds make very good progress thanks to the high quality provision made for them in the youngest classes
- Pupils with special needs, some very special, are well catered for and make good progress
- Pupils' personal, moral and social development have a very high priority. They behave very well, happily take more responsibility as they get older and get on very well together.
- Staff take good care to ensure that their pupils are safe and happy and able to do their best by carefully monitoring their progress and development.
- The headteacher is an outstanding leader and manager who, with the considerable help of her deputy, senior teachers and the governing body, is making the most of the school's unique assets.

What could be improved

- Present timetabling arrangements make it difficult for pupils to follow extended lines of enquiry or to undertake and finish off larger scale pieces of work.
- Standards of handwriting and presentation in some classes are not as good as they could be especially when involving work in subjects other than literacy
- Parents would like to be able to talk more regularly about their children's progress in literacy and numeracy to the teachers who actually teach them these subjects

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of its last inspection in January 1999, St Mark's CE Primary School was said to have serious weaknesses in several areas. Since then, HMI concluded that the school has addressed all of them to their satisfaction and inspectors are able to say that most are now strengths. Teaching is good with much very good. Pupils have full access to a well planned, rich curriculum. Subject and senior managers ensure that all aspects of the school are very well managed and monitored. Pupils are achieving well in information technology and financial management is very good. Improvements in recent results for school leavers have generally matched the national trend. However, substantial improvements in planning and teaching are seeing pupils achieving well throughout the school as was evident in last year's results for seven-year-olds which went from below to above average. This constitutes a very good overall improvement.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results in each subject have been consistently above the national average and the trend in improvement in overall school standards at eleven has been broadly similar to the national trend. The improving trend continued in English and mathematics in 2000 but attainment in science was down though still above average. Results were the same when compared with schools in a similar situation with pupils achieving well above average standards in English, and above average in mathematics and science. A long term downward trend by seven-year-olds was dramatically reversed last year when below average standards in reading and writing, and well below average in mathematics, jumped to above average in mathematics and well above in reading and writing. Current standards in both key stages are above average in mathematics, science and literacy. Pupils are achieving appropriate standards in all other subjects but with variations between classes. Four year olds are making very good progress in their first year in school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Boys and girls enjoy coming to school and joining in the many activities it has to offer. They work hard, do their best and take a pride in their school and their achievements. Most are very willing to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences in class discussions and follow up school work at home.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	With very few exceptions, behaviour is very good and this makes a strong contribution to learning. Pupils understand the school and class rules and teachers and helpers rarely have to take up time sorting things out. Playtimes and lunchtimes are calm, sociable occasions with little need for adults to intervene even when thunderstorms suddenly arrive.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good and this is a key factor in the happy, relaxed feel of the classrooms and play areas. Good manners are a hallmark of St Mark's and visitors are made very welcome. Pupils of all ages act in mature and sensible ways and all pupils are very happy to take on responsibilities when they are offered.
Attendance	School is a very positive experience. Lateness and absence are unusual and well dealt with by the school.

Pupils make a very good contribution to their own learning and achievements and to the happy and positive ethos of the school. The very good quality of relationships between all members of the school community is one of its most significant strengths

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Four-fifths of all teaching is at least good with none unsatisfactory. About one in every four lessons is very good. All teachers manage their charges very well and pupils understand exactly what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and work habits. Lessons are very well planned and prepared. Literacy skills are particularly well taught and the school is making good progress in developing the teaching of numeracy. More than two thirds of lessons in the two foundation classes are very good with the teachers making very good use of the excellent facilities and providing a rich range of appropriate activities matched to pupils needs. In most of the few satisfactory lessons, teachers lacked the confidence to be ambitious and encourage pupils to use their initiative. Learning support assistants form a very important resource especially in helping pupils who find learning difficult and in supporting teachers in the foundation classes .

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a suitably balanced range of subjects with literacy and numeracy well represented. Strong contributions from extra-curricular activities and the local community together with very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education ensure that they receive a good quality range of learning opportunities. The taught curriculum for under-fives is very rich and appropriate for their needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils who find learning or conforming difficult have improved greatly under the acting coordinator. Good procedures for identifying, monitoring and supporting such pupils have been established and all the necessary paperwork is now in place. Very well trained classroom assistants are closely involved with teachers in planning and providing necessary support mainly as part of normal classroom work. Pupils with very special needs are very well catered for and included in the school has to offer.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Staff make very good provision for promoting pupils' personal development with very good arrangements for the development of pupils' social skills and attitudes and moral awareness. Curricular provision for pupils to study and appreciate their own cultural heritage and celebrate the cultural diversity of others is also very good with good attention given to helping pupils to reflect on the more spiritual aspects of their growth.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils and ensures that they are safe and not at any risk. It keeps a very close watch on their attendance, behaviour and personal development and maintains suitable records to record events or trends that may be significant. Teachers and other staff know the children very well and good assessment procedures are well used to monitor progress. Good communications with individual parents help to ensure that any potential problems are dealt with promptly.

The great majority of parents are very pleased with the way the school is helping their children to learn and mature. They feel comfortable in their formal and informal dealings with school and make a good contribution to their children's learning. The general information provided by the school for parents is very good as is the impact of parents' involvement with the school

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher & other key staff	The contribution which the head has made to the enormous recent improvements in the school is excellent. Very well supported by her deputy and other senior staff, she has shown admirable determination and wisdom in managing the very full agenda following the last inspection. Other staff have followed their example and, with much encouragement and training, leaders and managers in all areas of the school have become effective and influential. Very efficient school administration staff help the whole school run smoothly. The school is excellently led and managed
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and keen for the school to succeed. They have very well developed arrangements for fulfilling their responsibilities, know the school well and are keenly aware of its strengths and limitations. The head has ensured that they are fully involved in identifying what needs to be done to improve and as a group and individually they are providing the school with great expertise and necessary practical and moral support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's commitment to matching best practice is excellent and there is every reason to believe that it will succeed. Monitoring and improvement have become a way of life and the school's aims the bedrock of all its actions. The whole school community is involved in identifying what needs to be done and improvement planning is of the highest quality. The necessary very fundamental changes already made show just how effective the school's actions have been. Teaching and learning are observed regularly in the classrooms and staff are given regular opportunities to discuss their performance.
The strategic use of resources	The head and governors ensure that the school makes very good use of all its resources through the detailed evaluation of the impact of all it does. All spending is targeted on agreed priorities and is carefully managed and monitored. A good supply of well maintained and used teaching resources have been accumulated in all subjects. Generous numbers of teaching and support staff are very well deployed and the school has made very good use of the enviable potential of its site and accommodation.

The head has made an outstanding contribution to making the school the success it is today. She is well aware of what still needs to be done and with the continued hard work of the staff and the ever-increasing effectiveness of the governing body, there is every reason to believe it will continue to thrive.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

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

Inspectors agree with all parents' positive views but find that the amount and quality of homework and extra-curricular activities provided by the school are better than in most. The impact of parents' involvement in school is judged to be very good. However, aspects of the oral reporting of pupils progress in literacy and numeracy could be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards have improved since the last inspection when, in the introduction to the Key Issues, the Governors, headteacher and staff were urged to 'continue with their improvement work, focussing particularly on ways to raise standards by addressing the significant amounts of underachievement in the school.' Standards now are good, particularly in the core subjects, and inspectors are confident that, as pupils move through the school, the impact of all the improvements noted will result in ever better standards for pupils when they leave. Results for eleven-year-olds in the most recent national tests were well above average in English, and above average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools and to schools in a similar context. The result in science was down a little but still above average. The recent trend in improvement in overall school standards at eleven has been broadly similar to the national trend.

2. A long term downward trend by seven-year-olds was dramatically reversed last year when below average standards in writing, and well below average in mathematics rose dramatically to above average in mathematics and well above in reading and writing. The percentage of children achieving higher grades was well above national average in reading and writing. Results at the ends of both key stages are consistent with the evidence obtained during the inspection from lesson observations, talking to children and looking at their past work.

3. Attainment on entry is usually above that found in most schools, but with a small drop in literacy related aspects this year. Four year olds are making very good progress in their first year in school especially in their personal and social development and in the early stages of reading and writing. Pupils are making good progress and achieving well in English, mathematics and science subjects in both key stages. Standards at the ages of seven and eleven are above average in all three subjects. The full implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, together with other improvements in leadership, planning, curriculum and teaching over the last two years has had a positive impact on the standards achieved.

4. Pupils are generally achieving appropriate standards in all other subjects but with small differences between subjects and classes according to the confidence and expertise of individual teachers. They make satisfactory overall progress and are achieving as well as in most schools. This is an improvement since the last inspection when a 'less important weakness' was to 'improve standards and progress in art and design technology'. 'Raising standards in information and communications technology' (ICT) was a Key Issue because 'attainment in ICT was below that which is expected nationally.' Pupils are now achieving well in ICT so that by eleven years of age their attainment is at least in line with national expectations and sometimes better. Boys and girls are making good progress through the school and attainment in ICT in the infants and younger junior classes is now above average.

5. In the tests for seven and eleven year olds the difference between the attainment of boys and girls is less marked than that found nationally in literacy related aspects. Detailed monitoring arrangements mean that the school is very aware of trends and anomalies among various groupings and deals with them appropriately. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is consistent with that made by all pupils. The small number of pupils with very special needs are fully included in all the school has to offer, and with sensitive, high quality support their achievements are very impressive. Setting (ie teaching in ability groups) arrangements in both numeracy and literacy ensures that pupils with the most need receive the skilled additional support they require in smaller groupings.

