

INSPECTION REPORT

DITCHEAT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ditcheat, Shepton Mallet

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123642

Acting Headteacher: Miss Heidi Sprake

Reporting inspector: Mr Harold Galley
21313

Dates of inspection: April 15th - 18th 2002

Inspection number: 243683

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ditcheat, Shepton Mallet Somerset
Postcode:	BA4 6RB
Telephone number:	01749 860329
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Susan Ahlquist
Date of previous inspection:	September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21313	Harold Galley Registered inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage; Mathematics; Science; Art and design; History; Geography; Physical education.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to further improve?
9644	Mike Whitaker Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22942	Jackie Cousins Team inspector	English; Information and communication technology; Design and technology; Music; Religious education; Special educational needs; Equal opportunities.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ditcheat Primary serves the village of Ditcheat and surrounding villages just south of Shepton Mallet in Somerset. It is much smaller than average with 83 pupils on roll, 51 girls and 32 boys. In most year groups there are between 10 and 15 pupils, although the present Year 2 has just five pupils. The school buildings, which date back to Victorian times, are set in attractive grounds which include an adventure playground, a children's garden and a wildlife garden. Attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year, but is broadly average. No pupils speak English as an additional language and all but two pupils are white. Seven pupils are on the school's special educational needs register which is well below average. Six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, well below the national average. The high level of teacher turnover has been an ongoing problem for the school. It was mentioned in the last inspection report and, despite a period of stability between 1997 and 2000, there have been more problems recently, not least in finding a replacement for the headteacher who left last summer. The governors have recently made an appointment and a new headteacher will take up her post in September. The senior teacher has been acting headteacher for the whole of the present academic year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with a number of very good features. In the present Year 6, standards are above the national average in reading and mathematics, and pupils achieve especially well in history. Standards in the present Year 6 group are much higher than those achieved in the 2001 National Curriculum tests and assessments, largely due to the unusually high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in last year's group. Compared to their prior attainment, pupils achieve at least satisfactorily in every subject, with good levels of achievement in reading, mathematics and history. Attitudes to learning are very good and pupils are extremely keen to learn. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Years 1 and 2. The school has been very well led during a transitional period by the acting headteacher. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in Year 6 are above average in reading and mathematics, and above national expectations in history.
- The acting headteacher is a very effective leader and is well supported by an active and well-informed governing body.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and behave well throughout the school.
- Relationships are excellent and underpin the calm, happy and purposeful atmosphere.
- Older pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative and are well prepared for the next stage of education.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors and by an excellent range of out of school activities.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its last inspection in September 1997. Standards have risen in line with the national trend. Teaching has improved, with more good, very good and excellent teaching, and unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced to zero. Curriculum provision has been improved through the introduction of detailed schemes of work. The school now has a very useful improvement plan and has much improved strategies for evaluating its own performance. Although standards in ICT have improved, the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects remains a weakness.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores¹ in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	A	C	E
Mathematics	E	B	D	E
Science	C	B	C	D

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

The information shows the considerable variations in standards from year to year. This reflects the changes in attainment on entry between different year groups as well as the small number of pupils in each year group. In 2001, standards in Year 6 were average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. Compared to other similar schools², standards were well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. A significant factor in this year group was the very high proportion of pupils, around one-third, on the school's special educational needs register, compared to this school's usual average of less than 10 per cent. Children in the Foundation Stage³ achieve satisfactorily overall, with good levels of achievement in personal, social and emotional development and in reading. Most children achieve the Early Learning Goals proscribed for the Foundation Stage before they enter Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 show similar variations from year to year, but in 2001 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards of work seen in Year 6 were much higher and show good levels of achievement compared to pupils' performance in the Year 2 tests in 1998. Standards in other subjects are in line with national expectations, apart from history where standards are good. Although standards in physical education are at the expected level overall, standards in swimming and country dancing are above those normally seen.

¹ Average points scores refers to the average of pupils' scores weighted by Ofsted for each level attained in each subject.

² Schools with up to 8 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals.

³ The Foundation Stage refers to children from entry up to and including age six when they complete the reception year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils are keen to learn throughout the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good, both in class and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent and older pupils have a good range of opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative.
Attendance	Good. Unauthorised absence is very low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, with strengths in personal, social and emotional development and in terms of the good range of activities provided across the areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, over half the lessons were good or better, particularly on the days when the class is taught by the acting headteacher. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is satisfactory with good features. Half the lessons were satisfactory with the rest being good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching throughout the school. Most literacy and numeracy lessons are well taught. All lessons are well organised and proceed in a calm and orderly fashion. Much of the teaching is lively and interesting, but opportunities are missed to extend pupils' skills in writing and in ICT in many lessons. Teaching in history is good throughout the school with one excellent lesson in Year 5/6. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is enriched by the effective use of visits and visitors that enliven lessons, and by the excellent range of out of school activities. However, the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is weak.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils achieve well because of the clear targets in their individual education plans and the effective co-operation between teachers and support assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual, moral and cultural development are all good, and social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very caring environment. The promotion of good behaviour is especially effective.

The school has developed very good working relationships with parents who much appreciate the very caring atmosphere throughout the school. Provision for homework is satisfactory and parents make a positive contribution to their children's learning at home.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The acting headteacher has provided very good leadership during this transitional year. Subject leaders are hard working and effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and bring a good range of skills to their work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. This has improved recently due to the detailed analyses of performance by the acting headteacher.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has good procedures for deploying its resources to the maximum effect for its pupils.

There is a good number of teaching staff affording small class sizes. Accommodation is satisfactory. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. Resources in many subjects are good, but there is a shortage of appropriate software to support work in ICT. The school applies the principles of best value well in all its major spending decisions and gives good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like coming to school and are keen to learn.• Teaching is good and all staff are approachable.• The acting headteacher has done a very good job in difficult circumstances.• The way in which the school helps children to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework set.• Information about children's progress.• The disruption caused by high teacher turnover.

Inspectors agree entirely with the positive views expressed by parents. The amount of homework is consistent with that normally seen. Information to parents about their child's progress is good, although more information could be provided about the curriculum for children in Years 1 to 6. Although there has been much disruption in terms of teacher turnover, there is no specific reason for this and the school is presently fully staffed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. School records show a considerable variation in attainment on entry from year to year. The main reason for this is the very small number of pupils in each year group entering the school. These variations, along with the small year groups, have led to considerable fluctuations in the results achieved by pupils in the National Curriculum tests and assessments at the age of seven and 11. With only between ten and fifteen pupils in each year group, some caution is needed in comparing the school's results to national percentages.

2. Children achieve satisfactorily overall in the reception class and are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals in all the areas of learning recommended for the Foundation Stage. There is an effective focus on creating a happy, relaxed environment in the reception class and the excellent relationships between staff and children lead to good levels of achievement in children's personal, social and emotional development. Children make a good start to their reading and speaking and listening skills and achieve well in these aspects of learning. Children's mathematical development is satisfactory.

3. Results of the 2001 National Curriculum test and assessments show that, by the age of seven, standards were average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Compared to other similar schools, standards were just below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was average in all areas, apart from writing, where the proportion was above the national average. Since there are only five pupils in the present Year 2, comparisons with national averages are rather meaningless, although it is clear these pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily across the curriculum.

4. The 2001 test results show that, by the age of 11, standards were average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Compared to other similar schools, standards were below average in science and well below average in English and mathematics. A potent factor in this year group's results was the unusually high proportion of pupils on the school's special educational needs register, with around one-third of pupils on

the register compared to this school's usual average of around 10 per cent. In all three subjects, standards have risen in line with the national trend since the last inspection in 1997. Standards observed during the inspection in Year 6 were average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Comparisons with these pupils' attainments in their national test scores at the end of Year 2 in 1998 show that, in all three subjects pupils have achieved well since then. Pupils in Year 6 have achieved especially well in reading and standards are above average. Standards in English overall are average, however, because pupils do not achieve well enough in writing. In mathematics, pupils respond positively to the good teaching and achieve well in all aspects of this subject. In other subjects, pupils achieve satisfactorily, apart from history where teaching is good and standards are above national expectations. In religious education pupils meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the ages of seven and 11.

5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans and are included in all activities. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and pupils' targets updated on a regular basis.

6. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been successfully introduced and make a positive contribution to pupils' levels of achievement. Progress in reading is better than in writing because teachers have more confidence and expertise in this area of learning. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Although standards in ICT itself are satisfactory, there are few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.

7. The school's targets for English and mathematics for its end of Year 6 results are sufficiently challenging and the school is on course to reach them. There have been recent improvements in the way in which test results are monitored as well as in the way such data is used to track the progress of individual pupils as they move through the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Pupils are very positive about school and respond well to its friendly supportive atmosphere. Virtually all children say that they enjoy school; one recently arrived pupil observed that, "I really like this school. I'm so glad I came here." Children in the Foundation Stage, many of whom are still under the age of five, are confident about leaving parents in the morning and settle confidently to well-established routines in a calm and purposeful environment. Attitudes to lessons are very positive throughout the school, which represents a significant improvement over the satisfactory attitudes noted in the previous inspection report. Pupils of all ages focus well upon the task in hand, whether it is a Year 1/2 class collecting green leaves and grasses in a nearby lane as a preliminary to considering Van Gogh's 'Fields under Thunderclouds' in an art lesson, or Year 5/6 considering written methods of division in mathematics. Pupils respond to lively, challenging material presented in an interesting way by teachers with whom they have excellent rapport. Pupils are attentive, involved, keen to try and delighted when they succeed. Pupils are proud of their school and take full advantage of the opportunities it offers, such as after school activities, sport, drama and visits.

