

INSPECTION REPORT

DAMERS FIRST SCHOOL

Dorchester

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113665

Headteacher: Mrs J McLeod

Reporting inspector: Stephen Dennett
13712

Dates of inspection: 31st October to 3rd November 2000

Inspection number: 224351

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Damers Road Dorchester Dorset
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sally Thorne
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

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Brian Rance 01305	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Kay Andrews 31975	Team inspector	English Art Special Educational Needs English as an additional language	The Speech and Language Unit
Robert Arnold 22729	Team inspector		The Speech and Language Unit
Kenneth Parry 24019	Team inspector	Mathematics History Physical Education	
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Yvonne Bacchetta 31801	Team inspector	Science Geography	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Damers First School is a Community school providing education for 375 pupils aged 4 to 9. There are 206 boys and 169 girls on roll. Most pupils are of a white UK origin, but 7.2 per cent come from other ethnic backgrounds. Although the social and economic circumstances of pupils are broadly average, a significant minority are from relatively deprived environments. Pupils' levels of attainment are just average overall, but an increasing number are entering the school below average levels of attainment. The percentage of pupils entitled to school meals is below average, at around 8.8 per cent, but the school does not provide hot mid-day meals and as a consequence many families who may be eligible do not claim. Nearly a third of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is well above average. Five pupils in the main school have statements of special educational needs, which is well above average. In addition, the school has a unit for 18 pupils with speech, language and communication problems. Currently, 14 pupils, all with statements, are supported in the two unit classes. The school has identified that 4 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is much higher than most schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which provides its pupils with a good education. Teaching is consistently good and the quality of learning is also good in all classes. The school's provision for special educational needs, both in the main school and the unit, is very good. The new headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school and is very well supported by governors and all staff. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in information and communications technology, design and technology and music are above average at both key stages. Standards in history are above average at Key Stage 1. Pupils achieve well in all subjects.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good in all classes.
- Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are very good throughout the school.
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development.
- Very good leadership and management are moving the school forward rapidly.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- There are weaknesses in science at Key Stage 1, especially in the planning and teaching of investigative work.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment information to adjust the planning for some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS PREVIOUS INSPECTION

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The key issues raised at that time have been largely addressed effectively, with the exception of investigational science at Key Stage 1. There is a good assessment policy which is translated well into practice. Assessment is now related well to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. There has been appropriate further development in the monitoring and evaluating of work in the classroom. Information provided to parents meets statutory requirements. The school has also made improvements in a number of other areas. Attendance is now above average. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, which was good at the time of the previous inspection is now very good. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good. The leadership and management of the school has improved from good to very good. Standards have improved in English, mathematics, information and communications technology, design and technology, geography, art and design, history and physical education. There have also been significant improvements in the provision for pupils with special educational needs, which is now very good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	D	C	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	C	E	C	B	
Mathematics	C	C	C	C	

The above table shows that pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are similar to those found nationally. In comparison to similar schools standards are average in reading and mathematics, but above average in writing. Recent trends in reading, writing and mathematics show an improvement in standards, despite the increased number of pupils with special educational needs. It should be noted that the above results include those of pupils at the unit. If these results are excluded from the table, overall standards are above average. Observed standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average, as they are in art and design, geography and physical education. Pupils' attainment in religious education meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in science, although broadly average overall, show weaknesses in the investigational aspects of the subject. Pupils' achievements in information and communications technology, design and technology, history and music are above average. Higher attaining pupils achieve standards which are above average. When children complete the Foundation Stage of education at age five, the majority have reached the early learning goals. Good standards are achieved in their personal development. Standards when pupils leave school at age 9 are average in English and mathematics. They are also average in art and design, geography, history and physical education. Pupils' achievements in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards are above average in information and communications technology, design and technology and music. Observed standards in science are above average by the end of Year 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are enthusiastic about their work and show great interest and involvement in the activities they undertake.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good throughout the school. Pupils listen well to teachers and follow instructions promptly.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils show great respect for others' feelings and beliefs. They have very good relationships with each other and with adults. Their levels of personal development are very good.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are above average and the incidence of unauthorised absence is very low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. In over a quarter of lessons seen, teaching was very good and in two lessons, it was excellent. Teaching was good in two fifths of lessons and satisfactory in under a quarter. Teaching at the Foundation Stage for children under five is good overall and children learn well,

often concentrating for considerable periods. This has a positive impact on the progress they make in their learning. The teaching of English is good overall and teachers meet the needs of pupils with speech and language difficulties well. The teaching of mathematics is good overall and pupils of all abilities are making good progress. Overall, teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, the teaching of science at Key Stage 1 has some weaknesses, as teachers do not plan or provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills. Teachers have high expectations of both behaviour and pupils' achievement, and as a result, all pupils make good progress in their learning, especially those with special educational needs. Teachers manage pupils very well and as a consequence, even the occasional disruptive behaviour from pupils with special educational needs does not interfere with pupils' learning. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils are challenged successfully to achieve to their full potential.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a good curriculum, which is varied, broad and balanced. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those in the unit, is very good. They learn well and make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The schools' provision for English as an additional language is good and pupils are making good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop the spiritual and moral aspects of their education. Provision for their social and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. Procedures for assessment are good, but there are weaknesses in the use of assessment to adjust planning in some subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school and has a very clear vision for the future. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and other key staff. Leadership and management are very good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors take their responsibilities seriously and play an excellent role in shaping the future direction of the school. They are very effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is very good at evaluating its performance and uses the information it gathers very well to set targets.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all strategic resources, including special grants. Financial planning is very good and supports the school's educational priorities very well. The principles of best value are applied well. Levels of staffing are good and most subjects are well resourced. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, but some of the temporary buildings are at the end of their useful life.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are always positive, friendly and hardworking. • Classrooms are well organised. • There has been a marked improvement in the school over last 18 months. • Problems are handled very well by the school. • The new headteacher has had a major positive impact on the quality of education. • Major improvements to the fabric of the school are much appreciated. • The school makes very good provision for special educational needs and disruptive pupils are handled very well. • The school provides a happy environment and staff are kind and helpful. • There is very good provision for music, drama, dance and art. • Children are very happy at school. • Parents are very impressed with the unit. • Standards and expectations are always very high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school day is too long at Key Stage 1. • Disruptive pupils are causing problems in mainstream classes. • There is not enough time for swimming lessons. • There is insufficient 'free play' in Year 1. • Lunch times are too short. • There are unhygienic conditions for eating lunches in classrooms. • School events are not always given enough notice. • There is too much homework for children in reception classes. • Some classes are too big.

The inspection team agree with the positive comments made by parents. The school day is of an appropriate length. Teachers have very good strategies for dealing with disruptive pupils. The amount of time given to swimming is sufficient. The programme of study for pupils in Year 1 is appropriate, giving a good balance between formal learning activities and directed play. Lunchtimes are supervised well. Most classrooms are clean and tidy at the end of the lunch period. The quality of information given to parents is very good. The amount of homework given to children in the Foundation Stage is appropriate. The inspection team agree that some classes are larger than is ideal, especially those classes with a significant number of pupils with special educational needs, but good planning and teaching has overcome most of the detrimental effects of large class sizes. Current class sizes are within the government limits.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children enter the school with levels of attainment which are broadly average, however increasingly, a significant minority have a range of special educational needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils make good progress in the 'stepping stones', which are followed to reach the newly introduced early learning goals. By the end of the year, children have generally achieved these goals and are well prepared to start work on the National Curriculum.
2. Pupils' achievements in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are similar to those found nationally. In comparison to similar schools, standards are average in reading and mathematics, but above average in writing. However, the comparison to schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals is unreliable, as the school does not provide hot lunches and as a consequence many families who may be eligible do not claim. Recent trends in reading, writing and mathematics show an improvement in standards, despite the increased number of pupils with special educational needs. It should be noted that published test results include those of pupils at the unit for speech, language and communications difficulties. If these results are excluded from the table, overall standards are above average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher level 3 in tests is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Observed standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average and confirm the test results. Standards in science, although broadly average overall, show weaknesses in the investigational aspects of the subject. Pupils achieve well in information and communications technology, design and technology, history and music and standards are above the expected level in these subjects. In art and design, geography and physical education, standards are average by the end of the Key Stage. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
3. When pupils leave school at age 9, their levels of achievement are broadly similar to national averages in English, mathematics and science. All pupils achieve well and most are working at their full capacity, including those with above average ability. In the light of the significant number of pupils with special educational needs, which is as high as 40 per cent in some Key Stage 2 classes, the school has done well to raise standards to their current levels. Standards in art and design, geography, history and physical education are average in Year 4. Pupils' achievements in religious education meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Their levels of achievement in science, information and communications technology, design and technology, and music are good and standards are above average.
4. A significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs have good achievement due, in the main, to the good quality of the teaching and the very good support that they receive. Despite the fact that the high levels of pupils with special educational needs affect standards in national tests, these pupils, including those in the unit, generally make good progress through the school when measured against their prior attainment. Early identification ensures that difficulties are addressed quickly and evidence shows that the school is successful in moving many pupils down and off the register. A recent focus has been to raise the attainment of able pupils in writing and numeracy. To this end, the school has put appropriate strategies in place, which are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress. The school has been successful in targeting higher attaining pupils and challenging them to achieve to their full potential.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Overall pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and have improved since the previous inspection. Their attitude to their work has a positive impact on their learning. Pupils like coming to school and enjoy learning. Pupils know and understand the well established routines of the school and pupils who are new to the school settle in quickly. They work independently on the tasks they are given and are keen to complete them in the set time. They help each other and treat one another with respect. They are particularly good in classroom discussions, waiting to take

their turn to speak or answer questions and not doing so until invited to by the teacher. They therefore listen to each other and the teacher well, and this contributes to their learning significantly. As pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the work of each class and are very well provided for, they also have positive attitudes to school and their learning.

6. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is very good. It has improved since the previous inspection and is a major strength of the school. The consistent implementation of the behaviour policy by all staff throughout the school is a significant contributing factor. The effective schemes for rewarding good behaviour, good effort and good work are enjoyed by all the pupils. The practice of appointing Year 4 pupils as monitors also has a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, especially in the playground where all pupils play sensibly together in mixed age and gender groups. There is no evidence of bullying and there has been only one exclusion in recent years. The significant proportion of pupils identified on the special educational needs register as having challenging behaviour are well supported and generally have good attitudes to school and are eager to make a contribution in lessons. Most have high self-esteem and are keen to gain success. This is commendable, considering the high level of poor or immature behaviour that some pupils have when they start in the school.
7. Relationships within the school are very good and make a significant contribution to the effective learning environment and to the quality of life in the school. Comments from parents strongly support this view. Relationships are based on mutual respect between all members of the school community. Teachers celebrate pupils' contributions to the life of the school and pupils show considerable respect for their peers and for property. In discussion lessons, for example, they listen with interest to each other's views while in more practical situations they handle equipment with care. Very effective working relationships were demonstrated clearly when small groups of pupils co-operated by sharing resources and supporting each other in their learning. Very good examples of collaborative work were observed in information and communications technology, mathematics and history, when pupils are secure and relaxed in their relationships with teachers and adults, and this gives them the confidence to ask for help when required. This clearly has a strong bearing on the resulting good learning. In circle times and in assemblies pupils learn to reflect on their own behaviour and feelings and to think about the impact of their actions on others. The school promotes a strong sense of inclusion and as a result pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and those from the speech and language unit, integrate well at all times.
8. Pupils' very good personal development has a high priority in the school and underpins all areas of learning. Pupils respond in a mature and enthusiastic manner to the wide variety of opportunities the school provides for them to take responsibility and use initiative. For example, as a result of their involvement in the school council, pupils provide continuing financial support for a child in the Gambia and contribute to significant decisions about the way the school is run. Older pupils involved in the playground helper scheme provide effective support for younger pupils. Their letters of application to fulfil these roles show a high degree of commitment to the school's caring ethos. On a day to day basis they respond equally well by willingly undertaking helpful duties such as returning registers to the office and clearing up after lessons.
9. Overall pupils' attendance at school is above average and has improved since the last inspection. Unauthorised absences are very low. While the level of authorised absence is low, being in the top 25 per cent of first schools nationally, it is significantly affected by pupils being taken on family holidays during term time. In the present academic year and by the time of this inspection in November, approximately 10 per cent of pupils had already been away from school. The great majority of pupils arrive at school punctually so that the day gets off to a prompt start.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. The quality of teaching is good overall. In over a quarter of lessons seen, teaching was very good and in two lessons, it was excellent. Teaching was good in over two-fifths of lessons and satisfactory in less than a quarter. The impact of teaching over time is good because all pupils, irrespective of their prior attainment are making good progress in their learning and working to their capacity. This achievement is all the more marked in those classes where the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is highest. Teachers work hard, and to good effect, to

ensure that tasks are well matched to the needs of individual pupils. As a consequence pupils are well motivated and eager to learn.

11. At the Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have a good grasp of the needs of children of this age and the teaching of basic skills is effective. Great emphasis is placed on social development, which enables children to fit in well to school life. Planning is effective and is appropriately focused on the early learning goals for young children. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and challenge children to do their best at all times. Effective teaching methods, combined with very good management of the children result in a good learning environment. Children concentrate well and put a great deal of effort into their work. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and children generally remain engrossed for considerable periods. For example, in one information and communications technology lesson, most of the children concentrated for nearly twenty minutes, using the 'mouse' competently to draw pictures of monsters. Teachers make good use of baseline and other on-going assessment to ensure that children are given work which is appropriate to their needs. The early assessment of children who are thought to have special educational needs means these children are very well supported in their learning.
12. In English the quality of teaching is good overall and has been successful in raising standards. All the teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory, usually good and often very good. Some very good instances were seen during the inspection of very effective strategies being used to teach literacy. Good teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge and a willingness by teachers to adapt their teaching styles to engage pupils' interest through role-play, particularly as a stimulus for writing. Teachers have very effective strategies to deal with challenging behaviour, which include moving lessons on at a brisk pace and assessing regularly to ensure that work is well matched to need. They pose challenging questions, expectations are high and lessons are conducted in a friendly approachable manner. A strength in English is that planning is thorough and consistent across the year groups where teachers share their expertise. This is as a result of regular effective inset, particularly in the use of drama, which has raised teachers' skill and confidence.
13. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is consistently good throughout the school, and taking into account the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs almost all pupils achieve well. Almost unanimously pupils say that they enjoy their mathematics lessons and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of their learning. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been particularly effective in ensuring that learning develops systematically and that tasks planned by teachers are closely matched to pupils' needs and prior attainment. Teachers' plans show that they have a clear awareness of precisely what is to be taught in each lesson, although they do not always share these intentions with pupils. They are secure in their knowledge of the subject, which is evident in their confident use of mathematical vocabulary.
14. The quality of teaching in science is good overall and there are examples of very good teaching in Year 2 and excellent teaching in Year 4. All teachers display at least a satisfactory subject knowledge and encourage pupils to use correct scientific vocabulary during lessons. Most teachers use probing questions which focus on the purpose of the lesson and on clear learning objectives and, for example, to develop pupils' understanding of circuits where pupils 'pass the squeeze' to simulate electricity travelling in a circle. When carrying out practical investigations, pupils explore and co-operate responsibly and enthusiastically. Pupils with special educational needs develop increased skills and understanding through the good support given by learning assistants. In the best lessons, learning intentions identify the skills and knowledge to be learned and these are well matched to the pupils' stage of development. Lessons build progressively on pupils' skills as well as knowledge. Effective intervention is given for pupils to develop appropriate independence in group activities. Pupils' understanding is extended well through the effective use of computers to interpret patterns in measurements related to what pupils expected to happen in their own investigations. In marking pupils' work in science most teachers recognise pupils' success but rarely inform pupils how they need to improve their work.
15. Overall, teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of the subjects they are studying. Even when subject knowledge is less secure, as for example in information and communications technology, teachers' professionalism

and dedication ensure that they are well-prepared for lessons. The teaching of basic skills is good overall with the exception of investigative skills in science at Key Stage 1. Overall, pupils' progress in acquiring skills is satisfactory, but as a significant minority of pupils have specific and general difficulties with speech and language, teachers have done well to raise standards to their current levels. The management of pupils by teachers is very good, especially in those classes where pupils' specific learning needs present a challenge to organisation and class control. As a consequence, pupils' progress in learning is generally good and in several lessons seen, it was very good and, occasionally, excellent. Expectations are high and the tasks given to pupils are challenging and interesting. Pupils respond well, showing good levels of interest, concentration and independence of learning. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning and includes opportunities for independent research. Teachers' day-to-day assessment is good and it is used well to set individual and group targets, which are shared with pupils.

16. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and they make generally good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Teachers work and plan well with each other and with colleagues from specialist agencies, including speech and language therapists and the Hearing Impaired Service to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs, including those in the unit, benefit from targets in the good quality individual education plans. They are very willing to adapt their teaching styles to accommodate new ideas and teaching promotes the learning of these pupils well. In particular, recent inset to help teachers deal with challenging behaviour has been very successful in producing a more consistent approach across the classes. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in the main school and the unit is effective in ensuring that these pupils are well taught and well supported in small groups with suitable work to meet their needs. These include 'booster' writing and maths groups.
17. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. No formal training has been undertaken to help teachers who now have pupils with English as an additional language in their classes. Therefore, planning has been rather 'ad-hoc' and lacking a basic structure to support teaching. However, teachers have all received reports on progress and advice on how best to meet their pupils' needs.

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

18. The curriculum for all pupils provides varied experiences across all subjects which contributes significantly to pupils' good rate of learning and personal achievement. For example drama and role play are integrated into the curriculum and this has raised standards in pupils' speaking and listening skills and is currently having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the purposes of writing in meaningful situations. In Key Stage 2 residential outdoor education improves pupils' social and geographical skills and the environmental club has enriched opportunities for learning by involving pupils in designing and using their designs in the school environment. Lunchtime offers an excellent range of activities which pupils enjoy and these have raised standards in pupils' talents, attitudes and behaviour. Pupils are provided with opportunities to use their initiative, through contributing to decision making on the school council and in working towards their individual targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development. Provision for pupils' personal social and health education and preparation for life is very good and is a strength in the school. Educational visits and visitors, such as the actors dressed as Romans, enhance learning. The headteacher is currently bidding for before and after school provision to increase opportunities for pupils to use the school's swimming pool and computers. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
19. Curriculum provision for children under five in the reception classes is good and planned well to ensure that they have every opportunity to attain the early learning goals and pupils make good progress. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum subjects and religious education are met at both key stages and are sufficiently broad and balanced with subjects allocated sufficient time. The curriculum planning of science is not consistently relevant to the pupils' stages of development to promote progression and this has a negative impact on pupils' achievement in the subject.

20. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The very effective use of specialist help and the policy of including pupils from the unit, mean that all pupils with special educational needs are generally receiving the same quality education as the rest of their peers. All pupils are generally enabled to take part in the curriculum provided. However, due to present arrangements, there are occasions when pupils benefiting from extra help in basic skills miss part of their entitlement to non-core subjects. The school is successful in promoting a welcoming and language rich environment for pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs. Effective opportunities for speaking and listening are in place, particularly through role-play and drama. The school is working hard to ensure that all these pupils, including those in the unit, have full access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. They have full access to all other areas of school life, including extra-curricular activities, which are often organised in the lunch hours to accommodate this.
21. There are effective strategies in place to raise pupils' standards in literacy with a particular focus on writing for all pupils, but also standards in boys writing. Pupils enjoy writing e-mail messages to pupils in the group of schools taking part in an action research project. Standards in writing in Year 4 improved during the 'JUDE' drama initiative and presently boys and girls in Year 2 are benefiting from this provision. They take part in role play about Florence Nightingale which enhances their ability to write sensitively about the characters and conditions of the time. Use of Key Stage 1 national test results and day to day school assessment procedures for literacy are very good. Target setting for individual pupils are based upon their needs and shared with the pupils and their parents who work together with their teachers to raise achievement and increase progress in literacy. Additional literacy support is effective. Parents help younger pupils choose appropriate books to take home. They assist in hearing pupils read which increases their learning opportunities. Homework consolidates and extends pupils' work mainly in the core subjects. A few examples of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics were seen. In a science investigation in Year 4, pupils make effective use of graphs to compare changes in temperature, for example.
22. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a wide range of creative sporting and environmental activities. The school dedicates weeks throughout the year to curriculum areas such as expressive arts, the environment, science and design technology. Fifty pupils in the 'Wild at Heart Club' created habitats in the school nature reserve. Outdoor education residential visits provide challenges for team building and broadening pupils' experiences in physical education. Caring attitudes towards the blind are developed in a 'PAWS' club and in visiting the hospital to entertain patients.
23. Provision made for pupils' spiritual development is good. Daily acts of worship are held either in the school hall or in classes which reinforces learning in religious education. A calm reflective atmosphere is created for pupils to consider what is special to them and how they make others feel special. In lessons teachers frequently arouse pupils' 'awe and wonder' through, for example a 'discovery' in science lessons and pupils' empathy with characters in drama.
24. Provision made for pupils moral development is also good. Weekly opportunities are provided in 'circle time' for pupils to reflect upon for example feelings and kindness to others and for pupils to learn to appreciate how their actions affect others. They understand the value of good behaviour and are involved in deciding their own class rules. Teachers provide excellent role models for their pupils and treat pupils ideas and suggestions with respect.
25. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. Relationships within the school are harmonious. Initiative is fostered in all classes during lessons and even the youngest pupils elect a class representative for the school council, which keeps them informed about school events. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones during playtimes when they take turns to act as 'guardians'. Opportunities are made for pupils to develop social skills through drama. Lunchtime supervisors organise a selection of activities, which has had a positive impact on pupils' social skills.
26. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils have many opportunities to be involved in a wide range of expressive arts. Musical performances and whole school productions provide many opportunities for pupils to raise their self esteem and confidence in performing. They experience multi-cultural and African dance. Good emphasis is placed on different beliefs

in religious education and the cultures of people in other countries in geography. Art and design, history and music make a good contribution to pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of British culture.

27. The contribution from the community to the life of the school is good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. A member of staff is the present Mayor of Dorchester and the pupils have enjoyed learning about her civic role and seeing the robes at close hand. The new school motto and logo has been used for the design of a flower bed in a public park in the town. At Christmas and on several other occasions through the year pupils visit the hospital, which is next to the school, to entertain the patients. There is also an annual carol concert in the local church. Numerous visits are organised to museums and other places of interest, in particular taking advantage of the Roman heritage in the area. The school is visited by theatre arts groups, and living history actors such as a Roman centurion. The school is an active member of the Dorchester area schools partnership so that sensible dialogue and planning takes place with the middle and upper schools to which pupils transfer. Effective liaison takes place on curriculum topics as well as in the transfer of information about pupils both from an academic and pastoral point of view.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The steps taken by the school to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are generally very good and continue to be a strength of the school as mentioned in the previous inspection report. Child protection procedures appropriate to this school are in place with the head teacher undertaking the role of designated person. Procedures for dealing with first aid, medicines and accidents, including notifying parents, are well established. Health and safety risks are continuously reviewed by staff and governors. Checks on potentially dangerous equipment and practice evacuations of the premises take place regularly. The school provides a caring environment, where the teachers and all the support staff know the pupils very well in an extended family atmosphere.
29. One significant health and safety concern of the inspection team is the group of demountable classrooms on the north side of the school site. They are damp and still rotting in places, in spite of significant repair and maintenance costs incurred in the last year. The outside toilets are unhygienic, despite the best efforts of the cleaning staff. The matter was raised with the school, who are aware of the situation.
30. The procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality are good. The great majority of pupils arrive at school in good time. They are settled ready for registration which is taken promptly so that the day gets off to a good start and the pupils have the chance of a full days' learning. Parents co-operate fully with the school by notifying reasons for pupils' absences, and in the rare cases where a pupil is unexpectedly absent in the morning the school calls home to check. The procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The school has a behaviour policy which reinforces the school's aims and ethos and is applied consistently by all staff throughout the school. This policy evolved through consultation with parents and pupils, and is accordingly widely respected by the pupils and parents. Their democratic participation in the School Council and keenness to join in the Year 4 monitor scheme are significant contributory factors.
31. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are overall good which is an improvement since the previous inspection when assessment was a weakness. Statutory assessments are used well to predict targets for individual pupils at the end of Year 3. Analysis of results in English is used effectively to analyse school performance and make changes to improve the curriculum. Analysis of data for other core subjects is not used effectively yet. The school has planned a procedure to record pupils' achievement in foundation subjects at the end of each unit. Day to day assessment procedures and use of assessment to promote pupils' progress is good. During lessons teachers assess pupils' understanding and respond in further activities with clear explanations to improve their understanding. Teachers listen carefully to their pupils and know their pupils' needs. They set literacy, numeracy and personal development targets for each pupil which provide a good focus for pupils for their work in school and at home. Each half term pupils are moved into groups based on their progress. Pupils with special educational needs are provided

with individual education plans which are well matched to their needs. Marking of pupils' work recognises pupils' effort and achievement and includes suggestions to extend pupils' ideas. The quality of marking is variable in mathematics, science and history, for example in science the work rarely includes comments that identify areas for development. Reports to parents do not provide clear information about their children's progress or include targets for their development.

32. The school is proactive in ensuring that all pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs, including those in the unit, are well supported. For example, individual education plans have recently been reviewed to give more space for detailed breakdown of targets. Very good systems are in place to track the progress of all pupils who have been identified with specific learning difficulties in individual education plans. However, although individual progress is very carefully monitored, the tracking of progress in relation to that of other pupils in the school has not yet started. Reverse integration between the unit and mainstream classes is effective in ensuring that work is well matched to need. For example, in literacy, pupils are grouped according to targets set in individual education plans and activities are planned accordingly. Ongoing assessment is recorded in target books during the activities and shared with all staff, including speech therapists and mainstream teachers and with pupils. The local education authority has assessed pupils with English as an additional language quickly and reports have been discussed with teachers. However, tracking of their progress is at a very early stage. Some of these pupils join with others for extra literacy support.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. Parents involvement in the life and work of the school is very good and has been maintained since the previous inspection. Individual home/school agreements have been signed by all the pupils and their parents. For the younger pupils parents actively support their children in learning to read and encourage them in their other homework assignments as they progress through the school. A substantial number of parents come into school to assist in a variety of ways in the classrooms and in some extra-curricular activities. The parents' workshop, which takes place one afternoon each week, has made some very attractive resources to support story telling in the classroom. The efforts of all the voluntary parent helpers are well managed and appreciated by the staff, and make a significant and useful contribution to pupils' learning. Support from parents and the local community for the fund-raising events organised by the Damers School Association has raised substantial funds which have been used to improve the environment for the pupils, for example in the swimming pool, the quiet play area, the technology room and the library.
34. Overall the information provided by the school to parents is good. The general information provided by the school through a steady stream of newsletters and other information about forthcoming events, including the curriculum topics to be covered during the next term, is very good. The prospectus and the governors' annual report are attractively presented and meet government guidelines. On the other hand the annual reports on individual pupils are presently only satisfactory. They contain appropriate commentaries on what has been covered in each subject and how well pupils have done. However, there are only very limited comments on what could be improved in the child's performance and this aspect of reporting is currently unsatisfactory. The school plans to improve reports at the end of the current academic year.
35. Relationships with parents of pupils with special educational needs, both in mainstream and in the unit, are very good. Parents are thoroughly involved in decisions regarding their children and in a flourishing system to support reading and to help in the classrooms. Although some parents feel that the more able are not sufficiently challenged, evidence during the inspection shows that new initiatives to support the learning of able pupils in literacy and numeracy are already having an impact. Good efforts are made to communicate with parents of pupils with English as an additional language.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

36. The leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff is very good. The newly appointed headteacher is an excellent leader and has a crystal-clear vision for the educational direction of the school. She has communicated this effectively to all staff and the schools'

governors. The schools' aims and values are reflected very well in its work. For example, the policy of including pupils from the unit in mainstream classes where appropriate is paying good dividends in terms of social development and self-esteem. The headteacher is supported enthusiastically by other key staff, but the fact that both the deputy headteacher and the head of the unit are only in an acting capacity means that the delegation of responsibility is in need of further development. Co-ordinators have responded positively to the challenge of new leadership and are developing their roles with varying degrees of success. Overall this aspect of management is satisfactory, but, as the school is aware, further development is necessary.