6. The school has set challenging targets for itself and expects standards to rise. The quality of provision has improved dramatically and with the energy and commitment of the whole school community and given the progress pupils are already making, it is on course to meet its targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. The attitudes of pupils in both key stages and in the foundation stage are very good and they obviously enjoy coming to school. They are proud of what they achieve and anxious to share these achievements and successes with others. This is well demonstrated by older pupils who undertake the job of showing visitors around. They proudly point out displays of work, interesting features in the environment and talk enthusiastically about the after school clubs they attend and awards which they and their friends have been presented with. Most pupils listen carefully in lessons and are keen to express their views. They usually settle quickly to their tasks and concentrate well. Just occasionally some pupils are overly passive in lessons and this occasional lack of response and opportunity to bounce ideas off one another, slows the pace of learning.

8. Boys and girls usually behave very well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are very polite and helpful. They open doors for adults and are eager to direct visitors, unfamiliar with the layout of the school. Play times and lunch times are happy harmonious occasions, even when all pupils have to remain inside school because of bad weather. Pupils know the school and classroom rules well and take care to abide by them. They take good care of their environment and are respectful of the property of others. Behaviour in lessons is almost always very good. Only one incident of unsatisfactory behaviour was noted and this was after several days of wet lunchtimes and playtimes when a few pupils took a long time to settle down to their lesson.

9. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good and given high priority in the school. All pupils regularly take part in sessions where they sit quietly with their teacher and consider the needs of others, talk about moral issues and discuss concerns. They respond in a very sensible and mature way at these times, listening carefully to the opinions and beliefs of others, and responding sensitively. Many conscientiously take responsibility for a wide range of jobs around school and in the classrooms. The youngest children carry out small tasks in their classroom such as arranging chairs, cleaning tables after snacks while older children take on wider responsibilities such as caring for younger ones at lunchtime and play time and helping to organise worship and assembly times. During wet lunch times older pupils patiently play games with the younger children and help the lunchtime supervisors organise videos and other amusements. Year six pupils look after parents on parent evenings, showing them around and serving refreshments. They also undertake small office jobs, such as preparing the visitors book and carrying messages. Relationships are very strong throughout the school. Adults provide very good role models for the children by showing respect and consideration for everyone and being open, friendly, polite and kind. Pupils respond well to these role models and the school is a happy, harmonious place where adults and children care about one another.

10. Attendance levels have improved since the last inspection and are now above the national average. New procedures to reduce above average levels of unauthorised absence are having a positive impact and its incidence was much reduced for the autumn term. Pupils are very keen to come to school and almost all arrive punctually ready to start the day's activities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. More than a half of teaching is good with a quarter very good and none unsatisfactory which represents a considerable improvement since the last report when fewer than a half of lessons were better than satisfactory and 15% were unsatisfactory. This time, ten teachers taught at least one very good lesson in one of eight different subjects or aspects and almost all teachers had more good or very good lessons than satisfactory. Teaching overall is good.

12. An important factor in this has been the contribution made by pupils to their own learning through their good behaviour and interest and enthusiasm for what they are learning. They learn from and help each other and complete tasks in good time. This was often not the case at the last inspection where pupils in the middle years especially had difficulty in sustaining concentration. Although the quality of teaching is generally associated with the teachers involved, the structures of the literacy and numeracy strategies and the associated groupings by ability have had a beneficial effect on the teaching of basic skills throughout the school while making good use of teachers' strengths and interests. This is most clearly seen in literacy where pupils of all abilities are able to achieve well in the smaller, very focused groups. Swimming benefits greatly from being taught by a teacher with particular expertise and the acquisition of a fully integrated computer system has made possible big improvements in the teaching of information technology.

13. A great deal of effort has gone into improving and developing teaching over the past two years. The benefits of this are obvious in the very impressive consistency shown in the quality of the basic structures of the teaching and learning process throughout the school. All lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives carefully matched to the needs of the pupils concerned and the expected learning outcomes usually well defined at the beginning of lessons. Activities and children are competently managed and controlled using clear, agreed and understood whole school strategies enhanced by well-established routines and work habits. Good use is made of all available adults through well built up routines and the provision of clear instructions and information. In most of the few lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, teachers lack the confidence to build upon these firm foundations and tend to focus on control and management rather than learning. When this happens, pupils are more inclined to comply rather than be enthused.

14. Nearly two-thirds of teaching in the reception classes is very good with the rest good. Excellent use is being made by the two class teachers of the generous and very well resourced accommodation to provide pupils with a rich range of learning opportunities. This is best seen in 'Plan, do and review' sessions where children are given the opportunity to decide, with the help of an adult, how they will work their way around a wide range of activities, many based on the theme of journeys. A simple but effective planning sheet, very clear rules and instructions and well established routines mean that boys and girls are very confident and mature in organising their time. All the activities have a clear purpose and are well supported by adults who use key questions set at different levels of difficulty to draw out and monitor understanding. A good example of this was observed where a classroom assistant working with children in the role play area, encouraged them to use their 'own' writing to write invitations and make lists of food needed for their party. Not only did they complete the task with some pride but the quality of the discussion which accompanied the writing showed just how focused and interested they were and how used they were to sharing their thoughts and using their initiative. The overall contribution of classroom assistants to the whole learning environment in the reception classes is very good.

15. Two thirds of teaching in years one and two is at least good with nearly a quarter, mainly in year one, very good in a range of subjects. A lesson on finding the total of groups of coins in one class showed how the use of well thought out and prepared activities matched to pupils' abilities, very well prepared classroom assistants and very high expectations for behaviour and response can help pupils of all abilities to achieve well. In a crisp, sharp oral warm-up, the teacher used a big dice to get pupils to practice doubling in their heads while the classroom assistant discretely used a number line to help two lower achievers to find the answers. The class shop then came into play as pupils were asked to say how much two of the toys they chose would cost with the 'sum' written on the board. With no time lost, the lower ability group then moved away with the classroom assistant to work at their own level while the teacher extended the work into asking the rest to nominate coins to make up given totals. Then it was the turn of the able mathematicians to move away and use homemade coin cards to find totals being reminded by questioning to start with the biggest first. This freed the teacher to work on coin doubling with the middle group using mini white boards so they could all show their answers. The pace and efficiency of the whole session meant that pupils were busy, thinking and successful throughout the lesson.

16. Over four-fifths of teaching in Key Stage 2 is at least good with a sixth very good, mainly in English but also in art, design technology, information technology and personal and social education. The opportunity presented by 'setting' (teaching in smaller ability groups) was well demonstrated by a very good literacy lesson with higher attaining year fours. Here the teacher was able to provide a very challenging task which stretched pupils' developing writing skills and knowledge of language. Imaginative use of red colouring in water stimulated pupils to talk about the ideas involved and gave the teacher the opportunity to engage them in discussions using technical language such as simile, about ways of extending their writing. The whole group enjoyed working together to turn 'volcano' into 'a giant volcano erupting like an exploding bomb with white-hot, boiling lava spitting out.'

17. Learning support assistants (LSAs) make a very good contribution in the area of special needs. They have formed good working relationships with teachers and the pupils in their charge and whether enabling pupils to work alongside their classmates or working with individuals and groups in the classroom, they constitute a very important teaching resource. This is especially the case in the lower ability groups or sets in literacy and mathematics where it is often the LSA who is working with individuals or groups towards targets on pupils' individual plans. All LSAs have received extra training on matters connected with special needs and several make good use of specialised knowledge or expertise such as in autism or speech and language. When no ancillary support is

available, work is usually matched to the needs of individual pupils and the teacher focuses on these pupils to give support and explanations.

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

18. Very good progress has been made in addressing the issues raised in the last report and all weaknesses in curriculum development have been addressed. The school has recently adopted and is adapting published schemes of work for most subjects which provide clear expectations for work in each year group. A consistent approach to very detailed planning throughout the school has been implemented through teachers planning together in year groups and subjects to ensure continuity and progression. The time balance allocated to the curriculum has been reviewed and is now appropriate but current timetabling arrangements have tended to fragment and separate the various elements.

19. Pupils in the Foundation Stage receive a very good introduction to the curriculum through very good planning, which is based on the stepping stones to the Early Learning Goals. It provides for all areas of learning to be taught, including personal, social and emotional development, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. The planning at this stage was criticised in the last report for being underdeveloped, but now activities are practical, relevant and purposeful. They include very good opportunities for the development of play, with clear learning objectives and very good progression of skills. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and self-reliant through a 'plan, do, review' system for part of each morning when they plan their own time. All children take it in turns to help with routine activities such as preparing for snack time and taking the registers to the office. Boys and girls are well prepared for the first stages of the National Curriculum programmes of study. The phase leader is aware that it would benefit the youngest children to continue elements of this approach into year one.

20. The curriculum provided throughout both key stages is good. It covers all the required areas and meets statutory requirements as well as extending beyond the basic curriculum into skills relevant for life. Very effective strategies for the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, which include the teaching in ability groups (sets) of all pupils from years two to six, are now in place. This system also allows staff to make good use of their subject expertise and is having a positive impact on the improvement of standards in the core subjects. Pupils in years five and six are also set for science. Boys and girls with special educational needs are well catered for and work is planned to ensure that gifted and talented pupils are challenged, some while working with the next age group up. The curriculum ensures equality of opportunity and prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good with a well-structured programme in place. Suitable programmes for sex and drugs education include the annual visit by the health education van. With the development of the computer suite, with timetabled use for pupils throughout the school, information and communication technology is now fully covered with increasing links to other subject areas.

21. A good range of extra-curricular opportunities extend pupils' learning. Visitors are welcomed into school regularly to share their experiences or expertise and many visits are made to local places of interest. Pupils from year one through to year six attend a number of clubs such as environment, computer, film and worship workshop as well as sporting activities. Attendance at some clubs is very high. In order to accommodate as many children as possible different age groups attend in different terms. The homework programme successfully extends pupils learning from the lesson very effectively in a variety of activities. Many pupils enjoy the opportunity to spend more time on research using a variety of resources at home. Parents are provided with details of the work to be covered each term, which gives added support to learning.