9. Behaviour is very good, an improvement over the good standards seen at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are polite and responsive in class and orderly as they move about the school. Play is co-operative and good natured; constructive play is encouraged by the stimulating environment, with its adventure play equipment and the wide range of toys, games, balls and skipping ropes provided by the school to channel pupils' energies. All ages and both sexes mix well at play. There is a complete absence of any sort of harassment or aggression towards any individuals or groups of pupils – the school is an inclusive community. Pupils are polite and helpful, and happy to show visitors around their school. The

grounds are largely free of litter and children are quick to pick up any they observe. School property and resources are treated with respect. There have been no exclusions over the preceding twelve months.

10. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are good in most lessons and such pupils work hard to achieve the targets set for them.

11. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils are involved in the school's daily routines. All pupils have classroom tasks, such as collecting books, looking after pencils or being that day's 'special helper'. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 play a significant part in the running of the school. The school is divided into teams (or houses) and each is captained by a Year 6 pupil. Older pupils, completely unselfconsciously and without being asked, look after young children in the playground whilst others volunteer to help tidy the hall after lunch. Pupils in the Year 5/6 class show a commendable maturity, esprit de corps and loyalty towards the school and the village community. Pupils demonstrate a sense of community by taking part in village activities, helping the parent-teacher association with their functions and organising charity fund-raising events. Possibly because the school is a very secure, supportive community, there is less evidence of pupils taking responsibility for their own learning. Relationships at all levels are excellent. Staff treat pupils with respect and pupils respond appropriately. Relationships between pupils are mature and sensitive. The school has experienced more than one personal tragedy in the recent past. The sensitivity and understanding with which the entire school community, including young children, has reacted, is exemplary.

12. Attendance is good. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Pupils arrive punctually and the pace of the school day is brisk – there is little if any slippage of time between lessons, breaks and lunch. Registration is carried out promptly and efficiently.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. Teaching in the Foundation Stage (reception class) is satisfactory with good features. The strengths are in the teaching of personal, social and emotional development. The teacher has worked hard and extremely effectively to provide a warm, happy and calm learning environment, where children feel confident and relaxed. Children respond positively and the quality of learning is good in this aspect of the provision. Children make good progress in their reading development as a result of good teaching in this area. Teacher's planning is good in terms of providing a wide range of well organised activities, but does not always make enough provision for children of differing ability.

14. Teaching in the Year 1/2 class is good, with some very good features. This class is shared by the acting headteacher and the 'headteacher's relief'. The acting headteacher sets a particularly good example with some lively and very effective teaching. Eighty per cent of lessons in this class were good or better, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Both teachers have a secure understanding of how young pupils learn and make extremely effective use of the local environment to bring learning to life in subjects such as art and design and science. A strength of teaching is the practical approach to learning that makes good use of the resources available. In a science lesson, for example, good use was made of the school grounds to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of animals and their different habitats. In a mathematics lesson, pupils' understanding of capacity was enhanced by the use of a range of different sized containers that pupils had to fill with sand. By the end of this practical session, pupils were able to conclude that capacity was 'how much room there is inside'.

15. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall, with some good features. Just over half the lessons were satisfactory, with a quarter being good and a quarter very good or excellent. All lessons are well organised and pupils are managed in a firm but friendly manner. This

ensures that pupils concentrate and learn effectively throughout lessons. The calm purposeful atmosphere is a feature of all lessons. The quality of learning is enhanced by the sharing of objectives at the start of the lessons and by a clear evaluation of these at the end of each lesson. Teachers have worked effectively to introduce both National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and the successful use of these underpins the successful teaching in these areas. In other subjects, good use is made of visits and visitors to bring the curriculum alive and this has a significant impact on the quality of learning. The pace of lessons is satisfactory, although some satisfactory lessons lack urgency. Where teachers do maintain a lively pace, teaching is often good or very good. One excellent lesson was observed in a Year 5/6 history lesson. In this lesson, the teacher took the class, without any introductory preamble, in the persona of an actual teacher at Ditcheat in the 1870s, using the original log book of that era that enabled pupils to develop a close understanding of life for children in a Victorian classroom.

16. Alongside these many strengths there are some weaknesses that meant that otherwise strong lessons were judged to be satisfactory rather than good. In literacy sessions, teachers have a very good understanding of how to develop pupils' reading skills but are much less sure when teaching writing. Opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects across the curriculum are too infrequent, and more able pupils are not always challenged enough in this area of learning. In both their oral and written feedback, teachers use praise and encouragement well to motivate pupils, but rarely give pupils a clear idea of their own strengths and weaknesses and what they need to focus on in order to improve further. Although the teaching of ICT itself is satisfactory, teachers' knowledge of how to use ICT to enhance pupils' learning in subjects across the curriculum is weak.

17. The assessment of pupils' progress is good. Teachers have developed a good range of strategies for monitoring pupils' progress and, in most lessons, use these records well to plan work that is well suited to pupils' differing needs. An exception to this is in writing, where pupils are not given sufficiently detailed feedback and, as a consequence, have only a sketchy idea of their own strengths and weaknesses.

18. Throughout the school, homework is used appropriately to support pupils' learning. Parents confirm that older pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Teachers work closely with the special needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants to promote the learning of these pupils. Teachers are especially effective in ensuring the inclusion of all pupils in all the school's work.

20. The quality of learning reflects the satisfactory and good teaching across the school and is considerably enhanced by pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Overall the quality of teaching is judged satisfactory.

21. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, with more good and very good or better teaching, and unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced to zero.

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

22. The quality of the school's curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. It is sufficiently broad and balanced with all subjects represented including personal, health and social provision on a regular basis. The main focus in literacy this year has been on developing writing. The National Literacy Strategy has been satisfactorily implemented and there are many activities targeted to pupils' particular needs in writing, although the school recognises this remains an area for further improvement. The National Numeracy Strategy

has been implemented well and there are improvements in the development of mental and oral arithmetic. In all subjects detailed and effective schemes of work are in use. Some subjects are trialling new updated schemes of work. For instance, the school is piloting a new whole school programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education. This is an improvement since the last inspection when many whole school plans were not in place. Provision for religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

23. Teachers' weekly planning has been improved since the last inspection and now contains specific learning objectives. However, in few subjects is there any mention of how more able pupils are being set specific challenges in terms of their writing skills. The national guidance for the Foundation Stage has been suitably implemented. There are policies for all subjects and aspects of school life. Some policies require review, as they are out of date. These include policies for geography, drugs, early years and special educational needs. There are draft policies for anti-racism and bullying as well as for equal opportunities. The school's planning ensures that there are many links between subjects; science and design and technology projects, for example, are especially well linked.

24. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective and is linked to their individual education plans. The requirements of the DfES Code of Practice are fully met. Arrangements for pupils' inclusion in all aspects of the curriculum are appropriate and pupils with special educational needs have access to all subjects. Teaching assistants give good quality support in literacy and numeracy lessons, but some sit just observing during the lesson introduction. Work is set at a level closely matched to pupils' prior attainment and to any specific targets. The class teachers and the special needs co-ordinator carefully set and monitor pupils' achievements.

25. Extracurricular provision is excellent. During the last year pupils have enjoyed sporting activities such as, netball, country dancing, tennis, rugby, hockey, athletics, rounders, mini sports and football. Other school clubs include pupils in drama, ICT, French, choir and percussion. There were many visitors who enriched the curriculum, from artists, vicars, a visitor from Zambia to gardeners. Pupils use the local environment very well. School visits linked to curriculum studies took pupils to a local cheese factory, a stable, (and two years ago) a Tutankhamun exhibition, Bristol Zoo and Wells Cathedral Music School. Whole school enrichment weeks have focused on books, mathematics, science and art, as well as weeks about the local community and the wider world. School productions involve pupils in Harvest Festivals, Christmas plays and Leavers' Services. Pupils especially enjoyed a recent 'circus workshop' that helped develop a range of physical skills.

26. Pupils' personal, social and health education is well catered for. A scheme of work for this area has been developed. The school places a high priority on pupils' welfare. There are social development sessions and through them pupils' spiritual awareness is thoughtfully enhanced. This was seen when pupils were asked to tell the group what they were thankful for in their lives. Citizenship is well developed: for example when pupils' Harvest apple cakes were shared with many Ditchheat villagers. Funds raised have been given to national charities. The school assists effectively with the teaching of sex education and pupils learn about the use and misuse of drugs.

