

INSPECTION REPORT

ST SWITHUN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Southsea

LEA area: Portsmouth

Unique reference number: 116386

Headteacher: Mr B Mackay

Reporting inspector: Carole Skinner
23160

Dates of inspection: 9th-10th October 2000

Inspection number: 224843

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Taswell Road, Southsea Hants
Postcode:	PO5 2 RG
Telephone number:	023 9282 9339
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, St Swithun's Catholic Primary School
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Heaward
Date of previous inspection:	25 th -28 th November 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Swithun's Catholic Primary School educates boys and girls aged between four and 11. In total, there are 263 full-time equivalent pupils on roll, including six who attend part-time in the Reception classes. There are also 35 children in the Reception classes who attend full-time. The school is about the same size as other primary schools and has equal numbers of boys and girls. It is oversubscribed and is currently expanding from one form entry to one a half. At the time of this inspection, four classes were housed in temporary accommodation pending the addition of two new classrooms. Nine pupils speak English as an additional language and six pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Approximately eight per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. The school has 31 pupils (12 per cent) on its register of special educational needs, which is also below average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need. During the last school year, 15 pupils joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission and 18 pupils left it other than at the usual time of leaving or transfer. The attainment of children on entry to the school is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Swithun's is a very good and effective school. Children enter it at average levels of attainment. The very good quality of the teaching promotes a similar quality of learning, so that pupils make very good progress and attain well above average standards by the time they leave. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The school's performance is regularly and effectively reviewed and staff and governors are continually seeking ways to bring about further improvement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress and attain very good standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The very good quality of the teaching throughout the school promotes very good progress in learning for all pupils.
- The very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, key staff and governors lead to high quality provision in all aspects of the school's work.
- The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and promotes very good attitudes and behaviour and excellent relationships and personal development.
- The school has a very successful partnership with parents, which makes a significant contribution to its effectiveness.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, which helps them to make very good progress in their learning.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing, which, although high compared with most schools, are not as high as those in reading. The school has already identified this issue as its main priority for development in its strategic plan.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Since its last inspection, it has made a very good improvement and it has a similar capacity to continue to improve. Compared to the findings of the last inspection, the standards achieved by the pupils have improved in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Curricular provision has improved with better planning and clearer explanations of what is to be learned in each year group. The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress are much better and there is rigorous analysis of the school's performance in national tests. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and this has contributed to pupils' very good progress. The school has improved its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which has led to pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning. It has also enhanced pupils' personal development. The leadership and management of the school have become sharper and more effective in analysing and accounting for the school's performance and planning for its improvement. There have also been improvements in the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and in developing the pupils' awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A	A*	A
mathematics	A	A*	A	A
science	A	A	A	B

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

Children enter the school with average levels of attainment and attain standards that are well above the national average by the time they leave. This shows very good achievement. The school has maintained consistently high standards in national tests over three years. In 1999, the school's results in English were in the highest five per cent nationally. The results of the national tests for 11 year olds in 2000, which are as yet unconfirmed, show that a similarly high proportion of pupils achieved or exceeded expected standards in all three subjects. The school's own rigorous analysis of the English tests shows that, although the pupils' results were well above average overall, they were much better in reading than in writing. This is also the case for pupils in Year 2. This has led to the school's identifying writing as its main priority for improvement over the coming year. Appropriately challenging targets have been set for the pupils' performance in the 2001 national tests and the school is on course to achieve them. The standards of work seen during the inspection were in keeping with the school's very good test results and were judged to be well above average in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11. A similar picture emerges for pupils by the age of seven, where standards are also judged to be well above average in English, mathematics and science. There has been a significant improvement in standards in information and communication technology. They were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and are now average. Pupils are now making good progress in the subject because the quality of teaching has improved, following the installation of a new computer network and effective staff training.