22. Well established links with the community enrich pupils' experiences with very strong links with St Mark's Church. Members of the Parochial Church Council are regular visitors to the school and pupils join the parish and other community groups such as the brownies and scouts to take part in and carry the school colours at family services. Support and sponsorship is received from a number of local businesses and links with the nearby university have been used to help the school develop its own website. Pupils make their contribution to life in the community by joining in local musical and sporting events. They collected gifts at harvest-time in support of a local homeless shelter. "Helping people who share our community", was part of the year four thinking skills programme and in relation to this, employees from a local business employing people with learning

difficulties visited the school. Staff were then invited back to be shown around the school and enjoy a tea party. Pupils' older relatives and friends have also been invited into school to talk about their own school days. Very close links are well established with all the secondary schools to which pupils transfer as well as pre-school groups, enabling a smooth transfer to the next stage of education. Staff from other schools are also invited to take part in work with pupils, for example the involvement of Bournemouth College in the assessing and judging of extended story writing with older pupils. Staff training needs are supported by expertise in other schools.

23. All aspects of personal development, including provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, feature prominently across the whole school. Notable improvements have been made in the provision for spiritual and cultural development since the time of the last inspection. Well planned personal, social and health education together with the thinking skills programme, make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of the wider world and the part they play in the school, local and wider world communities. Overall provision is very good.

24. Provision for spiritual development is good, especially during acts of collective worship. Carefully planned worship themes encourage pupils to think about their own beliefs and that of others. Times of reflection and prayer are meaningful and well led by teachers. Pupils' positive response and participation during this time is indicative of the value and importance placed on these occasions. Opportunities are provided for pupils to express their thoughts and feelings about the natural world through the writing of poetry and stories but other opportunities for pupils to work reflectively in other subjects are limited.

25. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Strong relationships and the very good role models teachers and other adults provide, teach pupils about respect towards one another and the difference between right and wrong. Clear school rules and class rules discussed and agreed by the pupils, lay the foundations for children's understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and how they should behave and treat one another from an early age. Opportunities to reflect on moral and ethical issues are provided in their studies and in assemblies. For example, considering the effect of man's actions on endangered animals and environmental issues during thinking skills lessons gives pupils the opportunity to consider the part they might play in protecting our world for the future. Pupils are regularly asked to work in pairs or small groups. With the setting arrangements across years two to six, pupils work with their peers across the whole year group. Extra-curricular activities such as football or the worship workshops promote skills of teamwork and organisation. Residential visits and joining with other schools for special events and competitive sports provide opportunities for groups of children to work together in a wider context.

26. The provision for cultural development is now very good. A range of visits, for example to St Mark's Church and Scaplin's Court helps to develop pupils' understanding of their own cultural and religious heritage. They are presented with many opportunities to learn about the culture and beliefs of other peoples. Resources have been enhanced considerably and displays including artefacts are now used more effectively to support teaching in this area. A wonderful range of prints of famous works of art is displayed around the school, stimulating pupils' interest and appreciation of art. Assemblies are used well to introduce stories and impart facts about different areas of the world. Staff make good use of their own contacts in other countries to bring real life accounts to pupils. Links have been established to children in other parts of the country and world through the Internet, so pupils' can learn about their lives and how they differ from their own.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

27. Teachers know pupils well and together with other staff, work hard to meet the needs of each individual child. The high priority placed on pupils' personal development ensures they receive very good support and guidance as they mature. This prepares them well for their next stage of learning and life in the wider community.

28. Attention to matters of health, safety, and pupils' everyday welfare is good. Consistent implementation of agreed procedures ensures pupils work and play in a safe environment. The buildings and grounds are monitored regularly for potential hazards and concerns are dealt with promptly. First aid procedures are clear and pupils with particular needs are known by staff and supported well. A good number of staff have first aid qualifications. Fire drills are carried out termly and recorded appropriately. Levels of supervision are high. Dinner supervisors are assigned to each class and they get to know children well. Child protection procedures meet requirements. Pupils' are

encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles; only healthy snacks are allowed at breaktimes. They learn how to protect themselves from danger through work carried out in personal, social and health education. The school has been awarded a 'Healthy Schools Award' for work in this area.

29. Procedures for recording and monitoring attendance have been refined and are now very good. A combination of manual registers and computerised recording and analysis enables close monitoring of attendance for each individual. Parents are now contacted on the first day of absence if no message has been received. All requirements are met and this more thorough approach has already resulted in a reduction in the number of recorded unauthorised absences.

30. Very good monitoring and the promotion of good behaviour is evident across the whole school. Consistent implementation of agreed whole-school approaches to praise, rewards and sanctions results in the high standards achieved. Pupils are responsive to teachers' high expectations and work hard to achieve 'headteacher's' awards. Their efforts and achievements are recognised in assemblies. Rewards systems are sensibly adapted to ensure they are suitable for each age group. Pupils devise their own class rules and teachers apply sanctions fairly when necessary. The yellow and red slip system is used effectively to monitor behaviour.

31. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development are good. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues of curriculum planning and assessment that were raised in the last inspection report. Systematic and rigorous procedures for monitoring standards and evaluating progress are now in place. The role of subject leaders and of senior staff has been thoroughly reviewed so that the monitoring of standards and teaching are now firmly embedded into school practice. Baseline tests used as pupils enter the school, are repeated at the end of the first year in order to monitor progress. Standardised tests are regularly used as pupils move through the school and the resulting information enables their progress to be monitored. Information from the tests and from teacher assessments enables the school to identify pupils who require extra support and to set group and individual targets for improvement. Additional help is provided for pupils who do not reach targets through additional literacy and numeracy support. The number of support staff has increased to provide focused and targeted help and learning support assistants provide very good support to pupils within literacy and numeracy groups.

32. The assessment policy clearly states the school's aims and outlines the programme of assessment activity for each year group and the coordinator ensures the test data is thoroughly analysed with summary information reported to governors. Test and teacher assessments are analysed and improvement targets are set for all pupils following discussion with class teachers. Assessment is built into medium term planning and pupils' learning is evaluated at the end of each unit of work. Teachers use assessment information to ensure that their short term planning addresses the needs of pupils. The results of these assessments are kept in portfolios of work with tracking sheets to further monitor progress. Procedures that are in place will become more effective as the school continues to accumulate assessment data for all year groups. Despite all the progress made, the school improvement plan identifies assessment as a priority.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. Information to parents is very comprehensive and well presented. The prospectus is appropriately detailed giving good information about school routines, expectations and the curriculum. Very helpful induction packs given to parents at the beginning of each school year provide them with specific information for that particular year. The governors' annual report summarises well the work of the school over the last year and meets requirements. Other information about policies and procedures are available for parents at reception. Very well presented newsletters are sent home regularly & they can be found on the school's own website.

34. Parents are encouraged to come into school with any concerns. They can expect to receive a warm welcome and helpful assistance if they make enquiries at the well-organised reception area. Parents have formal opportunities each term to meet with teachers and written reports are good and meet statutory requirements. These reports are brief but succinctly describe pupils' level of attainment and set targets for improvements for English and mathematics. A significant number of parents responding to the parents' questionnaire felt they were not kept well informed of their children's progress. Due to the setting arrangements for the core subjects parents only have one opportunity to speak with all the subject teachers teaching their child.

35. Parents' involvement in the life of the school is very good. An active school and parent

association organises a variety of events to raise funds for the benefit of pupils. A large committee meets regularly to plan events and activities. Many parents come into school regularly and help with reading, supporting pupils in group work or assisting in the library or computer suite. The school encourages this involvement and appreciates the support received. Parents are well briefed when they help in classrooms to ensure maximum benefit is gained from their assistance.

36. The school's homework policy is clearly communicated to parents. Their help and support for children's learning at home is actively encouraged and written guidance on how best to do this is sent home. Parent support their children well with homework, especially as they first learn to read and this has a positive impact on the standards achieved.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. Since its low in 1999, levels of professionalism, leadership, responsibility and confidence have increased enormously and the staff team now constitutes a powerful force for good. Governors are becoming ever more efficient and effective in their group and individual roles. Every issue from the last inspection has been addressed and weaknesses have become strengths. The whole school community was involved in creating a shared vision through the school's aims which form the starting point and the test of all its actions. No aspect of the school has been ignored and every opportunity taken to make the most of its unique physical resources. The leadership and management of the school are excellent and this is fully appreciated by parents.

38. The headteacher was a relative newcomer to the school when in January 1999, it was judged to have serious weaknesses in many aspects. Since then, she has, with enormous determination, a great deal of courage and untold hard work, been responsible for managing a revolution in the development of the school. She provides extremely effective and positive leadership and, with the considerable support of her deputy head and management team, has worked closely with the staff and the governing body to put in place policies and procedures to completely reform planning and decision making. Her contribution to the present very healthy state of the school is outstanding.

39. Fundamental to the pace and extent of change has been the evolution of a comprehensive management structure with clear and specific roles and responsibilities. This has given teachers who two years ago had no experience of management, the opportunity to take on important responsibilities within the school which they have relished. Management training has been a very important part of the process and this is continuing with members of the management team involved in 'training up' their deputies so that there are readymade replacements when senior managers leave. Much is asked and expected of the management team and they form a formidable force for good in the school. Everyone in the school fully understands his or her respective role and is committed to fulfilling it and in constantly improving. Staff manage their subject and other responsibilities effectively and are very conscientious. The head as acting special needs coordinator has managed the development of special needs provision, which was barely satisfactory at the last inspection, very well.