27. Links with the local community are very good and they enrich the curriculum. A group of pupils sang and performed to the community at the vicar's recent retirement service. Visits were made to a neighbouring river and plants were studied. During community week there was a host of interesting visitors who worked with pupils. These included police, nurses, actors, a bugle player from the Royal British Legion, a Beaver leader and many other local people. Pupils have interviewed elderly people about life in the past. However, e-mailing has not been used to contact other communities or countries. Close ties have been made with the local playgroups, and the local secondary schools. Pupils are suitably prepared for the next phase of education.

28. The provision for pupils' personal development is good. The various strands of personal development – spiritual, moral and social – were drawn together very effectively by the sensitive way in which the school handled recent personal tragedies.

29. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Through assemblies, acts of collective worship and personal, social and health education lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect upon matters such as the nature of friendship. In religious education, music and science lessons, pupils are encouraged to see the wonder in what they are studying. For example, after a Year 1/2 science lesson in which pupils were studying living things found in the school garden, they were encouraged to think about the wonder of nature. One pupil, in the Year 5/6 class, wrote a prayer asking God to forgive terrorists for recent atrocities.

30. The school provides well for pupils' moral development. The promotion of positive behaviour permeates all aspects of school life. Acts of kindness and helpfulness are recorded in the school 'Golden Book' and shared with the whole school at a Friday celebration assembly. Pupils themselves can nominate others for 'Golden Book' entries, thus helping them to understand the principles involved. Even the youngest children in the reception class are encouraged to think about moral issues; for example, in a Year 1/2 assembly, pupils were considering the impact of 'people going away'. The subsequent discussion, sensitively managed by the teacher, developed into consideration of parents separating.

31. Pupils are very well developed socially; provision is very good. The school is a cohesive place and adult co-operation in day-to-day work provides a very good role model for children. Pupils are given every opportunity to take responsibility for organising aspects of daily school life. The school is divided into six teams, each led by a Year 6 pupil. Team points are awarded for effort and behaviour and the offer of a team point, for example for being the first table to be ready to go to lunch, promotes co-operative working very effectively. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to their community, for example by taking part in village activities. The school's activities are featured in the parish magazine, thus underlining the fact that the school is part of the wider community. This concept is further promoted by the school's community week, in which pupils find out what happens in their village, through meeting a wide range of key community figures, from the community beat officer to prominent local employers.

32. Pupils' cultural development is good and much improved since the last inspection. Aspects of their own, and other, cultures are addressed in the curriculum. In physical education, for example, pupils learn traditional British country dances. There is a lively after-school country dance club, which takes part in the annual country dance festival at Wells. Pupils attend classical music concerts in Bristol and local artists visit the school to work with pupils. The village church is used as an historical and cultural artefact as well as a place of spirituality. Pupils are well informed about other cultures. In 'World week', for example, they looked at life in Kenya, created a Canadian totem pole, and made and ate Chinese food. The school organised a circus skills day so as to raise money for Brazilian children, and there is a church link with a Zambian priest. In religious education lessons, pupils consider other faiths, such as Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Stories from these cultures are used in assemblies. For instance, the reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes listened to the story of Rama and Sita in their assembly. There is less evidence, however, that pupils are aware of the multicultural nature of their own country.

33. Overall, pupils' personal development has been improved significantly since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The quality of care offered to its pupils is one of the school's strengths, and one frequently mentioned by parents. The standards are good. The headteacher is the person designated for child protection purposes and has been appropriately trained. The school sticks closely to the local education authority's guidelines for child protection matters. Where necessary, the school's education social worker acts as a link between school and other agencies. Other staff, including support staff, are aware of the action to be taken in cases of concern. There are security procedures for Internet access and parent helpers are police cleared. Health and safety is overseen effectively by the governing body. There is a policy and necessary procedures are in place. The premises are inspected before each governors' meeting. There are regular safety inspections of electrical items, physical education and play apparatus, and fire equipment. Regular fire drills are held and the bell tested. There are satisfactory arrangements for dealing with minor accidents and the school is prepared to administer necessary prescribed medicines. The governing body is in the process of reviewing procedures for making risk assessments. In addition to discharging their statutory responsibilities, the headteacher, governors and staff devote considerable energy to supporting pupils and promoting their welfare, often in a low-key, unobtrusive fashion. Family tragedy and emotional turmoil are handled with kindness and understanding; as a number of parents have observed, the school is a very caring community.

35. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Registers are checked weekly, and the data transferred to the office computer, but the size of the school ensures that any irregularity in attendance is noted well before then. The great majority of parents are co-operative and inform the school when a child will not be attending. However, in the event of a pupil being unexpectedly absent, the school's administration officer will phone home. In the (unusual) event of unsatisfactory attendance, the school can call upon the services of an education social worker. The school does its best, through messages in newsletters, to deter families from taking holidays in term time. The school, however, recognises that as a number of its pupils come from agricultural families, the needs of the farm sometimes dictate when holidays can be taken.

36. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The high standards of behaviour seen during the inspection and commented upon by parents are achieved through expectation, example and ethos. Children are introduced to the school's basic routines in the reception class and from there onwards, the emphasis is upon encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour. The emphasis is upon team effort and, as was seen on more than one occasion, peer pressure is very effective in achieving co-operation. Particularly good effort, attitude or behaviour is recorded in the school's 'Golden Book' and recognised at a weekly celebration assembly. Lunchtime supervisors are involved in the reward system. The high standards of behaviour in the playground are, in part at least, a consequence of the stimulating environment and the provision of toys, games and activities. Bullying is rare but when it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly; because of the small size of the school, staff get to hear of such instances very quickly. Parents are involved at an early stage. Every class has a weekly timetabled personal social and health education (PSHE) lesson; these lessons are used, where necessary, to address matters such as relationships and bullying. The school is free of any sort of harassment or racial intolerance.

37. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good, though largely informal. The school provides many opportunities for personal development, through taking on responsibilities in school, fund raising for charity, taking part in community events, and going on a biennial residential visit. In a small school, staff know which pupils take up opportunities. Staff know pupils well; even when the class teacher is new the longer-serving support staff provide the necessary continuity. This knowledge, together with good assessment procedures and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure that no child's personal development is overlooked.

38. The procedures to assess pupils' attainment are good overall. In mathematics, English, science and all other subjects regular assessments are carried out. The assessment of

information and communication technology is established, but in its early stages. Assessment of art and design, physical education, history, geography, music, design and technology and religious education is suitably developed. Many of these assessment activities are newly introduced and have yet to raise standards. The school has started tracking individual pupils' progress, although teachers' use of this data is too recent to yet impact on standards. In English pupils could be achieving higher standards in writing. The performance of boys and girls has been analysed for literacy, numeracy and science in national tests for 11 year olds in order to plan for the future.

39. The school's use of assessment is good. Assessment is particularly well used to identify and set individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. However pupils' individual targets are not often referred to in lessons. Individual education plans have specific and measurable targets. Assessment is used well when teachers record their evaluations of learning in a lesson. Pupils have personal literacy targets in their literacy books, although these are sometimes too vague, but do help pupils become familiar with National Curriculum levels of attainment. When they are available local authority specialists are used to assess pupils. A lack of speech therapists has meant that pupils who would benefit from their expertise will not receive this early in their school career.

40. Overall, the school has made good improvements in care and assessment procedures since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school has built good links with parents. The school is an integral part of the community and is involved in most village activities. Parents, consequently, feel that it is their school even before their children start to attend. There are good induction arrangements and soon after the child has started school, parents are given a report of the child's assessment on entry to school (the baseline assessment). The school is a welcoming, friendly place and parents are invited to school events such as Christmas drama productions, Harvest Festival, sports events and open days. Some parents help in lessons, for example by listening to children read. Others provide additional supervision for school visits or run after-school clubs and activities. Parent governors, of which the school has its full quota, play a significant part in the effective management of the school. The parent-teacher association (the Friends of Ditcheat school) is well supported in the community and organises activities which are both effective fund-raisers and good social links between parents, school and community. The association's activities are of direct benefit to pupils in two ways – the funds raised are used to enhance learning resources or the school environment (for example the adventure play area), and children's involvement in some activities (the fashion show for instance) helps develop their sense of citizenship. Overall, parental involvement in the school is good.

42. The quality of information for parents is very good. All parents receive a weekly newsletter, written in accessible, parent-friendly language. These newsletters give advance notice of forthcoming events and report the children's activities, including the names of those children entered in the school's celebratory 'Golden Book'. Additionally, newsletters keep parents informed about matters affecting school management, for example the training courses attended by staff, and information about staff absences. These newsletters give parents a very clear window into the school's day-to-day life. Each class sends parents a termly letter, describing the work pupils will be doing. The reception class goes a step further and provides fortnightly newsletters, describing in detail the work the children will do and suggesting ways in which parents can help. These letters form an excellent link between the reception class and its parents. Parents have formal consultation meetings with their children's teachers in the summer and autumn terms and parents may, if they wish, meet staff to discuss their child's annual report. Those reports are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. Progress in each subject of the National Curriculum is described and, in most cases, targets are included. The school is presently revising the report format, with a view to

making the targets more prominent, and providing for the child's view of the year. All parents spoken to both before and during the inspection felt that the school was open and accessible; staff were happy to discuss matters of concern to parents. Teachers, including the acting headteacher, were known to be at the school gate at the end of the day. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, 22 per cent of respondents were unable to agree that they were kept well informed about their children's progress. The inspection team is at a loss to understand that response; it is difficult to see what more this most open and accessible school could do.