Children in the Reception class make good progress and achieve above average standards in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils have very good attitudes to their work. They are eager to learn and participate in all activities with interest and enthusiasm. This assists their learning very well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are fully aware of the school's high expectations and their behaviour is very good. They listen attentively in the classroom, converse quietly during lunch, and play sensibly together. The quality of their behaviour helps them to make very good progress.
Personal development and relationships	These are excellent and reflect the high levels of care and very good role models provided by all staff. Pupils show initiative, they co-operate very well with each other and form mutually respectful relationships with adults and other pupils. The result is a very harmonious community with a warm and welcoming atmosphere.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average and there is very little unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Twenty-five lessons were observed during the inspection. Of these, 64 per cent were very good or better and all were at least satisfactory. Ninety-two per cent of the lessons seen were at least good. The very good quality of the teaching throughout the school promotes very good progress in the pupils' learning. In English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, the quality of teaching and learning is very good, due to the effective implementation of the literacy hour and the daily mathematics lesson. Teachers are committed to continuing to improve their practice and are constantly seeking ways to do so. Their management of, and relationships with, pupils are excellent and this makes a significant contribution to the pupils' positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers and assistants work very well together as a team, and receive valuable support from a dedicated team of volunteer helpers, whose contribution to the raising of standards in reading is considerable. All adults who work with the pupils have very high expectations of them, value their efforts and encourage

them with praise. Teachers know pupils very well, track their progress very carefully and plan work to meet their differing needs.

The quality of pupils' learning is very good. They show great interest and enthusiasm in lessons and sustain concentration very well for lengthy periods. They apply considerable effort to all that they do and work at a very productive pace. Pupils take a pride in their achievements and produce work of very good quality. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in their learning because work is well matched to their needs and capabilities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good range of learning opportunities through a well-planned and interesting curriculum. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are being implemented very effectively. There is also a strong emphasis on art and music. Although the school offers a satisfactory range of extracurricular activities, there are limited opportunities for inter-school competitive sport.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school has very good procedures for the identification and support of pupils with special educational needs, which greatly assists their progress. Teachers and assistants work closely together to set achievable targets and plan work that is closely matched to the pupils' needs and capabilities. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides very good support by teaching pupils in small groups in literacy and planning work for them in numeracy.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school offers very good support for pupils who are learning English as an additional language. This helps them to make significant headway in a short time.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's excellent provision for the pupils' moral and social development is found throughout the curriculum and in all aspects of school life. The very good provision for pupils' spiritual development includes numerous opportunities to reflect on life's deeper issues. Pupils' cultural awareness is developed very well through music, art, religious education and visits to places of interest.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good procedures for child protection and the health and welfare of the pupils. Recently introduced procedures for assessing and tracking individual pupils' progress are indicative of the school's ongoing commitment to improving standards.

The school has a very effective partnership with parents, who are very supportive, and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of the pupils' learning and the progress they make.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's very good leadership, combined with that of the deputy headteacher, has created a team that is committed to improving standards through the successful management of well-paced change. Although standards are high, there is no complacency and staff are constantly seeking ways to improve their practice. All staff are involved appropriately in planning for school improvement and reviewing the progress made at regular intervals.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and needs of the school and fulfil their responsibilities very well. They work closely with the headteacher and staff to monitor standards, and they are kept well informed through detailed reports on curricular development and whole-school issues. Governors have been fully involved in analysing performance data and evaluating the impact of changes that have been made.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its performance is very good. Teachers are committed to maintaining high standards and are analytical about their teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. Detailed analysis of national and internal test results leads to the identification of issues for improvement and ensures that all pupils receive equality of opportunity. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are satisfactory, and a new system is currently being implemented as part of the school's strategy for performance management.
The strategic use of resources	The funds allocated to the school are used very well to provide a high standard of education for the pupils. Spending decisions are based appropriately on identified priorities in the school's strategic plan. The cost effectiveness of spending is assessed in terms of its impact on the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by the pupils. The principles of best value are applied very effectively, particularly in the way the school involves parents in decision making.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well managed and led. • Teachers expect their children to work hard and achieve well. • The quality of teaching is good. • Staff are approachable and work closely with parents. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • Behaviour is good. • Their children like school and are making good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extracurricular activities provided for their children, especially competitive sport.