40. Almost all the governing body were in place at the time of the last inspection and they shared in the disappointment and heart-searching that it brought. It is to their great credit that they have been very active participants in the massive improvement agenda, developing their own roles and procedures while supporting the school through difficult times. Governors are very supportive and committed to the school, visiting on a regular basis. Many bring considerable expertise to the governing body and all are very keen for the school to succeed. They now have a well-defined and understood structure of committees and individual responsibilities and a clear programme related to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Governors take their monitoring role very seriously visiting regularly and receiving feedback from staff on the effectiveness of various current policy developments or items of expenditure. As individuals and as a body they know their school and their responsibilities very well. The special needs governor is very supportive and is a regular visitor to the school. She has a clear view of provision in the school and reports regularly to the governing body on special needs issues.

41. Monitoring and evaluation have high priorities in the school community with the lead taken by the head and management team who keep a very close watch on what is happening. Standards, classroom practice and the effectiveness of policies and procedures are kept under review by responsible staff and governors. Extensive use is made of information gained from national and optional tests to identify priorities and trends and, as records build up from recently developed

assessment procedures, they are steadily being used for the same purpose. The school has set itself very challenging targets for its pupils over the next few years and improvement planning is focused on achieving these targets. Individual members of staff are encouraged to think about their own performance through professional interviews and professional development has a high priority. The clearly structured, very practical school improvement plan is a comprehensive document which focuses on improving standards and involves everyone in deciding what should be included and how effective actions have been.

42. To 'Improve financial planning by strengthening links with school development priorities and establishing more effective and formal links to evaluate the effectiveness of the school' was one of the Key Issues in the last inspection. This issue has now been fully addressed. Strategic use of resources, including funding is very good. The school budgets systematically for all expenditure and has benefited greatly from wisely targeted spending. The well-structured School Improvement Plan (SIP) ensures spending decisions relate to priorities by sound financial planning. The SIP identifies proposed development for the next three years and includes details of tasks, strategies, timescales, monitoring, evaluation, measurable impact, resources and finance. The Governing Body sees the SIP as a living document which is at the core of the school's expenditure. They are fully involved in the decision making process and are kept well informed of the emerging financial position by the Headteacher and Financial Officer, so that they are in a good position to monitor expenditure to ensure money is spent wisely. The much improved resources to support the teaching and learning of Information Communication Technology are tribute to the way the headteacher and governing body have ensured financial resources are properly targeted to meet the recognised needs of the school. Tough decisions needed to be made, including taking out a £30,000 interest free loan, to address a clear deficiency in the school's provision. This has proved money well spent and the new resources are already helping to push up standards in the school. By good forward planning, the governing body knew the loan was affordable and could be repaid over the next two years.

43. Financial control and administration are good. Systems of financial control are well-developed and respective roles and responsibilities are appropriately defined. Good accounting records are maintained and monitored by the school. Each subject leader has a delegated budget that they manage in accordance with the priorities identified in their subject action plan. The school secretaries and financial officer provide valuable support. Administration systems are unobtrusive and support the day to day running of the school. A finance computer package is well used to raise orders and monitor spending. The most recent external audit carried out in 1999 found the financial control and administration to be good. The school has subsequently put in place the actions recommended in the report.

44. The governing body and headteacher have been very shrewd and they successfully apply the principle of best value in the school's use of resources. They make very good use of detailed analyses of assessment results and other information to target their spending to bring about improvements in standards. School expenditure is compared using data provided by the local authority for all primary schools of a similar size. Although the school is part of a consortium purchasing group, the finance officer analyses comparative prices of other providers to ensure best value. For larger purchases three quotes are always secured.

45. A great many new staff have joined the school since the last inspection. The staffing structure has been reorganised as necessary to meet the needs of the school during a time of rapid change. Good use is made of part-time and job share arrangements to support the setting arrangements from years two to year six. The school is well staffed and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Comprehensive training focused on school priorities for improvement has taken place to increase the experience, expertise and confidence of both teaching and support staff enabling them to fulfil their roles very effectively. All support staff, including learning support assistants, administrative staff, lunchtime supervisors and the site manager play their part in ensuring that the school runs smoothly.

46. Accommodation is very good. All classrooms are of an adequate size and facilities such as the computer suite, play area for the under-fives, library and small additional rooms for group teaching enhance the overall provision. Outside facilities are adequate and pupils benefit from the use of the school's own indoor heated swimming pool. Plans are well advanced to improve outside play facilities. This very good provision enables teachers to teach the full National Curriculum effectively. The only restriction is on the teaching of physical education for the oldest pupils and the ability to gather the whole school together in one area. The hall is too small for either. Classrooms, corridors and shared areas are enhanced by attractive, well-presented displays which promote

further learning and celebrate pupils' achievements. Boys and girls learn in a lively, attractive environment, which is maintained and cleaned to a high standard.

47. Resources have improved considerably since the last inspection. Book stocks and resources to support multi-cultural studies have been reviewed and improved. Resources for most curriculum areas are now good and for the under-fives and music, they are very good. Considerable investment has been made in information and communications technology (ICT) equipment and facilities and provision for computers and associated hardware and software are excellent. The good level of resourcing is having a positive impact on standards. In particular the full ICT curriculum can now be taught effectively and pupils have regular access to computers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. To make the most of all the very good groundwork put in place and ensure that the quality of work which pupils produce matches the quality of the teaching and learning it represents, the governors, headteacher and staff of St Mark's School should:

- (1) Seek to make the whole curriculum more cohesive and make it possible for pupils to undertake and present the results of extended and larger scale pieces of work by:
 - looking again at whole curriculum planning and timetabling to see where it might be possible to build in some flexibility so that all pupils, but especially the more able, might be able to pursue extended lines of enquiry and create high-quality presentations of their work.
 - re-establishing, where possible, connections between the various elements of the curriculum so that, for instance, when planning work, guided reading could be chosen to match the current topic in history or learned literacy skills could be tested in action by researching and recording factual information in geography.
 - demonstrating in the range and quality of what pupils produce, that the school values high quality work in all subjects

(Paragraphs 18, 64, 66, 90 & 116)

- (2) Ensure that the school has the same high expectations for handwriting and the presentation of work in all subjects as it does in everything else by implementing all the above and :
 - making sure that what is expected in literacy lessons is carried through into all the written work pupils do in other subjects especially by those teachers not involved in the teaching of literacy skills
 - making sure that all teachers act as good role models in their own writing on whiteboards and in books

(Paragraph 65 & 74)

- (3) Find ways to make it possible for parents to receive more feedback about their children's progress in literacy and numeracy from the teachers who actually take them for these subjects.

(Paragraph 34)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

- The relatively lower spelling standards of older, more able pupils (Paragraph 65)
- Reading records are not very useful for teachers or parents (Paragraph 68)
- The balance of physical education activities in Key Stage 1 (Paragraph 118)
- Difficulties presented by 'other' equipment such as the overhead projector when physical education lessons are taking place in the small hall (Paragraph 118)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	25	54	21			

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		450
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		68

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	95.6
National comparative data	94.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	31	36	67

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	30	30
	Girls	35	35	35
	Total	65	65	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (87)	97 (79)	97 (74)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	30	30
	Girls	34	35	35
	Total	64	65	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (79)	97 (79)	97 (92)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	31	33	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	24	27
	Girls	32	25	31
	Total	58	49	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (84)	77 (75)	91 (91)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	24	26
	Girls	28	29	32
	Total	53	53	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (71)	83 (80)	91 (77)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	4
Indian	2
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	5
White	378
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	1	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.4
Average class size	30.0

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	271

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	737196
Total expenditure	798502
Expenditure per pupil	1799
Balance brought forward from previous year	43529
Balance carried forward to next year	-17777

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	420
Number of questionnaires returned	108

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	37	6		
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	3		3
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	59	7		3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	53	15	2	1
The teaching is good.	39	58			5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	52	22	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	47	6		
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	44	3		1
The school works closely with parents.	26	51	20	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	45	41	8		6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	49	2		6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	37	19	6	13

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49. Two reception classes make very good provision for all children in the foundation stage. At the time of the last inspection provision was described as good. Since then the school has worked hard to improve it even further. A spacious attractive area has been built adjoining both reception classes and this now provides an excellent, well equipped, shared space for the carefully planned, purposeful play activities which take place every day. There is a secure, well used outdoor area and children in the reception classes regularly use the school swimming pool. The school has developed an excellent induction programme which successfully introduces children, parents and carers to the life and routines of the reception class and ensures that positive relationships are made quickly and effectively. Staff have made very good links with the local playgroup and meetings and visits take place on a regular basis.

50. Many children enter the reception class with well developed speaking skills and mathematical skills which are a little above average. Their personal and social development on starting school is variable, as would be expected for children of this age. The overall very good teaching in the reception classes is having a very positive impact on children's learning and boys and girls are making very good progress. By the time they reach year one many children are exceeding the goals set nationally for young children in all the six areas of learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

51. The personal, social and emotional development of children at entry to the reception classes is variable but this aspect of their learning is given very high priority and children quickly make very good progress. At the time of the inspection, some children had only been in full time schooling for three weeks. All were very settled, happy and confident. They know the class and school routines well and can confidently find their way around the complicated school layout. Boys and girls are undaunted by large gatherings such as assemblies and are attentive and very well behaved on these occasions. They play and work very well together and take the responsibility for tidying up and caring for their environment very seriously. Special helpers are chosen daily and they conscientiously carry out tasks such as cleaning the tops of tables, arranging chairs, and taking registers to the office.

52. Great emphasis is placed on encouraging boys and girls to be independent and take some responsibility for themselves and for their learning. There is a daily session in which children select their own activities, record their selection and discuss with an adult what they propose to do and how they will do it. They are encouraged to talk about what they have achieved in these sessions and how they can extend these activities. Children manage this time very well, taking care with their choices and managing the systems set up very competently.