43. The school has effective links with parents of special educational needs pupils. Parents are given a copy of pupils' individual targets and most return a signed form to say they have seen them. Parents know that they can always come in and see staff if they have concerns. The school takes a considerable amount of trouble to talk to parents after school informally at the gate, so that suggestions can be made to help pupils achieve more successfully.

44. Parental views of the school, overall, are very supportive. Parents particularly appreciate the supportive atmosphere, the caring ethos and the impact of the school's values on their children. Parents like the acting headteacher's outgoing, inclusive approach; parents feel a part of the school community. The pre-inspection questionnaire revealed strong support for the school. Almost 69 per cent of parents replied and the majority of those responses were couched in strongly supportive terms. However, in addition to the 22 per cent who were unhappy with the information provided, 22 per cent were not satisfied with the amount of homework given. The inspection conclusions do not support that concern – the use of homework across the school is satisfactory.

45. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection, successfully building on the good provision described then.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The acting headteacher has led the school very well during this transitional year, between the departure of the last headteacher in the summer of 2001 and the appointment of a new headteacher to take effect from September 2002.

47. The acting headteacher has worked in close co-operation with the governing body and together they have developed a mutual understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear vision of how to improve an already effective school. This very effective leadership is based on a determination to improve pupils' standards of attainment whilst, at the same time, maintaining the high level of care. The very good school improvement plan represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection and contains appropriate priorities to raise pupils' attainment. The work of the school largely reflects its aims and objectives. In particular, the school is very good at promoting pupils' self esteem and developing a sense of responsibility amongst older pupils.

48. The governing body is effective and brings a wide range of skills and experience to benefit the management of the school. It has good procedures for gathering information about the life of the school and the impact of its decisions. Members of the governing body regularly visit the school and talk to staff, parents and pupils as well as receiving formal and informal reports from the headteacher. The outcome is that they have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They play a strategic role in shaping the future of the school.

49. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the future. She has developed new individual education plans, which have space for parents to record their own comments. The new code of practice has been well implemented. The co-ordinator has observed how class teachers are meeting the needs

of these pupils in lessons. One teaching assistant has been well trained to support pupils with special educational needs. The progress made by these pupils has been carefully monitored and this demonstrates that pupils achieve well.

50. Financial planning is good and the school makes good use of the resources available to benefit its pupils. The budget is closely linked to the priorities outlined in the school's detailed improvement plan. The acting headteacher analyses statistical data to monitor pupils' attainment against national and similar school averages and these findings inform the school's priorities. Specific grants, such as those for the support of pupils with special educational needs, are well used for their designated purposes. Recent funding decisions have resulted in improvements in the school grounds, which are used effectively to support pupils' learning in subjects across the curriculum. Provision for ICT has been another focus over the last year and has resulted in improvements in this subject, although the school recognises that much more needs to be done to make full use of the resources that are now available. Overall, the school makes good use of the resources available to it and provides good value for money. The school presently has a high carry forward figure, although this has been prudently decided upon by the governing body as part of their determination to maintain the present level of the teaching staff during a period of falling rolls.

51. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory. The acting headteacher has monitored teaching and offered useful guidance and support to colleagues. The role of subject co-ordinators is now well developed. Satisfactory strategies are in place for appraisal and performance management and this has already had a positive impact on teachers' induction and training needs.

52. The school's use of new technology is satisfactory. Appropriate software is used to monitor the budget and keep track of pupils' progress in various tests and assessments. E-mail is available, although not in regular use for pupils. The school has recently developed its own website and this is expected to go online immediately after the inspection.

53. The match of staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. All teachers are well qualified to meet the needs of the Foundation Stage, the National Curriculum and the needs of the locally agreed syllabus of religious education. Staff development is good and the school has a healthy, reflective attitude with a clear determination to improve. The only weakness in terms of teachers' subject knowledge is the area concerning the use of ICT to support learning in subjects across the curriculum.

54. Satisfactory attention is paid to the principles of best value in the way national test results are compared to other schools. Considerable care is taken to consult parents and care is taken to ensure that purchases are made competitively.

55. Accommodation is satisfactory. Classrooms are of an adequate size having regard to the numbers and ages of pupils. The hall is of sufficient size for whole school assemblies and the teaching of physical education. There is, however, no separate library and the headteacher has to share an office with the administration officer. Outside, there is a tarmac play area, of sufficient size for the number of pupils and a grassed adventure play area, with play equipment provided by the Friends' association – this is in frequent use and regarded by pupils as a distinct bonus. There is a wildlife garden and a peaceful orchard area with apple trees and a mass of primroses. The front garden, with fishpond, is beautifully tended. The school grounds provide an environment which is both restful and stimulating and is frequently used as a stimulating learning resource. The school has the use of a field a short walk away. The premises are maintained to a high standard and enhanced by a good range of high quality displays of pupils' work throughout the school.

56. Learning resources are satisfactory. They are good in history, geography, physical education and English, and satisfactory in all other subjects. In information and

communication technology, the hardware resources in the recently created ICT suite are good but there are deficiencies in software.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to further improve this already effective school, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- **Improve** standards in writing by:
 - Developing specific challenges for more able pupils;
 - Promoting pupils' awareness of National Curriculum levels;
 - Enhancing teachers' expertise;
 - Ensuring teachers' marking and oral feedback gives pupils specific guidance on how to improve;
 - Improving the range of opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Paragraphs: 4, 6, 16, 17, 23, 38, 67, 82, 87, 89, 90, 109.

- **Develop** the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum by:
 - Improving the range of software available to teachers;
 - Enhancing teachers' expertise in using such software;
 - Increasing opportunities for pupils to undertake individual research activities;
 - Developing the use of the Internet and e-mail;
 - Making better use of the ICT suite.

Paragraphs: 6, 16, 50, 52, 56, 73, 85, 90, 100, 108, 114, 120, 125, 134, 135, 136, 142.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

29

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	5	10	13	0	0	0
Percentage	3	17	35	45	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

83

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

0

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

7

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

2

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.6

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 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Total
	2001	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	17	16	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (91)	84 (91)	95 (91)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	17	18	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (82)	95 (91)	89 (91)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Because there were less than 10 girls in both the Year 2 and Year 6 groups in 2001, separate data for boys and girls is not included.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Total
	2001	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	18	14	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (90)	64 (90)	95 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	13	17	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	59 (80)	77 (100)	95 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	81
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7
Average class size	20.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	73.15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
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	£
Total income	241,984
Total expenditure	235,751
Expenditure per pupil	2,456
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,426
Balance carried forward to next year	22,660

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	86
Number of questionnaires returned	59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	29	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	41	5	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	46	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	41	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	66	28	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	31	15	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	25	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	46	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	63	24	14	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	63	34	0	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	47	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	36	10	0	2

Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

58. Children in the Foundation Stage are taught in the reception class. Currently there are 13 children in the class. All children started school full-time in the first half-term of the year, between the start of September and the end of October. Almost all the children have had some pre-school experience, attending one of the eight playgroups serving the area. The school has good links with these playgroups and almost all children become familiar with the school before their first day. Children are assessed shortly after they start school and the results of these assessments show attainment on entry to be average overall, although there are considerable variations between different year groups. The previous inspection report indicated that attainment on entry was average and this remains the case.

59. Provision for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, with strengths in personal, social and emotional development and in some aspects of communication, language and literacy. Teaching is good in these two areas and satisfactory in all other areas of learning. A strength of the provision is the good use of visits and visitors which bring the curriculum to life and make learning fun. Children make a sound start to their education and make at least satisfactory progress in all the prescribed areas of learning.

60. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage children are likely to attain the Early Learning Goals in all the areas of learning, apart from personal, social and emotional development, where most children are likely to exceed the goals. Children make a good start to their early reading and speaking and listening skills and are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in these areas. Although only children has been identified as having special educational needs, staff know the children well and make satisfactory provision for children of differing abilities.

61. A notable feature of the provision is an excellent newsletter, produced by the teacher and sent to all parents every fortnight. It is full of useful information about what children will be learning and tips for parents. It is superbly presented and makes a significant contribution to the overall quality of learning.

62. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

63. Children's personal, social and emotional development is given a high priority, and to good effect. Teaching and learning are good. A welcoming, calm and relaxed atmosphere is created with consistent and very well organised routines. This provides children with security and helps them to build confidence. Children respond very positively to the care of the staff and the very good role models they provide. This is instrumental in helping children develop good attitudes to school and in forming very good relationships with adults and with each other. The high quality of relationships plays a significant part in children's good achievements. Throughout the day, children play happily, alone or alongside each other. In the role play corner, presently in the form of a pet shop, they share, take turns and co-operate with each other. In 'circle time' sessions they listen to one another in a mature and sensible manner. When working in groups, children help each other and concentrate well, always trying hard to achieve successful results. When playing together, children show consideration and care for each other.