The findings of the inspection team endorse the very positive views of the parents. They also show that, although, overall, the school offers a satisfactory range of extracurricular activities, there is less emphasis on competitive sports than is usually seen in a primary school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards of attainment

1. Pupils make very good progress and attain very good standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. This is confirmed by the pupils' results in national tests, which have been consistently high from 1997 to 1999. Although the results of the national tests in 2000 are still provisional, they indicate that these high standards have been maintained. The findings of this inspection also show that pupils are achieving very well in all three subjects and that standards are well above average compared with schools nationally. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be above average in English and mathematics and average in science. The school also performs very well when compared with similar schools. The school set challenging targets for 1999 and 2000 in English and mathematics, which were met in mathematics and very nearly met in English. Similarly challenging targets have been set for the current Year 6 pupils, and they are on course to achieve them.
2. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly average. By the end of the Reception year, pupils achieve standards that are above average in all areas of learning. In Year 2, pupils are on course to achieve standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science. The standards achieved by children in the Reception year and by seven year olds have also improved since the previous inspection.
3. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher achieving pupils, make very good progress in their learning and achieve very well during their time at the school. This is because teachers make challenging demands on all pupils and have high expectations of what pupils will achieve. There are a number of reasons for the improvement in standards. More rigorous assessment procedures and analysis of the pupils' performance in national and internal tests have enabled teachers to identify weaknesses and address them through carefully planned programmes of work. The successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, smaller teaching groups formed on the basis of pupils' earlier attainment and a commitment on the part of teachers to improve their practice have all had a significant impact on the standards achieved by the pupils.
4. In English, the firm foundations that are laid in the Reception classes enable children to make a very good start in their learning, which is built upon very effectively as they move through the school. By the age of seven, pupils attain very good standards in speaking and listening. They communicate ideas clearly and confidently and show through their comments that they have listened carefully to the teacher and understood. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils have developed these skills to a high degree. For example, in a lesson in which pupils were examining how a narrator influences a reader's view of events, pupils expressed their ideas and opinions articulately, using grammatically well-structured sentences and drawing on a broad range of technical vocabulary. Pupils also achieve very good standards in reading. In Year 2, they read a range of texts fluently and accurately and explain the strategies they use to read unfamiliar words: "sound it out", "look at the pictures", "read the sentence". By Year 6, pupils are able to discuss complex texts with insight and perceptiveness. For example, they explain an author's technique – "he's using questions to build suspense" and compare contrasting texts – "it's expressive rather than descriptive".
5. In writing, by the age of seven, pupils communicate their ideas clearly in well-formed sentences. Spelling is mostly accurate or a plausible attempt that shows a good understanding of sounds. By Year 6, pupils produce varied and interesting writing in a variety of styles for different purposes. Some very

good examples were seen, which included dramatic descriptions, such as “the drool dripped from its slimy alien mouth”, persuasive arguments, and imaginative letter writing in the form of a letter from Macbeth to his wife. However, although the pupils attain higher than average standards in writing, the school’s own detailed analysis of the pupils’ performance in the national tests in 2000 indicates that their attainment in writing was significantly lower than that in reading. A closer analysis revealed that the main reason for this was that pupils were not using proof-reading skills adequately. As a result, teachers are now placing greater emphasis on this aspect of writing.

6. In mathematics, a strong emphasis on developing mental strategies helps pupils to achieve very high standards in numeracy. Good foundations are laid in the Reception classes, where teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils’ mathematical understanding, as when they count how many children are having school dinners and packed lunches during a registration period. In Year 2, pupils use mental calculations confidently to work out problems, using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They create symmetrical patterns, measure objects in centimetres and create simple graphs. In the lessons seen in Year 2, pupils with special educational needs received good support from the assistants who made sure that they understood what was expected of them and helped them to make good progress in their learning. Pupils in Year 6 use their mathematical knowledge and understanding very well in a variety of contexts to solve problems. In a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils used a variety of mental strategies to make calculations, and were able to explain the strategies used, check their results by carrying out an inverse operation or approximation, and consider whether their answers were reasonable.