37. The governing body is very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. The leadership of the chair of governors is excellent and the whole governing body has taken a very effective and proactive role in shaping the direction of the school. Governors have a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have in place a number of effective strategies to deal with those areas they have identified for development. The school improvement plan is a very effective document, which has been put together collaboratively by staff and governors. It is carefully costed and sets clear deadlines for completion.
38. The monitoring of the quality of teaching in the school is very good. The headteacher, supported by governors, has put in place an effective programme which ensures that teachers' classroom performance is regularly overseen. Co-ordinators of the core curriculum subjects are also enabled to monitor developments systematically. These efforts have contributed significantly to the marked improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. The management of teachers' performance is effective in identifying individual strengths and weaknesses. However, the school has not yet reached the stage where teaching quality is formally measured against pupil performance.
39. Very clear ideas of what the school could and should achieve are held. Targets for pupil attainment are appropriately ambitious while recognising the ability profile of the school. In addition, parents have been consulted and their views taken into proper account when plans are drawn up for further school improvement. More accurate analysis of pupils' standards on entry to the school has been introduced and procedures identified to monitor pupils' progress against these starting points. The school has also been very active in introducing a whole variety of strategies to improve pupils' results in Standard Assessment Tests. These initiatives are set to meet with success as governors, headteacher and staff share a high degree of commitment to move the school forward.
40. The overall efficiency of the school is very good and there is a strong and shared commitment to further improvement. In the past year or so the school has built successfully on the high standards of financial planning reported at the time of the last inspection by developing structured and systematic procedures that very effectively support the school's educational priorities. The headteacher and governors, for example, have prepared detailed budget plans based on accurate forecasts to cover the next five years in anticipation of the school's declining roll. The school improvement group carefully monitors the school's performance to ensure improvement through the latest development plan. This is a process that involves governors, headteacher and senior staff in an ongoing review of the work of the school in order to identify and agree future priorities.
41. The governing body, headteacher, special needs co-ordinator and special needs team manage special educational needs effectively. Together, they successfully promote a very good learning environment and full inclusion of all pupils with special educational needs, including those in the unit. The Code of Practice is fully implemented. The high level of inclusion is not only benefiting pupils from the unit. It also benefits pupils in mainstream who have specific learning difficulties in literacy and maths. The link governor, although new, is already well-informed about procedures. Special educational needs development is a target in the current school improvement plan and has led to an increase in the special educational needs budget to ensure that non-teaching support staff are in place and well trained to play a valuable role in all classes. The school effectively uses all the funds available for pupils and adds more from its delegated budget to ensure that a wide range of resources is available and that there is a very high level of classroom support for these pupils. Unit pupils are housed in temporary buildings which give some concern for health and safety. Policy for pupils with English as an additional language is underway and staff training is planned. The school has recently extended the contracts of learning

support assistants already in post to support these pupils in class. However, the tracking of the success of English as an additional language provision, by evaluating pupil's attainment is at an early stage.

42. The school has an adequate number of well-qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the pupils and the demands of the curriculum. They have well-defined responsibilities and work co-operatively as a very effective and caring team. They are fully committed to the all-round development of their pupils. Subject leaders are successfully developing their roles. Teachers and pupils are well supported by a very good number of well-trained and very effective learning support assistants. They make valuable contributions to the work of the school and in particular to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. The efficient administrative staff are valued team members and contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school.
43. Arrangements for training are good and the headteacher and deputy hold professional development interviews with all staff. This has been successful in helping them to improve their performance as well as giving the headteacher a clearer view of the school's work. Recent whole school training in behaviour management has been particularly successful. It has resulted in teachers consistently and effectively implementing the school's behaviour policy that was drawn up in consultation with parents and pupils. Although the school has yet to formalise its induction procedures new members of staff are given good support enabling them to settle quickly and successfully into their new roles. The school's well established planning teams are a particularly supportive arrangement for new colleagues.
44. Because governors now have a better understanding of the school's particular needs they are able to target the school's spending more effectively. This is clearly evident in the decision to provide additional teaching support for literacy that has resulted in improvements to the quality of pupils' writing. Very good use is made of new technology in all aspects of school life to improve efficiency levels and to support and improve the curriculum. Learning resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning, especially in information and communications technology, but also in other subjects such as mathematics and physical education. Specific grants, for example to support pupils with special educational needs, and to improve provision for information technology, are used effectively for their designated purposes.
45. The governors and headteacher successfully apply the principles of best value for money in their spending decisions. They give full consideration to alternative providers for services and resources in order to secure cost effectiveness and as a result money is spent carefully. A particular strength is the consultative culture that the headteacher is developing within the school in which the views of all involved, including parents and pupils, are taken seriously. The most recent financial audit made several recommendations to which the school is responding appropriately in order to further strengthen its good financial controls. Day to day procedures are good, enabling the headteacher and governors to closely monitor and evaluate spending decisions. Teaching and support staff are deployed effectively to promote pupils' learning and their improved expertise is used for the benefit of all.
46. The adequacy of the accommodation for delivering the curriculum and providing an environment for pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. In the main school building the accommodation is very good: classrooms are themselves a good size, and there are separate rooms for music, design and technology and information and communications technology as well as a library and other quiet areas. The main hall is large and spacious, and can accommodate the whole school for assembly. The school is enhanced throughout by attractive, interesting and informative displays of pupils' work on the walls. The grounds are spacious and provide good facilities for sports and play. The swimming pool is a real asset for the school, and is used by other schools and swimming clubs. The accommodation provided in the five demountable classrooms used by Year 3 and the special education unit are poor. Not only are they damp and rotting, thereby presenting a health hazard, but their remoteness from the main school inhibits the natural social mixing within the school, and makes movement between the classrooms and the main school extremely unpleasant in inclement weather. The toilets are unsanitary.
47. Resources for learning continue to be good overall as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Music is very well resourced. However Design and Technology and history resources

are only satisfactory. Although much new equipment has been provided in the information and communications technology suite, more computers and printers are needed in the classrooms in order to deliver information and communications technology across the whole curriculum, and to replace obsolete computers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should do the following:

a? raise standards and improve the provision for science, especially at Key Stage 1, by;

- improving the scheme of work to give teachers clearer guidance in their planning;
- providing further training so that teachers are confident in their teaching of scientific enquiry and investigative skills.

[Paragraphs: 76-81]

b? improve the use of national test results in core subjects other than English by;

- ensuring that the information is used effectively to adjust future planning and take into account the composition of each cohort.

[Paragraphs: 31, 75, 81]

49. In addition to the above areas for development, the governors may wish to include the following item in their action plan.

a? Improve the quality of the accommodation provided for Year 3 and the special needs unit by replacing the unsatisfactory temporary classrooms.

b? Remove the unhygienic outside toilets.

[Paragraph: 46]

THE UNIT FOR SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

50. The school has an attached unit for pupils with speech, language and communications difficulties. There are currently 14 pupils who benefit from the support given by the unit. They all have statements of special educational needs and their attainment is generally below average in English and mathematics. The progress shown in individual education plans is often good. Pupils are attentive, are well behaved and are keen to work. They are supported well by a very good pupil to adult ratio, which enables small groups to operate. Consequently, pupils have good opportunities to develop their language and communications skills.
51. Teaching in the unit is generally good and sometimes very good. Teachers understand pupils' needs very well. They develop and share individual targets with pupils, so that success can be celebrated. All pupils follow the full National Curriculum with literacy and numeracy provision appropriately amended to suit individual needs. There is good provision for speech therapy and there are regular visits by outside specialists. Good emphasis is placed on the improvement of subject specific vocabulary.
52. All pupils in the unit benefit from being attached to a mainstream class and join with the rest of the school for subjects such as physical education, music and information and communications technology. All pupils attend whole school and key stage assemblies. Pupils from mainstream classes who have difficulties with speech and language also benefit from the provision of the unit. They receive specialist support in small groups and additional lessons in literacy.
53. Assessment of individual needs is very good and is reflected in the targets set in individual education plans and annual targets for English, mathematics and science. These are both realistic and challenging. They are shared with both parents and pupils. Annual reviews are carried out, meeting statutory requirements and the reports produced are of a good quality.
54. The leadership and management of the unit are good. Although neither teacher has additional qualifications in special educational needs, their good qualities as teachers, their hard work and commitment ensures that pupils have the specialist care they need. As a consequence, all pupils make good progress in their learning. The acting head of unit provides good support to other staff and liaises effectively with outside agencies. Record keeping is good and the files maintained on pupils provide valuable information for tracking their progress. There is good consistency of recording and assessing across the year groups, with increasing and planned opportunities for pupils to integrate back into mainstream classes. Resources are good, but the accommodation in temporary classrooms is unsatisfactory. Although internally attractive and clean, the outsides are deteriorating rapidly and maintenance is running at an unacceptably high level.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3%	26%	48%	23%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		375
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		130

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	45	34	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	37	36	39
	Girls	32	31	33
	Total	69	67	72
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87(78)	85(80)	91(86)
	National	83(82)	84(83)	90(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	35	41	36
	Girls	31	32	32
	Total	66	73	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84(77)	92(86)	86(85)
	National	84(82)	88(86)	88(87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	356
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.3
Average class size	27.3

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	238

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	703,795
Total expenditure	759,941
Expenditure per pupil	1,891
Balance brought forward from previous year	70,280
Balance carried forward to next year	14,134

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	385
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	30	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	2	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	71	8	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	53	12	5	0
The teaching is good.	61	38	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	50	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	24	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	27	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	52	47	0	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	58	41	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	33	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	48	11	2	11

Other issues raised by parents

- Teachers are always positive, friendly and hardworking.
- Classrooms are well organised.
- There has been a marked improvement in the school over last 18 months.
- Problems are handled very well by the school.
- The new headteacher has had a major positive impact on the quality of education.
- Major improvements to the fabric of the school are much appreciated.
- The provision for special educational needs is very good and disruptive pupils are handled very well.
- School is happy, helpful and kind to parents.
- There is very good provision for music, drama, dance and art.
- Children are very happy at school.
- Parents are very impressed with the unit..
- Standards and expectations are always very high.
- The school day is too long in Key Stage 1.
- Disruptive pupils are causing problems in mainstream classes.
- Not enough swimming time.
- Not enough 'free play' in Year 1.
- Lunch times are too short.
- Unhygienic conditions for eating lunches in classrooms.
- School events are not always given enough notice.
- Too much homework for children in reception classes.
- Some classes are too big.