53. Relationships are warm and trusting, with all adults providing good role models for the children by treating one another and the children with kindness and respect. Regular times are provided for children to sit quietly and talk about things that affect them and their lives. Children talked with their teacher about people who help to keep them safe such as policemen, teachers and crossing patrol officers. They also considered being responsible for their own safety and looking at a collection of objects such as knives, kettles, and plastic bags, they learnt that if used unwisely these could be dangerous. Boys and girls respond well in these discussion times, making sensible, mature contributions.

Communication, language and literacy

54. Many children enter the reception classes with well developed speaking skills. These and other language and literacy skills continue to be very well promoted through a wide range of carefully planned activities and by the end of their reception year most children will achieve the early learning goals and a significant number will exceed these.

55. Boys and girls enjoy listening to stories and looking at books. They have a very well developed knowledge of how books are organised and talk confidently about the author, the illustrator and the title. All enjoy sharing large editions of favourite stories such as 'Going on a bear

hunt' and join in the refrains enthusiastically. Many are beginning to be able to recognise a sentence and correctly identify capital letters and full stops. They can retell stories and remember the sequence of events. A number of children recognise many of the most commonly used words, recognise and name many letters and know the sounds they make. They use this knowledge effectively to help them when reading.

56. Most children are learning to become confident writers and a lot of time and adult support is given to helping children learn to form letters correctly and make up their own stories. They have many very good opportunities to use writing purposefully in their play, such as writing tickets, passports, booking forms, notes and messages in the role play area set up as an airport. A group very well supported by a classroom assistant wrote and designed invitation cards for an imaginary party in the home area, then brainstormed lists of party food and wrote their shopping requirements. Children's invented writing is valued and celebrated. A well-resourced writing area is frequently used by the children and their own little books and written messages are carefully displayed. Many strategies are used to help children to spell, such as letter strips, word banks and lists of commonly used words. Children's progress is monitored effectively and classroom assistants play an invaluable part in this by carefully recording the response and involvement of children in the activities they are leading or observing.

Mathematical Development

57. Consistently very good teaching is enabling boys and girls to achieve very well in this area of their learning. Many mathematical activities are practical, purposeful and well related to the children's current interests. Children were observed thoroughly enjoying counting, ordering, subtracting and adding numbers through role play relating to going on a bus journey. Most children demonstrated that they could count, recognise, order, subtract and add numbers to ten. Many could go beyond this. Many recognise and correctly name basic shapes and try to use their developing mathematical knowledge to describe their attributes. One child describes squares and oblongs as like some boxes with long and short sides. They successfully explore quite difficult ideas such as symmetry, correctly making simple symmetrical patterns with shapes, completing the other matching half of a decorative mask and painting the symmetrical patterns on a butterfly. They are proud of the fact that they know and understand what the word symmetrical means and take great delight in using the term correctly when engaged in related activities. Many daily routines make a contribution to their mathematical understanding, counting children present, naming the days of the week and months of the year, filling and emptying containers in sand and water play, exploring shapes with construction materials.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

58. Children are making very good progress in their understanding of the world in which they live. The current theme of 'Journeys' is making a very significant contribution to their learning in this area. Water play is well set up to enable children to investigate floating and sinking. A variety of materials to make boats with encourages the children to explore this idea while an adult is always on hand to extend their ideas and discuss their findings. Sand play is carefully organised so that children can explore the idea of different environments and landscapes with hills, rivers and forests. They talk about where they live and their journeys to school. Some find out about the work of other people when they role play the various jobs entailed in travelling by plane, 'checking in' at an airport and acting out the roles of air stewards, serving food and drink to passengers. They make and design vehicles for their travels with construction kits and talk confidently about their design requirements such as 'this car needs windows and doors', adults encourage them to extend their design ideas with questions such as 'How could you make your car move?' or 'Can you make a garage for your car to fit in now?' They are encouraged wherever possible to consult books about travel and ways of travelling from a good collection on display for reference. Children are confident in using simple computer programmes with good control when using the mouse to play simple games and draw pictures.

Creative development

59. Children make good progress in the development of their creativity with many very well organised times provided for them to play imaginatively. Teachers often use role play to reinforce learning in areas such as language and literacy when stories such as 'Going on a bear hunt', are used to create sounds with musical instruments and mime actions. Children respond with obvious pleasure to music, moving imaginatively and creatively in dance lessons. Creative activities such as painting, modelling with clay and dough are a feature of daily activities. They are encouraged to experiment with paint by mixing their own colours and are well introduced to

techniques such as paper mach— when they create models of hot air balloons as part of their topic. All children's efforts are valued with many attractive displays celebrating children's work.

Physical development

60. A secure outdoor play area, time tabled use of the school hall and the regular use of the school swimming pool make a very good contribution to the development of children's physical skills. They regularly spend time outside riding and controlling wheeled vehicles such as bikes and trucks, climbing, balancing, running and jumping. In lessons in the hall they show a good awareness of the space around them and an increasing ability to control and change their movements. A weekly swimming lesson is giving children great confidence in the water and although few are able to swim without buoyancy aids, they enjoy the lessons and demonstrate good coordination skills, when for example, they have to move through the water and blow a ping pong ball in front of them. They are developing good skills with their hands when they undertake regular tasks which involve sticking, cutting, gluing, drawing, painting and writing. Letter formation is well taught and there are regular, specific times when children are taught correct letter formation and undertake a variety of activities, such as making large letters with plasticine and dough, and tracing and practising letters on individual white boards.

ENGLISH

61. Standards in English have improved since the last inspection and are above the national average for both seven and eleven year olds and progress is good. Results in the 2000 national tests show that standards were comparable with those in similar schools and pupils achieve standards well above the national averages in reading, writing and speaking and listening at ages seven and eleven. Test results have risen steadily over the past four years at a greater rate than national trends and the school did well to exceed its targets for 2000.

62. Throughout the school, pupils attain good standards in speaking and the majority listen well. They concentrate well in lessons, repeating lines in songs accurately, speak clearly and from an early age are eager to present their ideas and viewpoints confidently. Opportunities are planned for younger pupils through role-play, puppets and in church services to develop their speaking and listening skills, sometimes to a wider audience. They put their ideas in sequence and use a growing vocabulary. More able older pupils use a wide vocabulary correctly, including that specific to subjects, and speak with expression, such as when pupils in year five recited their version of the poem 'Inside my head' based on a pirate theme. Pupils in year six are well able to discuss a range of topics in a meaningful way, such as the issue of a proposed bypass. They listen very attentively to each other and carefully to instructions so they understand the task. Most explain their opinions and ideas about stories and books in interesting ways.

63. Reading is above the national average. Most pupils can read simple text from an early age. They read with increasing fluency and with expression using a variety of strategies to read unfamiliar words. Many self-correct their reading when it does not make sense. Boys and girls follow stories in books in group reading sessions and some read books from the Oxford Reading Tree scheme on the computer. They are confident in talking about their favourite stories and books and read widely including poetry and plays. Most pupils are able to read books for information and understand the value and use of the contents and index pages. Older pupils enjoy reading with sustained concentration. They make predictions about the text and storyline. More able pupils discuss text in detail making inferences and deductions, and identify a style of writing which they enjoy. This is an improvement since the last report. Pupils express their preference for a favourite author in their choice of book. Key Stage 2 pupils know and understand how to find books in the school library including the use of the computerised catalogue. Older pupils have well-developed research skills, understanding the techniques used in non-narrative text. They know the features to look for when choosing books and scan the text for information. Reading material is well matched to the pupils' ability throughout the school. The reading skills of those with special educational needs are satisfactory.

64. Standards in writing are above the national average. Pupils write for a wide range of purposes using suitable formats including diaries, stories, poetry, letters and descriptions including non-fiction writing. More able year one pupils write a detailed and imaginative letter from the doctor to the old lady who swallowed a fly. They develop their imagination and knowledge of story writing through changing endings to well known stories, such as the end of 'Cinderella'. Year two pupils plan their story writing giving more thought to the characters introduced, spelling is increasing in accuracy and writing includes punctuation. The teacher of a group of more able year

four pupils stimulates their thinking with the use of red food colouring in water to encourage exciting description. Pupils in year five experiment with making up words from the sounds made by stones, such as 'clansh'. They use descriptive words with increasing fluency, for example the blue and briny sea. Year six pupils write instructions with clarity when changing a scene from Harry Potter into a film sequence, including when to 'zoom in'. Following a study of 'Macbeth', they wrote their own scenes showing good understanding of the text. Poetry writing displays a feeling and rhythm for words containing metaphors, similes and alliteration to add colour. However, opportunities for extended writing are limited. The school is taking steps to address this and where pupils were set the task to write a sustained story for a competition they were very successful giving good attention to characterisation and plot.

65. Standards of handwriting are satisfactory in pupils' English books. Younger pupils regularly practise forming their letters correctly, joining letters legibly by the end of year two and older pupils continue to develop the school style using a pen. However, not all teachers expect the same standards in pupils' work in other subjects. Some teachers fail to set a good role model of presentation and writing for the pupils to copy. Spelling is satisfactory throughout the school, with good strategies in place to raise the standard further. Pupils are taught systematically and learn spelling rules, practice spelling and develop the use of words each day. They are encouraged to try out spellings for themselves, to identify common spelling patterns and recognise words within words. However, able spellers within groups are insufficiently extended during these sessions and some older pupils are careless when spelling simple words or copying key words.

66. Attitudes in lessons are always good and usually very good. Pupils settle promptly to their tasks working independently when required in a very calm atmosphere. Relationships are very good and they respond thoughtfully to questions. Behaviour is very good and pupils listen well to their teacher and other pupils. Many hands go up to answer questions, which is praised from an early age. They are keen to share ideas, putting a lot of effort into their work. However, some older pupils lack the urgency to complete the written task during the lesson.