64. Children have a good range of opportunities that give them a chance to show a sense of responsibility and they undertake routine jobs with confidence and enthusiasm. The

teacher encourages children to develop independence by providing opportunities for choice and by, for example, involving them in tidying the classroom at the end of sessions.

Communication, language and literacy

65. Children's achievements in this area of learning are good overall, with particular strengths in the way speaking and listening skills and early reading skills are developed. This is because the teacher, through the effective use of story telling and 'circle time' sessions, uses every opportunity to talk to children, successfully promoting speaking and listening skills, as well as developing a positive interest in books.

66. Children respond with enthusiasm and are eager to read books and participate in rhymes and songs. Children have developed a wide range of vocabulary associated with books and more able children can already describe the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and use a contents page. A strength of teaching is the emphasis given to children's development of the sounds of letters and many know a good range of initial sounds that help them identify simple words. Almost all children understand that print conveys meaning. They handle books carefully. The more able children use expression in their reading and read with confidence. The good level of achievement in reading owes much to detailed records of each child's progress kept by the teacher, and the superb support that parents give in terms of taking books home and encouraging their children with early reading skills.

67. The role play area is used well to develop speaking skills and children try hard to describe the animals in the pet shop, using phrases such as "floppy tails and little beady eyes". Early writing skills are effectively supported by the teacher through the modelling of writing on the board, although writing skills are not developed as well, especially for the more able children, as in other areas of communication, language and literacy.

Mathematical development

68. This area of learning is well provided for in the choice of activities and in the daily numeracy session, and levels of achievement are satisfactory.

69. Children enjoy a range of floor games that encourage them to order numbers from one to ten. They use a floor robot skilfully to move forwards and backwards along a number line and more able children can work out how many spaces it needs to travel to, for example, move back from the number ten to the number three. More able children use the term zero accurately. Children learn to sort and order shapes and colours and make repeated patterns with beads and counters.

70. Teaching is satisfactory. A strength of teaching is the good range of activities available for children during numeracy sessions. A weakness is that, in group tasks, there is a rather narrow range in the challenge offered to children and more able children are not always fully stretched. In particular, recording skills are not developed at the same rate as children's mathematical knowledge. In some lessons the teacher works without any adult support and this leads to a lack of adult interventions in activities such as water and sand play, with the result that vocabulary skills are not well developed, especially for the more able.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. When children start school, they have a basic understanding of their world. Satisfactory teaching and the wide range of planned activities enable children to broaden their knowledge and understanding so that the majority are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals. Particularly good use is made of the school grounds and local village, and children much

enjoy finding out about the life cycle of frogs and the various types of animals and plants they see around the school.

72. Children learn about the world around them from the good range of visitors to their class. Recent visitors that they have enjoyed include representatives of the police and RSPCA. The role play area is used well to develop children's knowledge of pets and how they are cared for.

73. Children have a satisfactory range of opportunities to use computers. They learn to use the keyboard, shift key and space bar, and many children know how to operate and control the floor robot. However, in some sessions during the inspection opportunities to use the computer were missed.

Physical development

74. Teaching is satisfactory. Children have a reasonable range of opportunities to develop their physical skills and the majority are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the time they leave the reception class.

75. Levels of achievement are constrained by the lack of a dedicated play space for children in the reception class. Good use is made of the school hall, playground and orchard area immediately outside the classroom. However, the school recognises the need for a specific play area for children in the Foundation Stage and plans to develop such an area feature in the school's present improvement plan.

76. When using the playground, children use ball skills to play simple team games and develop skills such as running, hopping and jumping. Children make good use of construction kits to develop fine motor skills satisfactorily, and use scissors, pencils and crayons with reasonable skill.

77. As in other areas of learning, effective use is made of visitors to the school and children recently enjoyed a visit from a circus group who helped develop skills in balancing, throwing and catching, and early juggling skills.

Creative development

78. Teaching is satisfactory. There is a good emphasis on providing a wide range of suitable activities so that most children are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of the school year. Children play imaginatively in the role play area, which is changed regularly in order to provide a range of different challenges. During the inspection, children used this area well to develop their imaginative play as they looked after various different 'pets'.

79. Children handle crayons, pencils and paints well. They create bold paintings of rainbows and use computers effectively to create pictures using a commercial program. They use a good range of three-dimensional materials such as clay and playdough, and have made an impressive moonscape using papier maché.

80. Children benefit from a good range of musical instruments and much enjoyed a song and dance session with the local 'Ditcheat Players'. They clap and use simple percussion instruments to accompany their singing.

ENGLISH

81. Standards in English are average. Standards in literacy vary from year to year due to the small number of pupils in each year group. In 2001, Year 6 gained national tests results that were average when compared to all schools. Inspection findings confirm that Year 6 pupils achieve satisfactorily. The majority of pupils gain standards which are in line with national averages. However, when compared to similar schools the test results are well below average. This is as a result of a third of last year's Year 6 pupils having special educational needs. The school recognises that recent results in tests for Year 6 pupils have been constrained by the fact that pupils' achievements in writing have lagged behind their performance in reading.

82. The school's test results for last year show that writing and reading standards for the Year 2 class were average. However, they were below average when their tests were compared to similar schools. The present Year 2 has only five pupils but they are mostly working at average levels in reading and writing. The majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily and standards in reading are average. In writing, the range of vocabulary used is too limited and there is a lack of thoughtful adjectives.

83. There are slight differences in the attainment of boys and girls in Years 2 and 6, but there is no significant difference between them over the last few years. Arrangements for the inclusion of all pupils are suitably achieved in all literacy lessons, but more able pupils are not fully extended in writing. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, and work with pupils of similar ability. Older gifted pupils have benefited from being given opportunities to attend extra writers' workshops and sessions at the local secondary school. Test results over the past four years demonstrate that standards have been appropriately maintained and they have broadly improved at the national rate.

84. When pupils enter the school they have average speaking and listening skills. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their vocabulary. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, increasing their skills steadily. In Years 2 and 6 pupils achieve average levels of oral skills. Year 2 pupils explain to the class what they are thankful for and discuss matters of mutual concern in circle time discussion sessions. Pupils in Year 6 develop their understanding of vocabulary when they stand at the front of the class and act out adverbs such as frighteningly and sympathetically.

85. The literacy hour has been suitably used to develop reading skills and word recognition. Throughout the school pupils achieve satisfactorily in learning to read. Average pupils have a satisfactory grasp of reading and they use their skills to sound out unknown words. Year 2 pupils confidently answered questions about which words could be used to label a drawing of people shopping. Reading skills of more able pupils in Year 2 enable them to scan text for key words quickly. The reading skills of those with special educational needs are below average, but pupils are making good achievements with their recall of basic high frequency words. Standards of reading in Year 6 are above average. The Year 6 pupils read complicated and challenging books such as 'Lord of the Rings' by JRR Tolkien. They know how to use a content and index page and know how to retrieve books efficiently from the library. Comprehension skills are satisfactory, although pupils' deduction and inference skills are not so well developed. Pupils' independent research skills are appropriate, but ICT is not often used to improve these skills.

86. Standards in writing are average in Year 2. The school has recently planned more writing lessons for pupils to practise and develop their skills. The majority of pupils in Year 2 can write simple stories or factual accounts. They write interesting stories of the Winter Robin. Average pupils can write about weekend activities using capital letters and full stops mostly accurately. More able pupils in Year 2 are beginning to add adjectives and connectives to their writing to make it more exciting. Pupils with special educational needs are able to form words, so that they are readable, and write a few words to label a drawing for a leaflet about seed dispersal.

87. Writing standards in Year 6 are average, but clearly lag behind standards in reading. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in writing and the majority can write at nationally expected levels. This was seen when pupils wrote about whether school uniform should be worn or not. A number of more able pupils in the Years 3 to 6 classes are not achieving high enough standards. This is because teachers' planning rarely sets specific challenges for these pupils. The best writing incorporates adventurous vocabulary, utilises grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately. A more able Year 6 pupil, for example, wrote the following opening to his story,

"It was Halloween. Mist lay like a thick quilt over the moors and the moon shone feebly, casting an eerie grayish light over the dew soaked heather."

88. Handwriting standards are satisfactory. Younger pupils regularly practise forming their letters correctly. Older pupils in Year 6 are mostly using joined up writing in their work effectively when they copy poems about numbers. The school plans to invest in a new handwriting scheme to further improve pupils' use of neat joined up handwriting in all subjects. Spelling is average and the school regularly asks pupils to learn groups of similarly spelt words.

89. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in lessons and one good lesson was seen. Teachers throughout the school have a good understanding of how to promote reading skills which means that pupils learn to read accurately. However teachers are less secure about how to develop writing. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the teaching of literacy. For instance weekly planning now sets clear learning objectives ensuring that the teachers are well focused on what pupils should be learning. However, specific challenges for the more able are not consistently present. The best teaching incorporates many of the following characteristics:

- Good behaviour management focuses on positive reinforcement and ensures that pupils concentrate on tasks carefully;
- Effective use of teaching assistants;
- Learning objectives are displayed and shared with the class at the beginning as well as the end of lessons;
- Effective use of paired discussion;
- Good use of stimulating resources.