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

55. Children are admitted into the three reception classes once a year in the September term. There are currently sixty-six children at this Foundation Stage of their education. The great majority have had pre-school experience in local playgroups. The good induction procedures in place, mean that parents are well informed about the school's expectations, and a smooth start is made. A rich and interesting programme of activities is provided. Great consistency in planning and teaching across all three classes ensures that all children benefit from the same good levels of provision. Teachers' planning takes proper account of the newly introduced early learning goals and the 'stepping stones' to be followed to reach them. By the end of the year the children have generally achieved these goals and are well prepared to start work on the National Curriculum.
56. Good standards are achieved in **personal, social and emotional development**. All children are well supported in adapting to the well-established routines in place. As a result they demonstrate a real sense of security and are able to apply themselves with growing confidence to their tasks. The high standards of behaviour expected are well communicated to them. Good teaching is helping in the development of an understanding of right and wrong and of a consideration for the feelings of others. Through properly organised group and play activities, children learn to work very well together, and the pleasant atmosphere generated is tangible. The effective systems in place encourage the sharing of equipment and play materials. Children learn to sit very quietly when required, such as in the early literacy sessions and when listening to stories.
57. Appropriate standards are achieved in the areas of **communication, language and literacy**. Strong emphasis is placed on the development of listening skills which are good. Speaking skills are satisfactorily developed through such structured play activities as the home corner, in which both boys and girls partake in quite sustained conversations. They are also enjoyably involved in whole class sharing of books, such as 'Elmer the Elephant'. A good start is made on interpreting and appreciating their own individual reading books. They begin to copy letters and write their own names satisfactorily and eventually progress to completing more demanding text. Teaching is good in all classes and is notably marked by the constant verbal interaction between teachers and children. This serves to move language development on continuously and provide a good basis to all other learning.
58. In **mathematical development** children's standards are average. They are suitably exposed to a host of learning experiences which provide good opportunities for understanding number. They can sort objects appropriately and use counting materials to appreciate values and recognise number patterns. Through good teaching less confident and immature children receive plenty of praise to enable them to complete their tasks. Activities are well organised and teachers repeatedly re-enforce counting strategies throughout the day in a wide variety of situations. Practical use is made of sand to develop early ideas of weight and capacity. An elementary knowledge of presenting information on graphs is formed when class birthdays are presented in this way. A range of relevant equipment is also used to explore shapes in three dimensions.
59. A broadening of children's **knowledge and understanding of the world** is generated through well-planned topic work. Teaching is good and valuable use is made of the local environment to enrich experiences. An understanding of living things satisfactorily develops through such activities as planting seeds and collecting and examining leaves. Children are able to celebrate the harvest festival and have some idea of its significance. Some of the properties of materials are appreciated when opportunities are provided for handling different natural items. Early concepts of the passage of time are satisfactorily encouraged through the ordering and sequencing of stories. An early start is made on using computers efficiently. Following good careful demonstration, they are able control the mouse, make appropriate selections from the screen and produce recognisable images.
60. Children's **physical development** is at the expected level. Pencils, crayons, brushes and other small tools are used quite efficiently. They learn to cut, paste and join materials effectively, using a considerable variety of differing methods. In doing so they develop sound hand and eye co-ordination and are prepared to work more independently at a later stage. They also use a range of

construction materials to further promote and refine these small motor skills. Outside they are able to make use of suitable wheeled vehicles to develop other movements appropriately. Teaching of physical skills is good. This is notably demonstrated when children are able to take advantage from physical education lessons in the school hall. They are able to use space properly to perform a range of basic movements and are suitably sensitive to the effects of exercise on their own heart rates. Response to signals is very good.

61. In the areas of **creative development** appropriate progress is made as children explore their own ideas in drawing and painting. They are able to use, and sometimes mix, colours suitably to create individual and group pieces. They know the names of the primary colours and a few others as well. Paint is used effectively to print repeating patterns and to produce eye-catching large flower displays. When working with malleable materials, they explore texture and design to produce, for example, gingerbread men. They undertake some good work when making three-dimensional faces from wood, metal, glass etc. Teaching in the creative area is good. In music they are taught to sing a range of hymns and songs and generally benefit from the very good musical culture and ambience of the main school.

ENGLISH

62. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds, the schools' results in reading and in writing were below national expectations, although trends over time showed some improvement. Girls outperformed boys. Due to the enthusiasm of the literacy co-ordinator and the new headteacher, a good focus on the raising of standards, and a comprehensive action plan, there has been a marked improvement recently and results in tests for 2000 show that reading has gone up by 9 per cent and writing by 5 per cent. Evidence shows that the school's results, despite being affected both by standards in the unit and by the large number of pupils identified as having literacy difficulties in mainstream classes, are now in line with expectations and moving in an upward direction. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, because they are taught effectively and well supported across the school, now make good progress and achievement is good.
63. Standards in speaking and listening are now above national expectations at both key stages. This is a significant improvement and from national tests in 1999, when results were still below average, and from the previous inspection when standards were affected by the lack of opportunities for speaking and listening. The very good use of drama and discussion in the literacy hour and across the curriculum has had a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Role-play is very well used in many classes to motivate pupils in the simplest word level work in the literacy hour. For example, to reinforce pupils' understanding of adjectives and adverbs. Consequently, learning is fun and pupils are eager to speak. They listen very well to the views of others and speak confidently and clearly, sharing and expressing their ideas very well. A good example is when preparing to write a story about a Roman soldier to support work in history, pupils in Year 4 engage in role play to tease out the sort of character that their soldier might have. They explore his feelings about killing the Celts and his relationships with others, before putting their thoughts down on paper.
64. Standards in writing are now in line with what is expected nationally. National results in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3 and 4, show a significant improvement to the results in 1999. The school has also maintained its position from the previous inspection. The school identified some weaknesses in teaching and has addressed them. Consequently, results in the year 2000, for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4 all show a significant improvement and are now above average when compared to similar schools. New initiatives recently introduced have been successful in raising the profile of writing and encouraging pupils to be more responsible and more reflective about what they write. Good examples are the drama project to target boys who underachieve in writing and the information and communications technology project where pupils in Key Stage 2 e-mail pupils in other local schools. Boys now achieve levels that are close to those of girls. Pupils are responding well to the introduction of a new cursive handwriting scheme and handwriting is now good. Spelling is fairly accurate and pupils use a good variety of strategies to help them spell new words. They use a good story structure and a lively narrative style when writing about their own experiences, such as a visit to

hospital. When writing about the life of a seahorse, older pupils use interesting rhymes to create imaginative poems.

65. Standards in reading are average at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4, both in national tests and in comparison with similar schools. Pupils' reading skills are assessed on entry to school and regularly monitored throughout each year group. As a result, any weaknesses are quickly identified and dealt with. For example, a 'booster group' in Key Stage 1 has been established to withdraw underachieving pupils for extra support with reading. Older pupils use their reading well in a range of subjects to research information from books, CD-ROM and other sources. Pupils' library skills are underdeveloped but a new, well-stocked library has just been established to remedy this.
66. The quality of teaching is good overall and has been successful in raising standards. All the teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory, usually good and often very good. Some very good instances were seen during the inspection of very effective strategies being used to teach literacy. Good teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge and a willingness by teachers to adapt their teaching styles to engage pupils' interest through role-play, particularly as a stimulus for writing. Teachers have very effective strategies to deal with challenging behaviour, which include moving lessons on at a brisk pace and assessing regularly to ensure that work is well matched to need. They pose challenging questions, expectations are high and lessons are conducted in a friendly approachable manner. A strength in English is that planning is thorough and consistent across the year groups where teachers share their expertise. This is as a result of regular effective inset, particularly in the use of drama, which has raised teachers' skill and confidence.
67. Attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in all literacy lessons. Pupils enjoy their work in literacy lessons and are often reluctant to bring the lesson to a close. Very good relationships and behaviour management impacts well on both attitudes and behaviour. Pupils engage productively in practical activity and role-play and are eager to learn. Many sustain concentration very well in group work and are able to complete their tasks independently. This is often due to the very good level of support that pupils with special educational needs, including able pupils, receive that enables them to be fully integrated into lessons.
68. The leadership and management of the subject is effective. Literacy has been a main focus in school development planning for some time. The drama project was introduced to address underachievement of boys with their writing. Having seen its success, the school is now using the strategies learned from that in a wider context. Inset on gender differences and teaching styles has helped teachers to aim to use more interactive teaching that suits boys better and to help boys to match girls in their interest and ability with reading books. New books purchased for guided reading have more 'boy' interest, such as football, ghost stories and non-fiction. Parental support for reading now includes termly literacy targets and suggestions on how parents can best help their children at home have been well received. Book weeks and sponsorship have been used to purchase fiction books for the new library and for classroom libraries. Of note is the success of a recent writing competition where pupils and all adults involved with the school, including parents, contributed to the school's own books of interesting and often exciting prose and poetry.

MATHEMATICS

69. By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, pupils attain the standards that are expected for their ages in all aspects of mathematics. This includes number, space, shape and measures, and handling data. The inspection findings match the school's results in the 2000 national tests which also show that the results are average when compared both to national averages and with similar schools. Test results have been improving since 1998 and a considerable number of more able pupils attain better than average results. There are no significant variations in the attainments of boys and girls although through its analysis of test results in Year 4 the school has identified the need to improve the results of higher attaining boys in particular. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully integrated into lessons and as a result of the good support of teachers and learning support assistants they make good progress towards their individual targets.