7. In science, an effective balance between imparting knowledge and giving pupils the opportunity to investigate and experiment leads to very high attainment. For example, in a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils tested a selection of rocks for permeability and hardness and were able to devise, evaluate and record their own investigations. In a very good Year 2 lesson, pupils were given the opportunity to investigate how to make an electrical circuit after a very good introduction in which the teacher showed pupils the various components and assessed their existing knowledge. They enjoyed the challenge and were delighted to see the bulb light up when they were successful.

8. In information and communication technology, where pupils were making unsatisfactory progress at the time of the previous inspection, standards have improved significantly as a result of the installation of a computer network, a better range of software and related hardware and increased expertise among staff. All of these factors have contributed to higher quality teaching, which is now enabling pupils to make good progress in their learning throughout the school. Pupils are now attaining the standards expected of them and, in some younger classes, are exceeding these. For example, pupils in Year 5 are achieving above average standards for their age. In a very good lesson seen during the inspection, they used the mouse competently to click on screen icons, changed the size and colour of the font and highlighted and underlined text. Pupils used the spell check facility independently to edit their work and gained access to the Internet to search for poetry on particular websites. The lesson was particularly successful in developing pupils’ independence in solving problems.

The quality of teaching

9. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils’ learning are very good. Of the 25 lessons observed during the inspection, two were excellent, 14 were very good, seven were good and two were satisfactory. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection when the quality of teaching was judged to be good. The high quality of the teaching has a very positive effect on pupils’ achievements and is a major influence on the high standards they attain. The quality of teaching is very good in English, mathematics and science. Teachers are successful in

meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs, higher achieving pupils and those who are reaching average standards.

10. There are a number of factors that make the teaching successful. The teachers' excellent relationships with the pupils help to create a calm and purposeful working atmosphere and a climate of mutual respect. In the lessons observed, it was rare for teachers to have to remind pupils about expected standards of behaviour or to chivvy them to concentrate on their work. Excellent management strategies result in pupils of all ages working independently at a very productive pace and sustaining high levels of concentration. All teachers have a very good understanding of the needs of the pupils in their class and very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They plan lessons very well and set demanding work, which extends pupils' thinking and leads to high standards of attainment.

11. An excellent example was seen in a literacy lesson for higher achieving pupils in Year 6, in which pupils adapted an extract from *The Silver Sword* by Ian Serraillier from the narrative genre to that of a play script. The teacher's searching questions stimulated a high quality discussion. For example, "How can we replace the narrator's role in the play script?" led pupils to suggest using stage directions and adding further dialogue. The teacher's own detailed knowledge of the text and her infectious enthusiasm for the subject engaged the pupils' attention and interest and led them to produce written work of a very high standard. Challenging questioning to make pupils think for themselves is a strong feature of the teaching throughout the school. In another excellent Year 6 literacy lesson, the teacher asked pupils, "What technique is the author using at the beginning of this section and what effect does it have?" The pupils' articulate and well thought out responses showed that they were used to this level of analysis and questioning.

12. Similarly challenging lessons were observed in all year groups, which indicates consistently high expectations of pupils throughout the school. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively, with the result that pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in a very structured way that builds successfully on their previous learning. Sometimes, pupils are taught in groups that are formed on the basis of their earlier attainment. This helps teachers to focus specifically on the particular needs of each group and makes for effective teaching. In whole class lessons, teachers make appropriate provision for pupils of differing capabilities and adapt work to meet pupils' needs.

13. A very good early morning activity in one of the Reception classes showed how teachers use every opportunity to develop pupils' mathematical understanding through everyday experiences. After completing the register, the teacher engaged the children in counting how many wanted a school dinner and how many had brought a packed lunch. She prompted children to write the numbers on the board and asked "Do you think there are more dinners or packed lunches?" The teacher challenged the higher achieving pupils to count how many altogether and helped others by demonstrating how to write numbers correctly. Throughout the school, teachers build very well on pupils' early experiences by giving them many opportunities to develop and use a range of mental strategies in mathematics, which is a significant strength of the teaching.