67. Teaching is good across the school. A third of the teaching seen was very good and there were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers from years two to six teach pupils in ability sets. Teacher subject knowledge has been increased with this strategy so ensuring pupils receive high quality teaching enabling extended learning with work well matched to the ability of all pupils. Teachers make sure pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links to what they have covered previously. They use a rich and wide vocabulary to promote pupils' interest in words. For example, in year six references are made to the Greek or Latin root of the word to help with meaning and spelling. From an early stage, teachers encourage pupils to use the correct technical vocabulary across the curriculum, such as in a music lesson in year two where 'dynamics' was mentioned. Teachers use interesting and varied approaches to writing. They understand the importance of providing opportunities for pupils to think before writing, which stimulate imagination and thought. Lessons are challenging for all groups but the end of the literacy session is not always used effectively for pupils to identify what they have learnt and to encourage them to think about what they need to learn next. Good support by additional support staff benefits pupils, particularly those with special educational needs in the lower sets.

68. The well-qualified subject leader has a clear view of her role leading the subject very ably, giving support to teachers, monitoring planning and observing lessons, and setting a very good example. The optional tests in years three, four and five are analysed and used to track individual attainment. The whole team look regularly at samples of work to agree levels of attainment and teachers know what is expected. However, the systems in place for tracking and recording reading are not sufficiently detailed to be of benefit to the pupil or parent. Since the last report, many new books have been purchased, especially for younger pupils, and all classrooms have dictionaries available making resources good. Pupils make good use of the school library, both as a centre to read fiction and to research for information. It is well stocked and organised including picture books and wallets of story tapes and books. Good use is made of visiting authors, writers and puppeteers to enhance pupils' learning.

MATHEMATICS

69. Results of National tests taken by 11 year olds in 2000 indicate that attainment in mathematics is above the national average when compared to all and similar schools. In the 2000 tests for 7-year-olds, the number of pupils achieving level two and above improved significantly so

that again attainment was above average using both comparisons. The results at both key stages are consistent with the evidence obtained during the inspection from lesson observation, talking to children and analysis of work. This is an improvement on the last Ofsted inspection, when standards in Key Stage 1 were said to be 'poor when compared to similar schools.'

70. Through the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the commitment of the staff to raise standards in the subject, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now making consistently good progress throughout the school and are achieving well. Again this is an improvement since the last inspection when progress was 'overall satisfactory but varied widely between classes.'

71. The National Numeracy Strategy has been well implemented and this has brought necessary rigour to the planning and a proper progression to the development of the subject through the school. The school's own audit made shortly after the last inspection showed 'gaps' in the children's learning in mathematics and that some of the 'building blocks of learning' were missing. The new planning regime now ensures that these inconsistencies are being addressed and remedied. This, with a greater emphasis on mental mathematics, direct whole class teaching, good use of teacher expertise and a planned daily mathematics lesson has meant standards are improving year on year.

72. As pupils progress through the school their understanding, knowledge and skills of mathematics are increased and refined. Pupils in year one successfully meet the 'three coin challenge,' by selecting appropriate coins to make a given total. They develop their vocabulary and recognise 'add' or 'more' mean 'count on' and that they must use the 'Yellow Monster'. By the age of seven, pupils use different strategies to add three numbers together and are pleased to explain their method. Pupils have a basic knowledge of fractions such as $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$. They recognise two-dimensional shapes for example squares triangles, circles and hexagons and know basic properties of some solid shapes. In mental maths, seven year olds can typically double numbers, count on in fives, count back in tens, identify odd and even numbers and speedily recall number bonds to 20.

73. In year three pupils recall addition and subtraction facts to 100, are able to identify eight compass points, recognise clockwise and anticlockwise direction and know a quarter turn is one right angle. Some are able to demonstrate on the computer their improving understanding of angles and rotation by successfully using Superlogo. By year four, pupils use a function machine to improve their understanding of inverse operations and some can find the area of simple and compound shapes by counting the squares and by calculation. Their understanding and competence in multiplication tables is improving but several still struggle with the more difficult, such as the 8x and 6x. In year five pupils can round numbers like 82.7 to the nearest whole number and solve simple problems by identifying the correct operation or operations to use. They recognise the properties of isosceles and equilateral triangles and are able to use a variety of methods to write down multiplication calculations. In the oldest classes pupils know that the numerator and the denominator have to be multiplied or divided by the same number to create an equivalent fraction. They change fractions to decimals, multiply decimals and can identify the range, mode and median for a given set of data.

74. The standard of presentation of the pupils' work is generally satisfactory, with some examples of very neat work. However too often work is poorly presented with, for example, some older pupils totally ignoring the squares provided in their books and not using a ruler when appropriate. As a result, they sometimes make more careless errors in their calculations.

75. Achievement in mathematics is good. Most pupils establish good work habits and try hard. Their ability to use appropriate mathematical language is developed from reception onwards. They improve their understanding of mathematical operations and their ability to use different methods of working out a problem in their head. During lessons, pupils are becoming increasingly self-reliant when faced with a problem. They are able and willing to ask for help when needed and are motivated to improve.

76. Pupils' attitude to mathematics is good. They are nearly always fully engaged in their work, interested and work hard. Boys and girls respond enthusiastically, particularly in the mental maths and are eager to volunteer answers or explain the strategy they are using. The way pupils 'get on' following the teaching input is most impressive, with a minimum of fuss being made during the transition when pupils move from sitting on the carpet to working at their desk. Consequently little time is lost and the pace of the lesson is maintained.

77. The teaching of mathematics is good in both key stages. Of the lessons observed teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons, 62% were good and 13% very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection when the 'quality of teaching was variable.' In the last two years a high level of funding enabled the staff to have intensive training in mathematics and provided release time for development work. Planning is now thorough and systematic with learning outcomes clearly identified in each lesson. Teachers involved in teaching numeracy meet fortnightly to plan together. The subject knowledge of the teachers is secure and often good. Provision is further enhanced by the use of subject specialists to use their expertise to teach other year groups. Strong emphasis is placed upon encouraging pupils to develop different strategies to work out problems in their head. There is a consistent approach to the way children are taught to carry out the operations, for example the way children are taught to multiply. Pupils are well managed and clearly know what is expected of them. Some teachers set time limits to ensure learning is productive and pacy. Pupils are further encouraged to try hard by praise and the school's reward system. Work is well matched to the ability of the pupils, not only through the ability setting, but also within a set where, quite often, the teacher provides three levels of work. Resources such as number cards and white boards, often teacher produced, are used to ensure as many pupils as possible participate in the lesson. Well thought out displays in most rooms help reinforce learning.

78. The curriculum is now based on the National Numeracy Strategy. This is systematic, provides a broad and balanced curriculum and ensures progression and continuity as pupils move through the school. The school uses Abacus as its main source, although often work is selected from a variety of other sources to ensure the work is suitably matched to the ability of all the children. The school's system of setting pupils by ability in years two to six, combined with subject teaching, has helped raise standards by making teaching more effective and also by ensuring those requiring the most help receive the support they need. In the last inspection, the judgement made was the 'opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics within mathematics lessons and across the broader curriculum are insufficient.' This no longer applies.

79. Assessment arrangements are good and improving. Following baseline assessment on entry information obtained from National tests (SATS), non statutory SATS in years three, four and five, and mid-year tests are carefully analysed to assess standards and identify trends. Targets are set for each child following the end of year tests. Work is regularly scrutinised and teaching observed by both the subject leader and members of the management team. Teachers' make day-to-day assessments on the lesson planning sheet or in their mark books. Pupils' work is marked regularly and consistently and this often includes helpful comments to help the pupils recognise how they can improve.

80. Mathematics is strongly led by a well-qualified subject leader, ably supported by a deputy subject leader. Her drive and enthusiasm is having a positive impact on the development of the subject. Well targeted training to raise subject knowledge and the monitoring of teaching and learning are already helping to raise standards. The school's improvement planning is well developed and ensures resources are targeted at agreed priorities. Funds allocated to mathematics are well managed by the subject leader, who also oversees the subject action plan. The deputy subject leader is currently shadowing the leader. Although only in this post a short time, she has identified areas of responsibilities and targets and is already providing valuable support.

81. Resources for mathematics are good, with enough equipment etc to properly resource the full implementation of the Numeracy Strategy. Good cross-curricular links have been established with other subjects. For example in information technology, pupils use Pinpoint to collect data and then present this in the form of a chart or graph.

SCIENCE

82. Pupils' standards of achievement in science at Key Stages 1 and 2 are above those expected nationally and in comparison to similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils achieving the higher level, Level 3, is above what is expected with a similar pattern at Key Stage 2. Pupils throughout the school develop good observational skills and demonstrate a sound understanding of fair testing. They make predictions and put forward simple hypotheses. More able pupils can give scientifically reasoned arguments to justify their predictions or hypotheses. Pupils absorb new facts and understand scientific concepts effectively.

83. In Key Stage 1 pupils learn to classify materials according to change and observe changes in materials. They undertake investigations such as melting chocolate, dissolving jelly and melting ice to show change. Boys and girls learn that pushing and pulling things can make objects start and stop and understand that these are examples of forces that help objects to move. Year two pupils are challenged to make a circuit with a bulb to fit into a model lighthouse. They plan for the activity, identify what they need, what they have to do and sketch the inside and outside of the lighthouse to show how their plan will work. Understanding is shown through recorded work and includes observational drawings, tally charts, graphs and Venn diagrams.

84. In Key Stage 2, learning is further developed through practical experience and opportunities to investigate, hypothesise and predict outcomes. Pupils are able to describe a fair test when conducting an investigation to find the best insulating material. They measure water temperature at regular intervals and compare their results against the temperature of the control container. Boys and girls learn to construct circuits and to investigate the effect of changing the type or length of wire in a series circuit. The effects of these changes on a bulb, buzzer or electric motor in a circuit are observed and recorded. Homework is used to support work in the classroom such as where year five pupils plan an investigation to be undertaken at home. They are challenged to grow two plants from seed and in addition to light, warmth and water they have to provide a further growth factor for one of the plants. Some suggestions, such as yoghurt and plant food are based on reason. Other less scientific ideas, like letting one plant watch television, provide an entertaining and amusing moment which is enjoyed by everyone and illustrates the good relationships between the teacher and pupils.