70. By the time they are seven, almost all pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of the place value of each digit in numbers to 100, confidently adding and subtracting numbers up to and beyond 20. They use standard and non-standard units for measuring, identify the particular features of common 2D and 3D shapes and compile tables and block graphs. By the time they are nine, they extend their understanding of place value to 1000, solve money problems to £1 and begin to deal with multiplication and division. They estimate and measure accurately in standard metric units and investigate lines of symmetry. They develop their data handling skills using the computer to generate a variety of graphs and charts. In mathematics lessons some good examples were seen of pupils using and applying their knowledge and understanding well to investigate and solve real life problems. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for them to practise their skills systematically in other subjects, for example in science and geography, in order to improve further.
71. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school, and taking into account the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs almost all pupils achieve well. Almost unanimously they say that they enjoy their mathematics lessons, and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of their learning. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been particularly effective in ensuring that learning develops systematically and that tasks planned by teachers are closely matched to pupils' needs and prior attainment. Teachers' plans show that they have a clear awareness of precisely what is to be taught in each lesson, although they do not always share these intentions with pupils at the outset. They are secure in their knowledge of the subject. This is evident in their confident use of mathematical vocabulary and encourages pupils to do the same when talking about their work.
72. In a third of the lessons seen teaching was very good. These lessons were characterised by challenging and interesting tasks and as a result pupils were highly motivated and keen to contribute. Teachers placed great emphasis on pupils developing their own strategies, as for example when older pupils investigated a milkman's problem of arranging 24 bottles in a crate so that each column and row contained odd numbers. In another lesson, younger pupils were enthusiastic learners, thoroughly enjoying the very good relationships promoted by the teacher. Very effective use of careful questioning in the review session at the end of the lesson not only reinforced pupils' knowledge and understanding but also assessed what they had learned.
73. Teaching and learning is less effective in some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 1, where the youngest pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration for lengthy sessions at the end of the morning. As a result, noise levels increase and the need for frequent interventions by the teacher has a negative effect on the continuity of the lesson and the pace of learning.
74. The school's use of computers to support pupils' mathematical learning is developing well. Pupils were observed working in pairs on classroom based computers to reinforce their knowledge of odd and even numbers and to extend their understanding of number sequences. Year 4 pupils have used the computer to produce an interesting variety of graphs, making useful judgements about which one is easiest to read and which provides the most accurate information.
75. The subject is managed well by the co-ordinator and her example as a teacher and commitment to high standards have helped to create a good ethos for learning. Good procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment have been introduced in order to track pupils' progress as they move through the school and to set targets for their future development. However, the information gathered in this way is not yet being fully used to modify the planned curriculum for particular groups of pupils. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The key issue regarding problem-solving skills has been addressed within mathematics lessons although it remains an issue across the curriculum. Teaching has improved and standards are rising.

SCIENCE

76. At the end of Key Stage 1, observed standards are average in most aspects of the subject, with the exception of investigative science, where standards are below. By the end of Year 4, standards are above average in all aspects of the subject. This is a similar picture to that found by the previous inspection at Key Stage 1, but an improvement at Key Stage 2. The 1999 teachers'

assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 were below the national average overall. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 was well above average. Standards were above average when compared with similar schools. In the 2000 teachers' assessments, standards remained below average and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 fell to below average.

77. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, offer clear explanations about electric circuits using correct vocabulary. They successfully identify electrical components and from their investigations understand that they have to join them to make them into a working circuit. They explain that circuits with more power produce brighter light and recognise that the more bulbs they use in a circuit the fainter the lights when they share the same battery. In one class they label diagrams correctly, using recognisable scientific conventions. They sort materials and find out about how they are used because of their properties. They measure the change in temperature to compare how well different materials keep water warm and predict and write about change when materials are heated. Pupils have a good understanding of where different local animals and plants live from experiences in exploring the school nature reserve and grounds around the buildings.
78. At the beginning of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good understanding of the living processes. For example, they know how toothpaste protects teeth. Pupils can also locate the position of the heart correctly and recognise the importance of exercise and eating less fat, for a healthy heart. They recall from the previous year how they explored the needs of plants. Pupils have a good grasp of the concept of a 'fair test' and use measurement accurately. For example, they are able to compare the effect of surfaces on how far a car will travel, using their own measurements with precision. Pupils are also able to recognise that some changes in materials are permanent. Older pupils plan their own ways to record information and look for patterns in charts and computer generated graphs from charts or sensors. They provide well reasoned explanations when these patterns are different from their prediction and suggest correctly that materials that trap air prevent heat from escaping. From their research about famous rock formations pupils write detailed informative paragraphs. In their work on soils they explain how they controlled a test to compare which soil absorbed most water. Pupils have a good understanding of forces. They use correct vocabulary to describe materials and forces of a magnet and how gravity and air work against each other when an object falls. Their understanding of comparing sound with distance is less secure. They correctly explain that smoking damages the lungs.
79. The quality of teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching in Year 2 and excellence in Year 4. All teachers display at least a satisfactory subject knowledge and encourage pupils to use correct scientific terms during lessons. Most teachers use probing questions which focus on the purpose of the lesson. Some find difficulty in matching their own schemes of work to the programme of study in the National Curriculum and in identifying clear learning objectives for investigative science. This has had a detrimental effect on standards in investigative science at Key Stage 1. The best teaching is characterised by clear learning intentions which identify skills and knowledge that are well matched to the pupils stage of development. Good teachers create a coherent series of lessons which build progressively on pupils' skills, as well as their knowledge. In good lessons, effective support is given through timely intervention, which enables pupils' to develop an appropriate level of independence in their learning. Most lessons move a good pace and pupils make good progress.
80. Pupils listen attentively and explain their ideas with confidence, which has a positive impact on their learning. Teachers use pupils' own ideas as teaching points to improve their understanding. Good use is made of role play to develop pupils' understanding. For example, in one lesson pupils 'passed the squeeze' to simulate electricity travelling in a circle. When carrying out investigations pupils explore and co-operate responsibly in practical activities with enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by learning assistants and this increases their skill development and scientific understanding. In marking pupils work most teachers recognise pupils' success but rarely inform pupils how they need to improve their work.
81. The co-ordination of science is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is a science specialist and provides training for the staff. They have adopted symbols for recording a sequence of actions for the science process. Some scrutiny of pupils' work for each year group is made but the work collected is not matched to national expectations and therefore teachers are unable to monitor pupils' achievement or progression in skills, knowledge and understanding. Curriculum links

with literacy and information and communications technology are evident in the scheme of work and this assists teaching. However, insufficient guidance is provided for numeracy or how science enquiry skills could be integrated to raise standards in knowledge and understanding at Key Stage 1. The resources for science are accessible and used well to support teaching and learning. Pupils have won an environmental award and with the support of the local community created habitats in the school nature reserve, which is used effectively to study local plants and animals. The school holds a school science fair, which stimulates parental interest.

ART AND DESIGN

82. The previous inspection reported that standards of attainment in art were similar to those expected from pupils of this age. Although only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 1, evidence was taken from scrutiny of pupils' past work, teachers' planning and classroom displays. This shows that the school has maintained its position in both key stages and standards are at least satisfactory, sometimes good. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is also in line with expectations. Due to the enthusiasm of the recently appointed co-ordinator, who has already reviewed both policy and scheme of work in line with curriculum 2000, improvements have already been made and are well set to continue.
83. In Key Stage 1, when pupils are given the opportunity to investigate the visual qualities of part images of photographs, they are very responsive and eager to offer suggestions about what they may represent. They work independently and thoughtfully to recreate the missing parts, mainly from imagination. Pupils work well with colour using a good range of media. This is a strength of art development throughout the school. Colour mixing to produce interesting hues for example, in background scenes for collage in whole group and individual work is very good. Good use of colour is evident in the good quality of pupils' work displayed effectively throughout the school. Use of art to support work in other subjects is also a strength. For example, in their work in science, pupils observe the markings on wood and create interesting drawings using charcoal and chalk. They create detailed mini-beast paintings in water-colour and wax resist drawings to illustrate woolly, spiky textures in materials. A recent focus has been on the development of observational drawing skills. This has resulted in the creation of interesting self-portraits in many classes. However, although much of the work seen is good, sometimes there is some repetition and a lack of progression across the year groups.
84. Teaching is good overall. In every lesson seen teaching was very good. Good teaching, together with the new scheme of work and new resources, is having a good impact on learning. Lessons are well planned, skills are taught well and interesting topics are chosen to excite pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are motivated and join in their activities with gusto. Learning objectives are clear, challenge is appropriate and teachers lead discussion sensitively. As a result, pupils undertake individual work independently and confidently. For example, when pupils in Year 3 consider a range of artists, such as Picasso, Klee and Munch, who portray relationships in their work, they are eager to discuss and explore the potential of paper, paint and texture in their own work in the same style. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development, providing good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other's work.
85. Overall, the picture seems very positive, with many new initiatives to engender enthusiasm for art and design. The new co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has undertaken an audit to check progression and continuity across both key stages and samples of work have been collected into a portfolio and annotated in order to monitor standards. Action has already been taken to develop some areas. A weakness in sketching was noted and the introduction of sketchbooks in Years 3 and 4 has given a better focus on the development of observational drawing. New resources, placed with each year group, have given better access and ease of use. Although a need for more multi-cultural artwork has been identified, this has yet to be implemented. Parents are pleased with provision for art and give good support to art teaching in the classrooms. Links with the community are good. A recent 'Art Week in the Environment' resulted in pupils working with visiting local and professional artists. Also, after working in partnership with a local hospital, pupils' sculptures were displayed in the hospital.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