14. In science, there is a very good emphasis on investigative and experimental work. Pupils are given many tasks that engage them in first-hand scientific enquiry and they are encouraged to make predictions and draw conclusions from their observations. Teachers achieve an effective balance between imparting knowledge and encouraging practical investigation. This was illustrated very well in a very good lesson in Year 2, where the teacher began by checking what pupils could remember about electricity and its everyday uses, and discussing the components required to construct a circuit. The pupils were then given the components so that they could investigate for themselves and record their findings.

Leadership and management

15. The quality of the leadership and management provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors and staff with management responsibilities is very good. There is a very strong team spirit and a shared commitment to achieve the highest standards possible in all aspects of the life and work of the school. The governors are very effective in their role and have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. The headteacher and his deputy work together very well as a team and provide a clear sense of direction for the work of the school. The headteacher is held in high esteem by staff, governors, pupils and parents and is influential in creating an ethos of care, consideration and mutual respect. There is effective delegation of responsibilities to subject managers, who, in turn, play a key role in bringing about improvement and raising standards.

16. There has been a very good improvement since the previous inspection and the school has a similar capacity to continue to improve or to maintain the already very high standards in the future. Standards have risen in English, mathematics and science and the quality of teaching has improved as teachers have implemented new initiatives successfully. Two of the most notable improvements over the past four years have been in the school's provision for teaching information and communication technology, and its procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. Both of these key issues from the previous inspection provide very good examples of how the leadership and management of the school have brought about change and improvement that are having a positive impact on the quality of the pupils' education and the standards they achieve.

17. The subject manager for information and communication technology has worked closely with the management team and governors to improve curricular provision in the subject. Through careful financial management, governors have largely funded the installation of a computer network, which has enabled both staff and pupils to develop greater expertise and capability in information and communication technology. The subject manager has led this initiative very effectively and has made a significant contribution to raising the confidence of staff and ensuring that pupils benefit from the new provision. She has been instrumental in setting up Internet and e-mail facilities, including links with other schools. She has also ensured that all aspects of the curriculum are well resourced and that teachers have sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach them. The headteacher and governors have maintained a monitoring role, overseeing the introduction of the new system and assessing its effectiveness. As a result of these improvements, pupils are now making good progress in their learning and standards are rising. This has led to the school being recommended by the Local Education Authority as a good example of a network approach to information and communication technology in the primary sector.

18. At the time of the last inspection, the school's procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress were unsatisfactory. They are now very good. The headteacher and key subject managers have devised and implemented very effective procedures, which are currently being refined still further to provide a means of tracking individual pupils' progress throughout the school. As a result of improved assessment procedures, which include annual tests in English and mathematics from Year 2 to Year 6, teachers have a very clear understanding of the needs of individual pupils. This enables them to provide additional help, more challenging work or specific skills teaching where it is needed. A significant feature of the improvements made in this area is the rigorous analysis of the pupils' performance in national tests, which is carried out by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, some subject managers and governors. Detailed comparisons with other schools, both nationally and locally, lead to the identification of priorities for the school's strategic plan. A very good example is the English manager's thorough analysis of the Year 6 pupils' national test results in 2000, which identified the need to improve the pupils' performance in writing. It also showed that the school has enabled many pupils to exceed earlier predictions and achieve high standards.

19. Overall, the very good leadership and management of the school have a significant impact on the quality of education provided for the pupils and the standards they achieve. Governors and staff are committed to excellence and are constantly striving to improve their practice, which makes for a very effective school. A measure of the strength of the leadership and management of the school, and of the teamwork that makes it so effective, is the school's response to a serious flood that occurred just a few weeks before this inspection. Calm efficiency and an unfailing determination to succeed enabled the school to get back to normal in a very short time.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

20. The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This provision has a significant impact on the pupils' personal development, which is excellent, and on their attitudes towards school and their behaviour, which are very good. It also underpins the excellent relationships that exist between pupils, and between pupils and all adults who work in or visit the school. The findings of this inspection are an improvement on those of the last inspection, when provision was judged to be good. It represents a significant improvement in the provision for pupils' cultural development, which was a key issue for action in the previous inspection.

21. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is very good and this is reflected in many aspects of the life and ethos of the school. Class assemblies provide valuable opportunities for pupils to consider their own and other people's lives, as when a Year 6 class were asked to consider what they could do to make the world a better place. In many of the lessons observed, it was evident that teachers value pupils' ideas and suggestions and enable them to reflect on their experiences. This helps to develop very positive attitudes towards learning. Collective worship also plays a large part in encouraging pupils of all ages to explore values and beliefs. The celebration assembly, attended by all staff, pupils and many visitors, gave pupils the opportunity to reflect on 'people who help us'. Many volunteer reading helpers were thanked for their support and the school site manager was recognised and thanked for his important contribution during the recent flood. Music, including solo instrumental performances by pupils, and prayer provided a spiritual dimension to the occasion, which also contributed very well to pupils' moral and social development.

22. Provision for the pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils have played a key role in formulating class rules and a behaviour policy. The school has an in-built framework of values, such as honesty and fairness, which regulate personal behaviour throughout the school day and are clearly founded on its Christian ethos. This results in very good behaviour during lessons, around the school, in the dining hall and in the playground. During the inspection, pupils were polite and helpful to visitors in showing them around the school, holding open doors and proffering information. Opportunities for pupils to develop and express moral values are provided in lessons and extracurricular activities, as when some Year 6 pupils made a presentation to other local schools about Third World Debt.

23. Excellent provision for the pupils' social development is a strong feature of the school, where outstanding relationships flourish between all members of the school and the local community. All members of staff, visitors, helpers and governors act as very good role models for the pupils' social development. Pupils of all age groups are given many opportunities to work together in pairs or larger groups and to take responsibility for their own work. This develops positive attitudes towards school and helps pupils to make very good progress in their learning. Year 6 pupils act as monitors in the infant classrooms on rainy days, and participate in shared reading sessions with the younger pupils. This contributes very well to the personal development of all pupils and the formation of excellent relationships. It is also usual for older pupils to escort visitors around the school. The oldest pupils' social development is greatly enhanced by a week's residential visit to Devon during the summer term.

The school and its pupils work closely with other local schools, churches, parents and the community, and this helps pupils to develop a very good understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship. Pupils also demonstrate initiative in fund-raising activities for charitable causes.

24. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils are given the opportunity to study different religions such as Judaism and Hinduism. A wide appreciation of different cultural traditions is developed through music, dance and geography. As part of this provision, pupils performed a Divali dance on the theme of light in the cathedral. The school takes full advantage of the cultural experience of pupils from other countries. During the inspection, for example, pupils listened to a pupil from South America as she told them about the customs of her country. Pupils extend their awareness of their own and other cultures through visits to local museums and art galleries in and around the city of Portsmouth, art workshops and visitors, such as a story-teller. Pupils' cultural awareness is also extended through a wide range of literature.

The school's partnership with parents

25. The school's very successful partnership with parents, grandparents and other members of the local community has a significant impact on the quality of education it provides and the standards achieved by the pupils. It makes an important contribution to the school's overall effectiveness. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The parents' meeting with the registered inspector, prior to the inspection, and the responses to the parents' questionnaires show a very high level of support for the school and a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of education it provides and the standards pupils achieve. The school has developed a very good range of productive links with parents, grandparents and volunteer helpers from two of the parishes that it serves. These help pupils to make good progress in their learning. An excellent example is the dedicated team of volunteer helpers who come into school regularly to hear children read. During the inspection, these helpers were invited to a meeting with the teacher responsible for co-ordinating their efforts, at which she explained the impact they had had on helping to raise standards in reading throughout the school. Staff and pupils showed their gratitude in a celebration assembly when the pupils presented certificates to the helpers.