85. Teaching is good throughout both key stages. Lessons have clear learning objectives, planning is well structured and there is a good balance of explanation, discussion and investigational work. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to think scientifically and develop their vocabulary. The subject knowledge of teachers is good and lesson objectives and learning outcomes are clearly stated and written on the board for reference. Clear instructions are given so pupils know what is expected from them and lesson introductions frequently recall previous knowledge. Time limits for tasks to be completed are frequently set and this maintains the pace of lessons. Teachers move between groups to challenge and check understanding, and offer guidance. Questioning is used effectively to probe areas to be investigated and to extend learning and promote further thinking. Pupils requiring additional support and more-able pupils are identified in the planning and work is differentiated accordingly. Support assistants provide effective support to pupils with special educational needs and assist their learning with related activities at an appropriate level. Not all marking is consistent with the school policy and in some cases, comment on misunderstandings would benefit learning and there is room for improvement in the standard of presentation of work.

86. The weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been addressed effectively. The subject leader's role has been clearly defined and she has worked very hard and effectively to put all the necessary structures in place and support her colleagues. A policy has been developed and the planning throughout the school is thorough and detailed with due emphasis on experimental and investigative work. Detailed schemes of work for each year group clearly state the learning objectives and the termly plans include an assessment activity. Pupils' progress is systematically assessed and recorded at the end of each unit of work. Displays throughout the school promote learning and reflect work in the classroom. Expectations of time given to science homework are made clear and this increases as pupils proceed through the school. The budget allocated to the subject provides scope to replace consumable items and to further develop and improve resources. Resources for science are good and there is sufficient equipment to support investigative work across the programme of study.

ART AND DESIGN

87. Pupils' progress in art in both key stages is mainly good and pupils throughout the school attain standards that are similar to those expected of pupils of the same age. This is an improvement since the last inspection when progress was said to be variable and standards generally below that expected. This has largely been brought about by a hard working subject leader, newly appointed to the post, who has introduced nationally available guidelines for planning the art curriculum, augmented resources and started to monitor teachers' planning of the subject. There is now a clear progression to the teaching of skills and techniques which is evident from displays and work in classrooms and shared spaces.

88. Reception children painted simple portraits of themselves, in year one they looked at portraits painted by famous artists and practised the skills of matching skin tones through colour mixing before painting their pictures. In year three pupils studied pictures where there are two figures, such as 'The Blind Girl' by Millais and 'The Ambassadors' by Holbein. They have taken photographs of one another in pairs and created their own double portraits in the style of the famous painters. In year six pupils have carefully observed figures in action and looked at lines and form producing their own gallery of pictures of people in action. Their work shows good progress in their ability to observe detail and to create a sense of movement.

89. Pupils enjoy art throughout the school. Some say it is their favourite subject. They work hard in lessons and cooperate well when undertaking shared projects, as in the year six lesson which involved designing and making headgear. Most pupils strive hard to improve their work and extend their skills, some do not want to finish when the end of the lesson is signalled. However, in some lessons pupils are so tightly directed that there is little opportunity for them to make choices and decisions about the materials they will use and the techniques they will use.

90. All teaching is at least satisfactory and in more than half the lessons, it is good or very good. All lessons are well planned and take good account of the recently introduced guidelines on curriculum planning. In the best lessons teachers are secure in their knowledge and clearly teach skills such as shading, pattern and line drawing. They stop pupils from time to time to discuss and evaluate work, teach new skills, and celebrate success. Pupils fully understand what is expected of them and what the objectives of the lesson are. In the less successful lessons, pupils are tightly directed and there is little scope for the development of pupils' individual creativity. At other times although a lesson has high level learning objectives the work pupils produce is of a low level because they do not fully understand the task.

91. Good displays of pupils art work celebrate their work in the subject and enhance many classrooms and shared spaces. Well-displayed work of other artists and work of the children is a feature of all the corridors in school. Information technology is suitably used for some design and art work, for example pupils used the programme Textease 2000 to generate good designs in the style of Matisse's work 'The Snail'. The school has good resources and benefits from a kiln and associated resources. The subject leader has very clear ideas of how she would like to see the subject develop including developing assessment procedures and a school portfolio, building up contacts with local artists and encouraging visits to art galleries and exhibitions.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. Throughout the school pupils consistently make sound progress in design and technology and achieve standards which are appropriate for the ages of the pupils involved. This is an improvement from the last inspection when standards were judged to be average in Key Stage 1 and below average in Key Stage 2. The school has worked hard to improve standards in the subject and the new, enthusiastic subject leader has played an important part in raising the profile of design and technology and supporting teachers in their efforts to improve standards. National guidelines for curriculum planning, which specify a clear progression to the acquisition of skills and experiences, have been successfully introduced. This is helping teacher confidence and ensuring that pupils develop skills and knowledge in a systematic way.

93. In Key Stage 1, year one pupils achieve very well when making movable models of Elmer. They correctly identify and use vocabulary associated with moving parts and can talk about levers, sliders and pivots. Split pins, hole punches and scissors are used safely and effectively. In year two they explore the technology involved in making vehicles move and learn that there are two ways for an axle to work, one with fixed axle and rotating wheel, the other with fixed wheel and rotating axle. In year six they extend their knowledge of the workings of vehicles by planning and designing controllable vehicles using circuits and switches. They choose the materials they will use and learn how to measure and cut wood carefully. In year four some very good ideas are generated by pupils designing torches. Their designs are very thoughtful and imaginative, with very ingenious ideas of how to adapt the torches for specific purposes. For example, a wrist torch to enable someone to see in small spaces, a knee torch to be worn when cycling. In year three pupils effectively study a collection of photograph frames and consider their design in terms of stability, attractiveness and ability to hold the photo securely. They test their findings and make detailed drawings and notes.

94. Pupils enjoy the subject. They work well together on projects such as the designing of the

controllable vehicles, listen to one another's ideas and patiently explain what they are doing. They are proud of their work and when lessons are finished, they keenly anticipate the next lesson and finishing the product.

95. Teaching of design and technology is good and sometimes very good. All lessons are meticulously planned with precise learning objectives that are well met in lessons. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their designs by asking probing questions that challenge pupils to think about how things will work, the suitability of materials and whether they can improve and develop their designs further. Teaching assistants and voluntary helpers are well used in most lessons to support pupils with their work. Throughout the school pupils' work in design and technology is celebrated through well-presented display. Most work is well finished and represents a good range of skills.

96. The subject leader has clear ideas about how she would like to develop the subject further. These include designing and implementing assessment tasks, further training to improve teachers' subject knowledge and developing resources for children with special needs. Hard work over the past two terms has ensured that standards have improved. There is now scope to look at ways in which design and technology can fit into work in other curriculum areas to make tasks more relevant to pupils' experience and interests and enhance learning in other subjects areas.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

97. The two subject leaders have worked very hard over the past two years to put in place the clear planning structures with supporting documents that were missing at the time of the last inspection. Work in both subjects is now essentially based on national schemes of work sensibly modified and added to, to meet the needs of the school. All staff are now very clear about what their children are expected to know, understand and do. Developing assessment arrangements are helping staff to know what this looks like in practice and monitor progress through the school.

98. As a result of all this effort, standards in both subjects are always at least as they should be for the ages of the pupils concerned and sometimes better in individual classes. This was most evident in the work observed in the classrooms or on display with much less evidence of progress or understanding in written work completed in pupils' geography or history books. Teachers plans, classroom observations and discussions with boys and girls show that the skills elements of both subjects are receiving sufficient attention and that pupils are developing, for example, skills of historical interpretation and of mapping.

99. Pupils in year one are learning about different places through the travels of Barnaby Bear who had found his way to Ecuador. Using large-scale postcards and some well-chosen Ecuadorian objects and music, they are learning about differences and travel. In history, other bears are used to give pupils a sense of history and the past. Year two are studying the differences between life on a remote island and their own lives noting what types of transport can and cannot be found on the island and why. Similar comparisons are being made between London at the time of the Great Fire and modern day Bournemouth in terms of the risk of fire.

100. Boys and girls in year three looked at what it actually means to be an invader or a settler by using dictionary definitions and matching them to associated words. They soon noted the difference and were able to see that eventually invaders often became settlers. Older pupils compared Henry VIII with the present royal family with such issues as beheading, the number of wives and hunting all sensitively dealt with. In an early lesson on India, good use is made of photographs and text to answer questions about schools, jobs and the landscape. Quicker workers make comparisons between Chembakolli and Bournemouth. Year five pupils make good progress at several levels in learning how to use four and six figure references to find or identify features on a map. Most recent work in geography in year six looked at the mountain environment comparing heights, interpreting photographs and looking at the dangers involved. In history, they have just started to look at ancient Greece.

101. Most teaching is good but geography and history were two of the few areas in the school where no very good teaching was observed. All lessons are well planned, managed and controlled. Better lessons involve pupils in activities that required them to think and use their initiative to come up with answers or suggestions. They usually feature lively discussions prompted by well thought out questioning and appropriate resources to stimulate talk. Present

timetabling arrangements mean that it is difficult for teachers to organise extended pieces of work or involve work in other subjects.

INFORMATION AND COOMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

102. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in both the provision of and attainment in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Throughout the school pupils are achieving well so that by 11 years of age, pupils attain standards at least in line with national expectation and frequently better. Children are making good progress through the school and in the younger classes, in Key Stage 1 and the younger juniors, attainment is now above average. Given the present provision for ICT in the school, and the drive and energy of the leadership, it is anticipated that attainment of 11 year olds will rise still further in future. This is an improvement on the last inspection when 'attainment by the age of 11 was below that which is expected nationally' and 'progress in information technology was intermittent ... and at Key Stage 2 overall progress was unsatisfactory.'