86. The school has made very substantial progress in its provision for design and technology since the previous inspection, where standards were found to be unsatisfactory. Standards are now good at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 and the majority of work seen was above average.
87. At Key Stage 1, pupils generate ideas well by drawing on their own experiences and those of others. They develop these ideas effectively by shaping suitable materials and putting together components to make large-scale artefacts. For example, pupils in Year 1 designed and made several different pieces of playground equipment, using rolled-up newspaper and wire. They were well constructed and pupils had followed their own plans as closely as possible, adapting them appropriately as work progressed. When talking about design and technology pupils in Year 2 are able to talk coherently about their ideas and suggest ways in which they can be adapted as designs are developed. They produce good quality designs using appropriate drawings, notes and diagrams. From the scrutiny of work, it is evident that pupils are able to measure, cut and assemble materials well, including fabric, modelling medium and rolled newspaper. They have a good understanding of the need for food safety and hygiene when doing food technology. Pupils have well developed ideas about what they like and dislike in their own work and can make sensible suggestions for improvements.
88. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 attain standards which are above average by the time they leave school at age nine. They are beginning to develop their ideas using a number of sources, such as the Internet, books and CD-ROMs, and can explain clearly why they have made certain design decisions. In one lesson, for example, where pupils in Year 4 were designing chairs for a cartoon character, a girl explained carefully that the design had to have a built-in drinks dispenser 'because the character was so lazy!' The quality of planning in this lesson was good and pupils drew pictures to explain each stage of the making process. In conversation with pupils, it is evident that they can suggest good alternatives when making a product, if their first attempt should fail. The scrutiny of work indicates they can shape a range of materials to the desired design. For example, pupils had produced a good-quality fabric wall-hanging which demonstrated good levels of skill in needle-work. Pupils are beginning to develop an idea of mechanisms, as, for example, when discussing ways in which revolving chairs work.
89. At both key stages, pupils have good attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic about practical activities and show interest in each other's ideas. They generally behave well in lessons, showing due regard for health and safety. They follow the teachers' instructions and are quiet when necessary to listen to directions. Pupils' personal development is very good. They work well independently and support each other well by making appropriate suggestions for improvement. Relationships are very good, both between pupils themselves and between pupils and adults. When asked to clear up or collect tools, pupils comply cheerfully and respond promptly. All pupils make good progress in their learning, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language.
90. The quality of teaching seen in lessons was very good. The impact of teaching over time is good, as standards are good at both key stages and pupils are making good progress in learning. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, which they use well to improve pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Planning is generally effective, although there are insufficient opportunities identified for the use of information and communications technology. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond positively by showing good levels of creative effort in their work. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and as a consequence, pupils' rates of productivity are good. The good range of different teaching methods used by teachers, including demonstration, explanation and focused individual teaching ensures that pupils remain interested, concentrate well and acquire a good ability to work independently. In all the lessons seen, teachers managed pupils well and as a consequence all make good progress irrespective of their prior attainment. Teachers' use of ongoing assessment is appropriate and consists of end-of-unit tests. However, there is little evidence that assessment information is being used effectively to adjust future planning for the subject.
91. The co-ordinator provides good leadership for the subject and has a good grasp of the needs of pupils and staff. She has identified appropriate areas for development and has a good action plan for ensuring that targets are met. Considerable work has been put into raising standards in design

and technology, especially in the design aspects of the subject. There have been no opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning in the subject and this aspect is only just satisfactory overall. Good use has been made of the resources available, including the purchase of equipment to recycle newspaper to produce rigid construction units. This innovation has improved the quality of large-scale modelling. Parents make a very good contribution to pupils' learning by assisting in lessons and taking small groups. For example, a regular rota of parents supervise food technology groups, which has enhanced the breadth of the subject's curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

92. Standards at both key stages are average, which is a similar position to that found by the previous report. However, there is evident school improvement in the subject since the previous inspection. Pupils currently apply geographical skills and use information and communications technology to understand places and use their initiative to influence their environment. The school now has a scheme of work which is well matched to the programmes of study of the national curriculum. Co-ordination and monitoring of the subject is satisfactory and beginning to influence classroom practice.
93. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are aware of how people influence their environment and describe their own locality and other places well. They draw a sketch map of their journey to school and explain how they experience problems in crossing roads. A group of confident pupils are invited to attend a meeting with the council to voice their views put forward in letters in which they suggest ways of controlling traffic to improve their safety. They suggest that people live in Dorchester because it is near the sea and describe the steep hills and they talk about the many places of interest such as the museums. Pupils give correct geographical descriptions of locations. For example, one pupil described local features in this way; 'Hangman's Cottage located by a river' and 'the Wild Life Centre is east of the town'. In discussion about recent storms they describe the effect of 'big seas and tidal waves' on the locality and on several places in England. They use magazines and the Internet to recognise how people in hot countries live and find some of these countries on a world map. Since the present curriculum is new older pupils in key stage one may not have had an opportunity to study a contrasting locality.
94. Pupils at Key Stage 2 develop their ability to use a CD-ROM of aerial photographs of Dorset to locate features of the locality. They use compass directions and make effective use of aerial photographs of an appropriately wide area around the school, and street maps to find places. When comparing historical maps with the present pupils use a key to identify how land is used and identify that the Nursery was once a workhouse. They are beginning to offer reasons for locations, for example, that the hospital was built to be close to most of the people. Older pupils use letters and numbers to locate places on a map and use a scale to estimate the distance between the main towns in Dorset. They have a good understanding of needs common to all people when selecting a place to settle. They write at length to describe how people live in a village in India.
95. Only one geography lesson was observed during the inspection, however it is evident from pupils' previous work and speaking to groups of pupils at both key stages that teaching is at least satisfactory overall. However the scheme of work is new and planned units are not fully covered or assessed in terms of the opportunities indicated in the medium term planning. In marking pupils' work, teachers make useful comments related to pupils' learning. The present focus on places has increased pupils' interest in the subject which is helpful to pupils' concentration and progress. The level of challenge to build on previous learning and promote progression in pupils' ability to make comparisons and provide explanations is an area for development.
96. The co-ordinator has an action plan for developing her management role. Plans to collect work for a portfolio have yet to include a focus for monitoring coverage and standards in the samples to be collected. Resources are adequate and residential stays are used to develop pupils' mapping skills. There are good curriculum links between geography and history which enhance pupils' understanding of settlement.

HISTORY

97. The school has maintained the standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Since then good improvements include the adoption of a detailed scheme of work. Its consistent implementation throughout the school is having a positive impact on the systematic way in which pupils acquire study skills. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now good. It is supported well by assessment arrangements introduced in the past year, although these have had insufficient time to impact across the school. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that standards overall are in line with expected levels. However, in some lessons seen during the inspection, particularly in Key Stage 1, pupils made good progress and attained higher standards than normally seen because of the good teaching.
98. From the earliest stages pupils are introduced to the use of timelines and along with a variety of sequencing activities, these make a valuable introduction to pupils' understanding of the passage of time. They acquire knowledge about people and events in the past and by listening to stories they begin to appreciate the difference between fact and fiction. Pupils successfully use different sources of information and evidence, making good use of the range of opportunities provided by teachers. For example, when learning about 'The Gunpowder Plot' they watch a video with great interest and respond eagerly to the teacher's performance in the role of Guy Fawkes.
99. In Key Stage 2, their emerging sense of chronology is effectively developed as they begin to recognise that the past can be divided into periods which have particular characteristics, for example Ancient Greece and Roman Britain. In their current study, pupils in Year 4 become enthusiastic young historians. They collaborate well when researching daily life in Rome, and share their acquired knowledge readily with partners and with the whole class. This makes a significant contribution to their acquisition of history study skills and to their development as independent learners.
100. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and in one lesson in Key Stage 1 was excellent. Teachers' good knowledge of the subject is a particular strength that is clearly evident in the emphasis that they place upon the development of the specific study skills of history. It was demonstrated also in the most successful lesson when the teacher's imaginative use of role-play provided pupils with opportunities to reflect on the conditions encountered by Florence Nightingale in Scutari. The activity stimulated great interest and promoted very effective learning. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher carefully monitored learning throughout the lesson. She introduced new tasks and challenges to sustain pupils' interest and gave helpful and encouraging feedback to improve their learning.
101. The history curriculum is enhanced and enriched considerably by a good range of relevant visits to places of interest which promotes a greater understanding of the concepts of change and continuity. These include a reconstructed Iron Age farm and a toy museum. A particular strength of the curriculum is the variety of links which teachers establish between history and other subjects including information and communication technology, literacy and mathematics. This helps to motivate pupils and to make learning more purposeful.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

102. Standards in information and communications technology have improved since the previous inspection and are now above average generally and well above average in communications and use of the Internet at Key Stage 2.
103. At Key Stage 1, pupils are able to draw information from a variety of sources, such as CD-ROMs and books. They know how to enter information into a computer, save it and retrieve the information when necessary. They use images well to illustrate stories they have made and are developing good word processing skills. For example, pupils in Year 1 were observed retrieving text from disc and amending it by putting in line breaks to make a list. This they did well, making appropriate additions to the list when they had created it. In conversation, pupils were able to explain well what they were doing when using the computer. They have an accurate idea of the effects of the actions they make on the screen. One pupil in Year 2, for example, knew which

icon to click in order to print her work. She said, 'You just click on this little thing with a page coming out. That's the printer. It will come out over there'.

104. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are able to talk in detail about ways in which they can obtain information from the Internet, CD-ROMs and other sources. For example, they have downloaded web pages on the Romans, which they have collated into information sheets as part of their history project. The work shows advanced skills in selecting suitable sources, classifying it and checking it for accuracy. Pupils in Year 3 are adept at sharing information with pupils from other schools. They can log on to the e-mail client, compose suitable e-mails and send them effectively. In one lesson, for example, pupils were observed sending riddles they had composed for homework to pupils in a local school. They were excited about whether their e-mail partners would guess the animal in the riddle. They then went on to compose more riddles, which they sent effectively, using their word processing skills to good effect.
105. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they concentrate well when using the school's information and communications technology suite. They are enthusiastic users of computers and are beginning to see the potential for using information and communications technology to support their learning. For example, one boy in Year 4 commented 'I use my computer all the time to help me with my homework. I think the Internet is very useful.' Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils treat equipment carefully. They are well aware of health and safety, especially the safe use of the Internet. Their personal development is good and they are able to work well on their own and in small groups. Pupils support each other well, giving encouragement and supportive comments to each other when working in pairs.
106. Teaching is good overall and in some lessons it is very good. Although some teachers feel insecure about their subject knowledge, their dedication and good planning ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning. Where teachers have good levels of expertise, standards are higher, especially at Key Stage 2 in communications and the use of the Internet. There has been good teaching of basic computer skills and all pupils know how to use a mouse, access menus and use the keyboard. Good use is made of the computer suite by teachers to provide focused teaching of information and communications technology skills and this is backed up by computers in the classroom to support learning in other subjects. As a consequence, pupils are making good progress in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. A good balance between whole class instruction, group work and individual tuition means that pupils put great effort into their computer work. They concentrate well, often remaining on the task in hand for considerable periods. Lessons generally move at a swift pace and pupils work quickly and well. Good use is made of support staff and parent volunteers to support pupils' learning. Assessment is appropriate, but as yet, the use of assessment to adjust future planning for the subject is underdeveloped. All pupils make good progress, irrespective of their prior attainment and good use is made of information and communications technology to support pupils with special educational needs.
107. The acting deputy headteacher has recently taken over as co-ordinator for the subject and is still coming to grips with her responsibilities. However, from the evidence presented, the previous co-ordinator was effective in giving good leadership to the subject and has done much to raise standards and improve provision. There is a good information and communications technology action plan, which identifies appropriate priorities. For example, It correctly identifies that the computers used in the Foundation Stage classrooms are inadequate to support the curriculum needed at this stage and there are plans to replace them shortly. There is a well-conceived plan for professional development, which is appropriately targeted at raising staff expertise in using new equipment and the Internet. The current co-ordinator has not had any opportunity to monitor teaching and learning effectively, and this should be addressed as soon as possible in order to maintain the good standards already achieved. With the exception of the computers in the Foundation Stage, equipment is of a satisfactory quality. However, in order to meet the demands of the new information and communications technology curriculum, the school needs to increase the number of machines available in classrooms. The school is aware of this and has plans to increase the level of resources as soon as funding allows. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and the recently installed computer suite has added appreciably to the good standards observed throughout the school.

MUSIC

108. Attainment in music, for pupils of all abilities, is good and above that generally expected for pupils of this age. Through continuing good effort, the above average standards identified at the previous inspection have been maintained. Music enjoys a high profile in the school and makes a significant contribution to the positive ethos. Parents are aware of the good standards and appreciative of the school's efforts.
109. Pupils at both key stages possess an extensive repertoire of hymns and songs. They sing out well with enthusiasm and pleasure. They follow a range of signals well and are able to vary the pitch and quality of their singing as required. They experience a diverse range of music, which they regularly perform for school and external audiences. This results in a growing confidence in their own developing abilities and promotes a unifying, corporate sense of achievement.
110. At Key Stage 1 pupils display a good sense of rhythm. They can rapidly absorb a new style of music, such as sea shanties, and can pick out the relevant notes to play on a tuned instrument, such as a xylophone. Other rhythms are well supplied by pupils with drums and wood blocks. All hold their positions well, alongside the piano accompaniment. The speed of progress made in developing musical skills, from initial hearing to four-part performance, is impressive.
111. In Years 3 and 4 standards continue to improve. Pupils are able to sight-read a range of basic notes and rests to reproduce relatively complex rhythms. Quite a few older pupils are able to sing notes read from the stave correctly. They are able to play the tunes they read with marked confidence, on for example, a glockenspiel. They are well able to contribute to a class performance at the end of the lesson and clearly demonstrate both previously learnt and newly acquired skills.
112. The quality of teaching in lessons observed is very good. Most of the music in the school is taught by a very talented teacher, whose experience and well-honed teaching skills make a considerable contribution to the good standards achieved. A very good programme has been devised which ensures that the necessary, progressive steps required are comprehensively covered. In addition, the work planned provides an exceptionally broad spectrum of musical experience and successfully engenders a love of music. The teacher's expectations are notably high and result in good performance all round. Very little use is made of computers to support learning, although the school does have appropriate keyboards for composition.
113. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The very good provision from which they benefit helps promote the tangible level of enjoyment observed in lessons. They are secure in the familiar routines of their lessons and willingly share instruments and co-operate well when performing. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and clearly get great pleasure from making music together.
114. A very high proportion of pupils are involved in extra-curricular music. These include violin, recorder, keyboard club and guitar lessons. A large school choir is also well established and pupils gain from the experience of regular public performance.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Throughout the school pupils experience a rich and well-balanced range of activities including dance, games, gymnastics and swimming. In Key Stage 2 athletics and outdoor and adventure activities are also introduced. During the inspection pupils were observed taking part in dance, games, gymnastics and swimming at Key Stage 1 and dance at Key Stage 2. Overall, pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected for their ages, although in swimming they attain better than expected levels. Almost all pupils leave the school confident and safe in the water and able to swim at least 25 metres. Many pupils gain more challenging awards. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from the speech and language unit are fully integrated into lessons, and most attain standards that are in line with other pupils.
116. In Key Stage 1 pupils understand the need to warm up before physical activity and demonstrate sound basic games skills of dribbling and controlling a large ball. In gymnastics they explore

different levels and directions and begin to link movements to form a sequence showing an increasing awareness of space and others around them. They move rhythmically in time with happy and sad music and express anger in facial and body language. In Key Stage 2 most pupils make good progress in their learning and in the acquisition of dance skills. In one lesson they selected a range of twisting, twirling and writhing movements and applied them well to their Carnival Dance. Another class performed sequences to include running, rolling, jumping and spinning to a Caribbean rhythm.

117. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, although the quality of teaching in lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teaching was generally stronger in Key Stage 2. All lessons were planned thoroughly and were well structured with a warm-up and recovery session to promote good attitudes to health related exercise. In the most successful lesson, the teacher was fully involved in a shared and enjoyable experience with the pupils. She had high expectations of behaviour and pupils' achievements and the brisk pace meant that pupils made good progress in their dance skills. They demonstrated good speaking skills and were able to explain their sequences and their interpretation of the music. This has a positive effect on their learning. In another lesson the teacher monitored and assessed pupils' performance throughout the lesson and provided helpful and encouraging feedback. Pupils responded by listening attentively and following instructions carefully, showing a willingness and enthusiasm to practise movements in order to improve. Where teaching and learning are less effective a significant minority of pupils does not make sufficient progress as a result of their inappropriate behaviour. They do not concentrate and do not apply themselves fully to the task.
118. The subject is well led by two teachers who share the responsibility with input from a third teacher who co-ordinates a very good programme of outdoor education. A good start has been made on developing a new scheme of work that has a clear emphasis on the systematic development of skills as pupils move through the school although this is not yet having the desired effect on raising standards. The facilities and resources for physical education are very good and they include an indoor swimming pool. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the skills of the large numbers of pupils who participate. These opportunities also contribute to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. The school has maintained the standards reported at the time of the last inspection and the potential for raising pupils' standards further is good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

119. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress throughout the school and meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. This is a similar finding to the judgements of the previous inspection report.
120. At Key Stage 1 pupils are beginning to appreciate some of the beliefs and practices of Judaism. They know a few of the simple basic facts of that religion. They have looked at the festival of Hanukkah and studied the place of religious artefacts in ceremony. An understanding is developing of the differing forms of celebration and the rituals that accompany them. Pupils can take part in elementary discussion on religious topics and can generally re-tell a story satisfactorily. They also know that prayers are addressed to God and may be concluded with 'Amen'.
121. In Years 3 and 4 pupils are aware that a book, such as the Bible, is important in a special way. They have experience of a few simple stories from both the Old and New Testaments and can relate past learning to new knowledge. Many know, for example, a few facts from 'The Loaves and Fishes' and its relevance to Christian teaching. However, on other occasions, only a basic recall of the 'The Good Samaritan' is evident and pupils are uncertain as to the significance of important elements. Sound knowledge is demonstrated of the experiences of a Hindu wedding compared with a Christian one. Pupils are able to pool ideas in group work and effectively present their findings to the whole class.
122. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and, on occasion very good. Teachers generally prepare their work carefully and follow the prescribed programme. Classes are very well managed and a positive atmosphere for the subject is created. Nevertheless, many lessons at both

key stages are prevented from being better by notable weaknesses in teachers' own subject knowledge and subsequent insecurities in the sharing of ideas. This results in a certain lack of challenge to pupils and a measure of under-achievement. However, all lessons observed are significantly improved by the good use of relevant artefacts and visual aids. Very good teaching, as in investigating a Hindu wedding, is characterised by an exceptionally interesting presentation of the topic, high expectations as to outcomes, and excellent use of information and communications technology.

123. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good. Where teaching is best, pupils are most fully involved and keen to talk of their experiences. Levels of interest are high and pupils are enabled to complete the tasks assigned successfully. All age groups respond well in question and answer sessions and seek to do their best. Although not a great deal of written work is undertaken, pupils take great care with it and show pride in their books.