26. This example is typical of the way that governors and staff value the involvement and contribution of parents and other members of the local community. Another is the very good quality of the information that the school provides for parents throughout the year. This has also improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to be 'sound'. Parents receive detailed information each half term on the curriculum that their children are to follow and are invited to support this work at home. Parents whose children have special educational needs are kept well informed and are fully involved in making decisions about the provision that is made for their children. The school organises a range of meetings for parents to explain curricular developments and consults them formally about some initiatives, such as the recent home/school agreement. A very good example of how the school involves and consults parents is the questionnaire that the mathematics manager produced, inviting parents' comments on how to develop their role in supporting their children's learning in mathematics. Twice yearly written reports and meetings with class teachers to discuss their children's attainment and progress provide further opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

27. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, which enables them to make very good progress in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in English, mathematics and science so that, by the time they leave the school, almost all have

reached the standards expected of 11 year olds nationally. They make significant progress towards achieving the targets in their individual education plans in the allotted time. This is achieved by the provision of considerable support for pupils, both in lessons and when withdrawn for additional help in small groups. As a result of the very good provision, pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their work and generally behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. Analysis of teachers' planning documents and observations of lessons show that teachers have high expectations of these pupils and provide appropriate work to meet their individual needs. The co-ordinator for special educational needs and support assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that individual needs are met. Teachers are well aware of pupils' individual education plans and take good account of them when planning activities.

28. On some days, pupils with special educational needs are taught in smaller groups for the literacy and numeracy hours, which enables teachers to focus specifically on their needs. A good example was seen in a Year 6 lower attaining literacy group, where pupils were fully involved in identifying the differences between prose and play scripts. The lesson was taken by the co-ordinator for special educational needs, whose very good knowledge of the pupils enabled her to tailor the activity to their needs, while still challenging them to produce work of a good standard. In this lesson, pupils were achieving levels more typical of average attaining pupils. Very good support is provided for pupils who have statements of special educational need. Individual education plans contain appropriate targets for improvement, are reviewed regularly and discussed with parents. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and assessment information is used effectively to plan the next steps in learning.

29. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs is further evidence of the impact of the school's leadership and management on effecting change and improvement. The school's financial commitment to this aspect of its work is considerable, and the headteacher and governors closely monitor its effectiveness. As a result of the improved provision, the percentage of pupils who are identified as having special educational needs has been reduced by half in five years. This inevitably has a very positive impact on the overall standards achieved by the school. Parents also express very positive views about the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and consider it be a strength of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in writing

30. Although standards in English are much higher than in most schools, fewer pupils attain or exceed national expectations in writing than in reading. This was identified by the school after detailed analysis of the pupils' performance in national tests and forms the main priority in the school's strategic plan for improvement. When examining the reasons for the lower standards in writing, teachers found that pupils were not achieving as well as they should in the national tests for 11 year olds because they were not skilled at proof-reading and correcting or improving their work. Evidence from this inspection endorses the school's view that standards in writing could be improved still further and shows that teachers have now made this a priority and are giving pupils more opportunities to develop the required skills.

31. In the national tests for seven year olds, the pupils' results in writing have been well above the national average for three years. The proportion of pupils who achieve higher than average standards in writing (Level 3) is slightly greater than that found in most schools, but far smaller than the percentage who achieve high standards in reading. Teachers recognise the need to provide greater

challenge for higher achieving pupils and to develop higher order writing skills for those pupils who are capable of achieving more.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. Continue to implement the measures outlined in the school's strategic plan in order to improve further the standards achieved by pupils in writing.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	56	28	8	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 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	263
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/a	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	31

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	1999	13	22	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	13	13
	Girls	19	21	22
	Total	30	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (91)	97 (98)	100 (100)
	National	82 [80]	83 [81]	87 [84]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls	21	22	21
	Total	33	35	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (97)	100 (100)	97 (100)
	National	82 [81]	86 [85]	87[86]

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	24	17	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	23	24
	Girls	15	13	14
	Total	37	36	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (80)	88 (91)	93 (93)
	National	70 [65]	69 [59]	78 [69]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	22	23
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	32	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (78)	88 (88)	90 (93)
	National	68 [65]	69 [65]	75 [72]

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	222
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Average class size	23.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000 0
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	£
Total income	520989
Total expenditure	550597
Expenditure per pupil	2047
Balance brought forward from previous year	42299
Balance carried forward to next year	12691

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	412
Number of questionnaires returned	133

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	24	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	39	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	54	9	2	8
The teaching is good.	64	32	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	38	10	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	31	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	25	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	51	41	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	73	25	0	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	34	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	33	34	6	10