103. All the issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed. The school, through its Governors and Headteacher, has made a major investment in successfully improving the ICT resources and further improvements in curriculum, planning, teaching and leadership have had a very positive impact on the development of the subject.

104. As pupils move through the school they successfully refine and extend their ICT skills. Reception pupils learn to use a mouse to select items on a screen, such as teddy's clothes. They are able to control Pixie along different pathways and produce stimulating pictures using Dazzle. By year one, pupils are able to change the font, size and colour of a given text. The oldest infants are able to use Dazzle to create pictures in the style of Piet Mondrian and give instructions to a programmable toy, Roamer, to move around the room.

105. Pupils in year three are beginning to combine text and graphics and use Superlogo confidently to demonstrate their understanding of angles in mathematics. Year four pupils collect their own data using Junior Pinpoint and present the information in the form of a graph or chart. In year five, pupils make graphical models of their own classroom and the school grounds. They also sort information on a spreadsheet and use formula. By the age of 11, pupils produce excellent multimedia posters to attract visitors to the Lake District. Pupils are achieving well, are enthusiastic and concentrate hard during ICT sessions. They work well independently and show initiative and resourcefulness in dealing with any difficulties that arise. They can explain the purpose of their task and are happy to make suggestions or volunteer answers.

106. Teaching of ICT is good. Of the lessons observed all were at least satisfactory, 67% good or better, with 17% being very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection when 40% of teaching observed was unsatisfactory. Teachers subject knowledge is at least satisfactory and in many instances good. Lesson planning based on the national scheme is clear, with specific learning outcomes well identified. In the lessons where teaching was good or better the multimedia projector was used effectively with concise, punchy explanations leading to challenging work. In the lessons where teaching was satisfactory explanations were laboured and work less challenging leading to some restlessness among the pupils.

107. Resources for ICT are excellent. Classes have weekly timetabled slots in the computer suite, which includes 18 personal computers (PCs), a multimedia projector to enlarge the image of the monitor screen so all the class can see and a colour laser printer. In addition, there are two PCs in each classroom, two digital cameras and a scanner. All computers are networked allowing every child access to their file from any computer using their own individual code. Each of the PCs has Internet access and all pupils have their own email address for use within school. The school Intranet, designed by the subject leader, includes work and information about the year groups and the school merit system. With the help of a student from Bournemouth University the school has developed its own high quality web site, which provides detailed information about the school and includes a copy of Snippets – the school's newsletter.. A weekly computer club further enriches the provision. The school has an excellent range of software available enabling the teaching of all the units in the ICT scheme and good cross-curricular use of ICT, for example using sensors to measure light in science. Computers are also used to find books in the school and to log books in and out of the library.

108. The subject is very well led by a subject leader and deputy subject leader, who are enthusiastically committed to developing the subject. Both have strong subject knowledge and

provide very good support to their colleagues. Since the last inspection the school has adopted the national (QCA) scheme of work and has phased in its introduction appropriate to the skill level of the children. It was fully implemented in September 2000. The co-ordinator has drawn up and implemented a very good scheme of work which covers all strands of the National Curriculum programme of study and identifies a suitable progression of computer skills to be covered by each year group. This is already helping to raise standards. The scheme identifies the learning outcomes, suggested activities, resources and vocabulary and includes formal teacher assessment sheets.

109. Work is regularly scrutinised and teaching observed. Lesson plans are monitored and the subject leader keeps a portfolio of pupils' work matched to lesson plans and QCA objectives. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory although this aspect is under-developed. The school recognises this and developing effective assessment procedures to accurately track pupils progress has been identified as a priority for improvement. A great deal of in-service work has already been undertaken led by the subject leader, who planned and delivered the staff training. The subject knowledge of all the staff will be further enhanced by the national training, which starts in April 2001. Financial resources for ICT are managed by the subject leader who was also responsible for the purchase of the computer system and software.

MUSIC

110. Pupils throughout the school attain the standards expected for their age and ability and enjoy their music making activities. The change from specialist teaching accounts for some decline in standards since the last report. All teachers, most of whom are enthusiastic non-specialists, are now involved in teaching music to their class. The tuition provided by visiting specialist teachers in strings, woodwind, keyboard and piano along with recorder and ocarinas further enhance the provision for pupils. This enables the more-able pupils to achieve well and some pupils perform in lessons, concerts and worship. The school choir performs regularly within the community and they are actively engaged in performances by the Bournemouth Schools Music Association.

111. Pupils in year one maintain a steady beat and enjoy a variety of activities to reinforce this skill, including playing and listening to music. They show good control in playing untuned percussion instruments, know the names of the instruments they are to play and explore ways of playing long and short sounds. Most make controlled vocal sounds following conductor cards. They sing with accuracy in pitch and are confident when singing on their own. In year two pupils take notice of a difference in loud and quiet singing and control their voices well. They use correct musical terms such as dynamics, experience songs and chants and are aware of repeated figures. They listen carefully to rhythms and identify word patterns correctly.

112. Pupils in year three discuss the structure of a simple piece of music and recognise repeated themes when played. They play instruments together to form a piece of structured music involving shimmering and diamond sounds, using two symbol cards for a pupil to conduct with. Some use the 'Compose' program successfully in information and control technology to make choices and, through discussion with their partner, to create a sequence of sounds. Others use keyboards and tape record compositions. In year five pupils work in groups to practise and improve creative music making ready for a class performance. They write and read a graphic score detailing sounds for thunder, waterfall, coconut grove and animal sounds. They perform confidently displaying good quality singing, and play expressively and with great control. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils use untuned percussion instruments to improvise a sequence of sounds related to the creation story from China. A pentatonic scale on chime bars is used to compose a lullaby. They appreciate the elements required to make a whole class composition work, for example a leader, repetition, echoes, and the use of differing dynamics.

113. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils enjoy the quick succession of activities, which develop over a sequence of sessions and play their part well in music making. The lessons are challenging and extend pupils appreciation and creativity. Instructions are clear and skills are practised and repeated to aid progress. Pupils' musical knowledge and ability to think independently is developed. Teachers make good use of pupils' contributions to help others to understand how to improve their work. Mixed ability groups enable the lower attainers to work alongside those with more developed skills. Where a learning support assistant is in the class good use is made to aid pupils learning and support behaviour. Pupils enjoy making music,

working enthusiastically. They answer questions, discuss and share their knowledge well. Pupils show appreciation for each other's work and efforts and give support to one another effectively when playing together.

114. Teachers plan lessons from the longer-term plans provided by a specialist who acts as a consultant, which are supported by a commercial scheme. Their plans are well monitored. A very good selection of tuned and untuned percussion instruments including instruments from other cultures and a wide range of recorded music is available. The use of appropriate music in worship, through singing and listening, supports their spiritual and cultural development. For example, upper school worship on the theme of help in Gambia introduced an African song accompanied by an African drum, which they learnt quickly although the quality of singing was disappointing. Pupils also listened to music from Africa when entering and leaving the hall which helped to set worship within the context. Links with information and control technology are beginning to be made through the use of the program 'Compose'.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. The standard attained by pupils is satisfactory overall with good standards in swimming. In Key Stage 1 pupils learn to learn to balance in a controlled way and to explore the movement options of height and direction with sustained concentration. There is an eagerness to demonstrate their movement sequences and they are able to describe a 'good balance'. They readily offer their own ideas for movement and identify high and low, forwards, backwards and sideways as directions of travel. In Key Stage 2 pupils build upon these skills and learn to combine travelling, rolls, jumps and balances in a sequence, incorporating the use of apparatus. They review and comment on the performance of others and confidently describe symmetry and asymmetry in movement. Pupils develop skills in games and in netball, for example, they learn to receive and pass the ball with accuracy. In swimming, pupils develop confidence in the water in the early years and become capable swimmers as they progress through the school but the shallow pool limits the activity of older pupils.

116. The quality of teaching is good overall. Planning is detailed and thorough and makes the lesson objectives clear. Introductions to lessons are concise and teachers discuss lesson objectives with pupils and provide advice on safety. Where warm up activities are brisk a good pace to the lesson is established. Main teaching points are reinforced effectively by pupils demonstrating key skills. Pupils are taught to use correct techniques when swimming and an awareness of tactics in games lessons. In gymnastic lessons pupils are well disciplined when collecting the apparatus and arranging it appropriately in the hall. However, in some instances an over emphasis on group control has the effect of reducing the time pupils have to work and explore themes. Teachers make good use of praise and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own performance. Support assistants give pupils with special educational needs appropriate support and encouragement.

117. The behaviour of pupils in physical education lessons is good. They work well independently and are co-operative when working with a partner or when sharing equipment. Boys and girls listen attentively, respond well to direction and take part with enthusiasm. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils are aware of the benefits of exercise to good health.

118. The subject leader has a clearly defined role which includes monitoring overall standards, planning and lessons and has put in place a policy and detailed scheme of work for all year groups. However, in Key Stage 1, the breadth of the curriculum offered to pupils over the course of a year is limited with no dance activity for year one pupils and no gymnastics for pupils in year two. Resources for physical education are generally good and plentiful for the range of activities. The school benefits from having its own swimming pool and teacher for swimming. This enables classes to be divided so that half have swimming lessons whilst the remainder are taught gymnastics or dance in the hall. The hall is adequate for these numbers but as it is also used for other purposes, the careful placing of equipment such as the overhead projector and piano requires consideration on safety grounds. The school participates in sporting events, such as swimming and athletics, football and netball, with other schools. After school netball, football and swimming clubs enhance the sporting opportunities. Sporting achievements are celebrated through phase times, displays and on the school website.