90. Teachers are carefully marking work to assess the strengths of pupils' work. However, they do not usually record development areas enabling pupils to take the next steps in their learning. Teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum levels in writing is not used well in the marking of pupils' work with the result that pupils cannot easily identify what they need to do to improve further. Teachers' spoken comments do not tell pupils specifically what they are doing well, so pupils are not sure which aspects of their work they should utilise in future. There are few opportunities for pupils to self-evaluate their work in lessons. Information and communication technology is not well used to teach aspects of literacy.

91. Attitudes to English are very good throughout the school. Pupils enjoy lessons, concentrate hard and invariably do their best. Behaviour in lessons is consistently very good. These positive attitudes make a significant contribution to the quality of learning throughout the school.

92. The co-ordinator sets a good example by the high quality of her teaching of literacy. The English action plan guides the school effectively. Significant improvements have been made in planning since the last inspection. Assessment is used effectively when teachers record their evaluations of pupils' learning in lessons. A recent awareness of weaknesses in pupils' writing meant that a detailed analysis was carried out. This has informed the school that younger pupils need to develop their use of adventurous words and older pupils need to work on producing complex sentences. Resources are good, although the school recognises the

need to renew many library books. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in English since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

93. Results of 2001 National Curriculum tests and assessments for pupils in Year 6 show that standards were below the national average and well below when compared to other similar schools. Comparisons with national averages have to be treated with some caution because of the small number of pupils in each year group. The 2001 Year 6 group had almost one-third of pupils identified with special educational needs, compared to less than one-tenth in other year groups.

94. In the 2001 tests for pupils in Year 2, standards were average, both in terms of national and similar schools comparisons. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 was above average, but fewer than average reached the higher Level 3. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

95. Standards observed during the inspection in Year 6 were considerably higher than last year. This is due to a large reduction in the number of pupils with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils working at the expected level is above average, whilst the proportion working at the higher level is average. A strength of work in Year 6 is the good standard in all aspects of number work and the good range of work covering all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. In the present Year 2 there are only five pupils, so comparisons with national percentages are rather meaningless, although it is clear that all these pupils are achieving well in terms of their prior attainment.

96. In all classes, pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They have detailed individual education plans, often with suitable targets to support their numeracy work, and are well supported by learning support assistants. They are fully included in all activities.

97. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced throughout the school and has made a significant contribution to the improvement in pupils' ability to calculate mentally.

98. By the age of seven, most pupils can double and half numbers and have learnt the two, five and ten times tables. Pupils use a number line with care and skill and can quickly identify pairs of numbers that make 20. They are able to sort and classify various two- and three-dimensional shapes. Appropriate vocabulary is used in all mathematics lessons and pupils take great pride in using the language for themselves, in most cases correctly. Pupils have a clear idea of capacity and accurately describe it as, 'how much room there is inside'.

99. By the age of 11, pupils' confidence has grown and pupils can use a variety of mental and written methods for calculating numbers beyond 1000 and they recognise and use digits to three decimal places. In working out long division sums such as 507 divided by 34, pupils use a range of appropriate strategies showing a good understanding of numbers and place value. More able pupils are challenged well by tasks such as 200.2 divided by 7 and they show a good understanding of decimals when correctly working out the answer. Pupils numeracy skills are used soundly in other subjects, including science, measuring in design and technology, timelines in history and graph work in various subjects.

100. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. During the inspection, nearly half the lessons were satisfactory and the rest were good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. A feature of teaching is the consistent manner in which lessons are delivered in different parts of the school. All lessons are well organised and presented in a lively and interesting manner. The mental warm-up sessions are challenging and much enjoyed by pupils, although they tend to be one-paced. There are few

examples of pupils being required to offer instant answers. Planning is good and teachers generally ensure that pupils of all abilities work at appropriate tasks. Time is used reasonably well, although, in some lessons, the amount of time allocated to group work was insufficient to allow pupils to complete all the work expected of them. The quality of teachers' marking is satisfactory; praise and encouragement are used effectively but pupils are rarely given a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses. A weakness of teaching is the limited use that is made of ICT to support pupils' learning in mathematics throughout the school.

101. The good quality of learning owes much to the very positive attitudes of pupils in all classes. Relationships are excellent and pupils have a relaxed and confident approach to their work. Homework is used regularly to support pupils' learning.

102. The mathematics curriculum has been improved since the last inspection and is now based securely on the National Numeracy Strategy, resulting in it being broad and balanced with a good emphasis on mental mathematics, problem solving and investigations. Arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are much improved and underpin the clear improvements in this subject. Teachers keep detailed information on each pupil's progress and this data is revisited regularly to check that the work presented to pupils is closely related to what they have recently completed. However, this information is not shared sufficiently with pupils who do not always have a clear enough idea of what they need to do to improve further.

103. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and effective co-ordinator. Teachers' planning is monitored and the school's test results are analysed carefully to focus on how to improve standards. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

104. Standards are in line with the national average for both seven and 11 year olds. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests and assessments the proportion reaching the expected Level 4 was above the national average for 11 year olds, although the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was below average. Compared to their prior attainments, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. The school has maintained the satisfactory standards described in the last inspection report.

105. By the age of seven, pupils have developed sound scientific skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, children in the Year 1/2 class are able to classify animals that can be found on the ground, in trees and in the air. They study parts of the body and can recall accurately the names of different bones, joints and muscles. Observation skills are developing well and pupils can observe and compare different creatures that they find in the school grounds, making valid suggestions about the kind of habitats they might require. Pupils' levels of achievement are enhanced by the good use of the school grounds and local environment to bring the subject to life and make learning interesting.

106. By the age of 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding of living things is satisfactory. Pupils have a sound understanding of electrical circuits and can identify magnetic and non-magnetic materials. They can identify reasons why a bulb fails to light in a circuit. Pupils have a good knowledge of plants and animals and their different living conditions. Pupils demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of investigation, from prediction to conclusions, recording their findings in tables and bar charts. Most pupils can describe the factors that make up a fair test.

107. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory throughout the school. A strength of teaching is the practical approach to the subject and the imaginative use of the school grounds and local environment. This was exemplified in a Year 1/2 lesson in which pupils searched the school grounds for mini-beasts and became excited as they discovered wood

lice, ants, spiders, bees, butterflies and various plants. Lessons contain clear explanations and the learning objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning, and referred to appropriately during the lesson. Pupils are managed very well and all lessons have a calm, purposeful atmosphere. Teachers organise lessons well and focus careful attention on the use of correct scientific vocabulary.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is enhanced by the use of a detailed scheme of work that guides teachers in their planning of the subject and ensures that the work presented to pupils carefully builds on what they have previously learnt. Despite a number of positive features, teaching is judged to be satisfactory rather than good because of the weak use of ICT to support learning. In a Year 5/6 lesson on classifying objects, a group did work with an appropriate piece of software that did make a constructive contribution to the quality of learning in that lesson, but a thorough scrutiny of pupils' work over the course of the school year indicates that ICT is rarely used to support learning in this way.

109. The pace of work is satisfactory, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in science lessons. The presentation of pupils' recorded work is variable; some is neat and extremely well presented, whilst some is rather untidy and poorly presented.

110. Science is well led. The co-ordinator is extremely well informed, enthusiastic and determined to improve standards further. The scheme of work has been substantially improved since the last inspection, as have resources, which are now good and extremely well organised. A programme of professional development has been organised for staff and this has improved teachers' subject knowledge. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further.

ART AND DESIGN

111. Judgements in art and design are made on the basis of the small number of lessons which could be seen during the inspection week, on samples of pupils' work and teachers' planning, as well as a scrutiny of pupils' work on display around the school. Standards at the ages of seven and 11 are in line with national expectations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily throughout the school. The situation described in the last report has been maintained.

112. By the age of seven, pupils can mix colours and draw and paint with reasonable levels of skill. Throughout the school there is an emphasis on developing good drawing skills and pupils achieve well in this aspect of art and design. Pupils in the Year 1/2 class have a good range of experiences working in media such as chalk and charcoal, as well as various crayons and inks. They develop their skills of observation and draw lifelike representations of bicycles and tricycles.

113. In Years 3 to 6, pupils undertake a broad range of appropriate activities, many of which are effectively linked to other subjects. For example, their geographical study of Kenya led to some good quality watercolour paintings of Kenyan landscapes and a whole school focus on 'World week led to a study of famous European artists including Van Gogh, Monet and Picasso. Similarly, an historical study of the Egyptians, led to some thoughtful designs of Egyptian pots and artefacts. Pupils in Year 5/6 have studied how to use tone in landscape pictures and were able to discuss the work of Turner and Monet in this respect. Pupils throughout the school have their own sketchbooks, but the use of these is generally weak; most pupils have completed few efforts and the quality of work in sketchbooks is below that normally seen. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 illustrate the fact that pupils enjoy art lessons and recall them with enthusiasm and affection, although pupils' recall of what they had learnt about famous artists was rather superficial. Pupils experience different aspects of

art from around the world and their studies in this subject make a positive contribution to their cultural development.

114. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers make good use of a detailed scheme of work to ensure that skills are developed carefully as pupils move through the school. Teachers manage lessons well and make good use of the wide range of resources. A strength of work across the school is the good range of media used by pupils. Teachers focus well on the three-dimensional aspects of the subject, using clay, collage, weaving and model making effectively to give pupils a wide range of experiences across the art and design curriculum. A weakness in teaching is the lack of use of ICT to support pupils' learning in art and design. The school does have appropriate software and this is used but only on an occasional basis. The school has not yet done a great deal in terms of assessing pupils' art and design work, although this does feature as a priority in the school improvement plan.

115. Subject leadership is good. The subject co-ordinator has a great enthusiasm for the subject and guides teachers effectively in terms of the planning of the subject. Resources are kept up to date and are very well organised and easily accessible. Art displays throughout the school are of a high standard and reflect the high priority given to this subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. The school presented a reasonable quantity of evidence of pupils' work in design and technology. Standards are in line with national expectations by the time pupils leave the school. The majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily. This maintains the situation found at the last inspection for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Arrangements for the inclusion of all pupils, including those with special educational needs in the curriculum, is suitably achieved due to the use of interesting and challenging projects. Those pupils with special educational needs have good provision and they achieve well. Boys and girls achieve similar standards.

117. Teaching promotes pupils' planning skills satisfactorily. This was evident from Year 6 musical instrument designs. Pupils drew diagrams of a slipper, which they planned to make. However, pupils' diagrams only contain a few labels. For instance, they do not use labels to explain how the pieces of the product will be joined. Pupils drew four different uses for alarm systems and investigated how sound is made in instruments. Planning in Years 5 and 6 is held in pupils' useful 'Design and Technology Book', which records work completed during the course of the year. A 'Design and Technology Book', which is used for several years, enables teachers and the co-ordinator to monitor pupils' standards of planning and evaluation effectively.

118. Overall, pupils' making skills are in line with national expectations in Years 2 and 6. The glove puppets made by Year 2 demonstrated accurate measuring, cutting and joining skills. Pupils know how to use a template to cut out an accurate piece of fabric. Sewing skills were well developed when pupils practised sewing a variety of fabrics together. The musical instruments designed and made by Year 6 pupils demonstrated thoughtful use of scientific knowledge. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 used one type of mechanism to make pop-up books. Mouldable materials were used effectively when pupils made clay masks and pots. Foods were combined suitably when pupils made bread, mince pies and Easter cakes. Year 6 pupils have used fabric paint to add designs to T-shirts.

119. The evaluation of pupils' products is undertaken by older pupils. There is evidence of Years 5 and 6 pupils writing detailed evaluations of their musical instruments. However, younger pupils do not consistently identify the strengths and development areas in their work.

120. No teaching of design and technology was observed during the inspection. Discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator, as well as an analysis of planning indicates that the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Effective use of the national guidance for this subject means there is

steady skills' development, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Basic skills have been taught suitably when pupils learn how to plan and evaluate their work. Effective learning methods are used when a variety of resources are utilised to make products. Pupils enjoy the practical activities in this subject. They talk about the fun they had testing out their musical instruments. However, ICT is underused to support pupils' work in this subject.

121. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a whole school programme of work. The creation of a new two-year plan of topics linking all aspects of the subject means pupils will have an opportunity to develop skills appropriately throughout the school. Monitoring of teachers' planning by the acting headteacher has assisted the school to develop its use of specific learning objectives. The co-ordinator has worked appropriately to maintain the level of provision for this subject. However, neither pupils' nor teachers' planning have been monitored by the co-ordinator and this does not guarantee quality. There have been considerable improvements in the use of assessment. Teachers regularly evaluate pupils' learning in lessons and assess pupils' achievements on record sheets. The cross curricular links with other subjects are well established.

GEOGRAPHY

122. Standards of pupils' work in geography at the ages of seven and 11 are in line with those expected nationally. The satisfactory standards seen in the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily throughout the school.

123. By the age of seven, pupils have learnt about their local environment by studying the village of Ditchat and comparing and contrasting it with other places, such as a seaside town like Weston-super-Mare. They use their knowledge to draw simple maps and can use a key to locate places such as the church, school and post office. Pupils effectively compare the main features of towns, countryside and seaside.

124. By the age of 11, pupils undertake considerable research work into aspects such as rivers and water usage. Good use is made of visits to bring the subject alive and Year 6 pupils (despite the awful weather on the day!) thoroughly enjoyed a visit to the source of the local River Axe. They tracked the river to its estuary and developed a wide range of geographical terms, such as source and meander, and studied the impact of water underground during a visit to Wookey Hole. As pupils move through the school they study different localities in greater depth. For example, they use photographs and books to contrast life in Ditchat with a farming village in Kenya. Their studies of Kenya were further enlivened by a visitor who had lived in that country.

125. Although no lessons were observed during the inspection, it is clear from a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, that teaching over time is satisfactory. Good use is made of a detailed scheme of work to guide teachers' planning and ensure the gradual build up of pupils' skills. A strength of teaching is the effective use of artefacts and visits to bring the subject to life. A weakness is the limited range of opportunities that pupils have to use ICT to further their studies.

126. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is new to the role, but has already undertaken a thorough audit of resources and recognises the need to improve the use of ICT.

HISTORY

127. Standards in history have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now above national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. These improvements reflect the outstanding leadership of the subject co-ordinator who has given history a very high profile in

the life of the school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well throughout the school.

128. By the age of seven, pupils effectively develop their knowledge and understanding of the lives of people in the past. From the beginning pupils are encouraged to develop good enquiry skills by seeking out primary sources, such as interviewing people in the community about life in the past. Pupils understand that life was different in the past and can compare and contrast the different toys used by children then and now. Pupils study the lives of famous people from different periods of history, such as Grace Darling and Boudicca.

129. By the age of 11, pupils have a good knowledge of the key dates, periods and events in British history. Teachers make effective use of a detailed scheme of work that ensures that, as they move from Year 3 to Year 6, pupils study a wide range of historical topics in considerable depth. In all the topics studied there is a good emphasis on interpreting evidence and trying to sort out fact from fiction. A wide range of visits, both in the local community and beyond, helps bring the subject to life. Pupils benefit from visits to places such as the Bristol Museum and the Haynes Motor Museum. Pupils develop a thorough knowledge of the range of sources used in history, and Year 6 pupils talk confidently about how they have used the Internet, CD-ROMs, photographs, artefacts and books to find out information. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is greatly enhanced by the effective links with drama, when pupils use role play in order to empathise with people in the past. Year 6 pupils especially recall how they used 'the hot seat' when studying the impact of evacuation for children in the Second World War; this involved one pupil pretending to be an evacuee and being interviewed by fellow pupils. The depth of knowledge and understanding shown on this aspect of history by pupils in Year 6 was well above that normally seen.

130. Teaching is at least good throughout the school and outstanding in the Year 5/6 class. The one history lesson seen in Year 5/6 was excellent. In order to bring to life the reality of life in the Victorian classroom the teacher took the lesson, without any explanatory preamble, in the persona of an actual teacher at Ditcheat School in the 1870s. Using sources from the log book of the school for that period, she dramatically explained many of the differences and similarities between life then and now. Using copies from the log book, pupils were able to build up a detailed and accurate picture of the daily lives of children during that period. This was a rare and exceptional lesson, and pupils appreciated it by working with terrific enthusiasm and commitment.

131. Subject leadership is outstanding. The co-ordinator's enthusiasm for the subject has had a clear impact on work throughout the school. Resources are good and very well organised and pupils benefit from a good range of interesting and stimulating artefacts. Displays in classrooms indicate that history is given a high priority throughout the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

132. Standards in information and communication technology for Years 2 and 6 are in line with national expectations. This is an improvement from the position at the last inspection when 'standards were below nationally expected levels in both key stages'. Due to the new ICT suite all pupils are achieving appropriately. Arrangements for the inclusion of all pupils including those with special educational needs, have been suitably achieved due to the use of classroom assistants and the ICT suite. The achievements of boys and girls are appropriate for their different abilities and there are no significant patterns to their attainment.

133. In Year 2 standards are average. The majority of pupils can word process and save their writing. They know how to use the delete and shift key. Most pupils can draw a picture and use the spray function. Pupils use circles, triangles and stars to make a witch map. Year 2 pupils have created a graph to show their favourite colours. They have reordered lines of a poem using the mouse so that they make sense. Pupils enjoy programming a simple robot to

move backwards and forwards. When they explored an adventure programme they used the arrow keys to move themselves around a maze. However, few pupils know how to retrieve their own work, nor do they print out their work often enough.

134. The standards of pupils in Year 6 are average. Year 6 pupils add images to texts and word process. One more able pupil word-processed a play script that was then used to create a show for the retiring vicar. Year 4 changed font sizes and printed out interesting words. Years 3 and 4 pupils stored and sorted information about sea creatures using data handling programmes. Year 5 pupils drew faces using effects from the tool bar. Years 5 and 6 knew how to search a database and used more than one criterion. Older pupils drew up a flow chart to programme a set of traffic lights. This is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils only knew how to word process. More able Year 6 pupils knew how to use e-mail, but the majority had not been taught how to do this. The Internet has been used in ICT lessons to carry out research, but this valuable resource is underused in lessons across the curriculum. Pupils rarely use the computers apart from their weekly lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by staff and achieve well.

135. Evidence taken from two lessons, an analysis of pupils' work and discussion with pupils in Years 2 and 6, as well as with the subject co-ordinator, indicate that the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have established effective teaching methods to develop basic skills by using the computer suite. Basic skills of ICT were suitably taught when Years 3 and 4 pupils learnt how to input information into a database. The teacher gave a clear explanation of how to interrogate and search databases when pupils in Years 5 and 6 learnt how to enter fields they would like to use to sort data. Teaching assistants were well used to enable pupils to learn about how to analyse facts from charts. Teachers' assess pupils' work on assessment sheets accurately. However, some teachers do not have the expertise they need to utilise all the programs. Pupils enjoy using the computers due to the positive approach of teachers. Pupils work sensibly and independently on them, overcoming problems for themselves due to high expectations and management skills of teachers. Teachers do not always use open-ended questioning and the use of self-evaluation by pupils is not often seen in lessons. The weekly planning of teachers is satisfactory, but there is no specific challenge for more able pupils.

136. The co-ordinator has worked effectively to develop the use of the ICT suite. A new two-year rolling programme of study has been created utilising the national guidance. The subject has been carefully monitored. As a result of this extra guidance booklets were produced to support pupils use of the spell checker and text bar. While the computers in the ICT suite are good, they do not have a wide range of programs for numeracy, simulations or music. The use of computers in other subjects is underdeveloped. There are two computers in reception, but they are old and unreliable.

MUSIC

137. Standards are in line in music with the nationally expected levels in Years 2 and 6 and pupils achieve satisfactorily. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards did not meet national expectations. The school has placed a high emphasis on the teaching of music and has made considerable improvements in the provision for this subject. There are many opportunities to sing, appreciate and create music in collective worship and lessons. The tuition provided by a specialist teacher is effective in developing pupils' achievements throughout the school. Resources have been developed to support a new whole school programme of work. The teaching of the subject has been effectively monitored with positive effects on learning. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the keyboard or the violin. Inclusion arrangements for all pupils, including those with special educational needs are suitably achieved. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls.

138. Singing is an important part of the music curriculum. Pupils enjoy singing a wide variety of songs. For instance, they all sang 'It's a still small voice' and 'From a tiny ant' beautifully in a singing assembly. This was due to knowledgeable instruction from the teacher. In lessons, pupils learn how to sing high, medium and low notes because of effective learning methods of the teacher. A recent visit from a Zambian minister inspired pupils to learn an African song. Nearly half the pupils enjoy participating in an after-school choir and regularly perform songs for parents. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully supported and achieve well in their learning.

139. Composing skills are appropriately taught. Pupils in Year 2 learn how to record a musical composition on paper using three lines of score. Here the teacher's knowledge and understanding of how to record notes on paper simply enabled pupils to make effective gains in learning about high, medium and low notes. Years 1 and 2 pupils recorded their tunes on a tape so that they could listen to their work. Older pupils in Year 6 have composed tunes using instruments, which are pitched and non pitched. For example, pupils have used keyboards, chimes, maracas, drums, triangles, Agogos and cymbals to compose music. However, pupils do not recall often having recorded their compositions on paper or on tape.

140. The appreciation of music is suitably established. Pupils in Year 6 select the music the school listens to in assemblies from the school resources. All pupils are encouraged to appreciate the meaning of lyrics. Older pupils have opportunities to compare and contrast old and new pieces of music. They can discuss which is their favourite song or part of the music.

141. The standards seen indicate that the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the one lesson seen many effective teaching methods were observed. Basic skills were well taught when warm up activities were used to develop pupils' understanding of pitch. Effective learning methods were utilised when listening, and musical skills were promoted when the pupils sang 'Heads and shoulders, knees and toes'. Teachers' good subject knowledge means that pupils learn simple musical notation. Teachers did not consistently plan specific challenges for the more able pupils in lessons. Pupils enjoyed all aspects of music tuition due to the positive approach of teachers. Pupils concentrated well and co-operated effectively because of teachers' good behaviour management.

142. The co-ordinator has selected an appropriate range of music for pupils to listen to in collective worship sessions. However, these resources are not as wide as they might be. Whilst there are sufficient musical instruments from other cultures, these resources could be more varied. The co-ordinator is aware that information and communication technology is underused in the school to develop music and ICT skills, but there are no computer programs to achieve this.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

143. During the inspection, lessons were observed covering country dance and games, but there were no gymnastic lessons timetabled. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show satisfactory levels of achievement in games and good levels of achievement in country dancing. Although there were no swimming lessons during the inspection, records of pupils' attainment indicate that levels of achievement in this area of physical education are good.

144. Pupils in the Year 1/2 class work with great enthusiasm. When warming up, they move confidently under the careful direction of the teacher, showing appropriate awareness of space and other pupils. Throwing and catching skills are satisfactory and most pupils can throw a bean bag correctly and with reasonable control. Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills as they throw a bean bag into a hoop that is gradually moved further and further

away. In country dancing, pupils show good control of their feet to keep in time to the music and develop levels of co-ordination and balance effectively.

145. By the age of 11, pupils have developed their country dancing skills extremely well and show considerably confidence in their performances. Skills in this area are greatly enhanced by a well attended after school club that is much enjoyed by pupils. This activity makes a positive contribution to pupils' social and personal development in the way in which it encourages boys and girls of all ages to work co-operatively. The school has a positive commitment to swimming and, even though trips to a public pool involve a lengthy journey, pupils benefit from regular lessons and, as a result, achieve standards above the nationally expected level.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is good in country dancing and satisfactory in games. All lessons are well organised and presented in a lively and enthusiastic manner. In the better lessons, pupils' performances are evaluated in a constructive, critical way which enables pupils to build up a clear picture of what exactly constitutes a good performance. In most lessons, there is a good balance between pupils listening to explanations and actual performance, although in games lessons there is sometimes too much talk from the teacher and not enough action from the pupils. Pupils are managed very well and respond with enthusiasm and determination.

147. A strength of the provision in physical education is the extensive range of activities provided for pupils, both in and out of school time. Good use is made of professional coaches who visit the school to provide expert tuition in activities such as tennis and rugby. The school arranges several events, especially during the summer, to develop physical skills, including sports days and an annual skipping day. Effective use is made of visits to places such as Millfield School, to take advantage of the excellent sports facilities there. Once every two years Ditcheat School organises a residential visit for older pupils, where they experience activities such as abseiling, climbing and outdoor pursuits. Provision is further enhanced by an excellent range of out of school activities including rounders, mini-sports, athletics, hockey, football and netball.

148. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic and effective co-ordinator. She gives good support to teachers in terms of planning lessons and has encouraged good links between physical education and other subjects. In history, for example, pupils in Year 5/6 had their topic on 'Britain since the 1930s' brought to life by learning about the dances of that era, including the waltz, jive and even the twist. Resources are good, well organised and used to good effect. The school has made good progress in provision for physical education since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

149. In Years 2 and 6 pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards were in line with the locally agreed expectations at the last inspection and so standards have been maintained. The arrangements for the inclusion of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are suitably achieved due to good use of teaching assistants and use of open-ended challenges. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls.

150. Standards of work seen in Year 2 were in line with the locally agreed expectations due to satisfactory teaching. Effective teaching enables pupils to learn how to reflect about the world effectively, so that they value people, their beliefs and places of worship. Pupils' spiritual development is well provided for through this subject. In Years 1 and 2 pupils reflect on their favourite part of the village and give a reason for choosing it. These pupils have written thoughtfully about a special family memory. Pupils know that certain books are special. For example, they understand that the Bible is special to Christians. Years 1 and 2

write about a particularly special book they own and say why. Many pupils comment that these books are special to them because grandparents gave them to them. Years 5 and 6 pupils record carefully why the Qur'an is important to Muslims. Harvest Festival and Leavers' services are used to develop pupils' awareness of the wonderful gifts around us. After the death of the Queen Mother, Years 3 and 4 learnt how to recognise a leader in the local community as well as on a national level. More able pupils could identify what special qualities the Queen Mother had. Older pupils use thoughtful vocabulary in a prayer giving thanks for the joy of mornings. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs demonstrate that these pupils are achieving well due to the effective support of teaching staff.

151. Pupils' knowledge of religions has been satisfactorily promoted. Pupils have recorded their own versions of many Bible stories such as the Good Samaritan, Abraham's Journey, Moses, the Last Supper and Jesus' Crucifixion. They developed a clear understanding of other faiths. For instance pupils wrote about the seven steps to happiness according to the Hindu religion. Years 5 and 6 have designed Diwali greetings cards. Older pupils know about how Muslims prepare for prayer with many special rituals. The story of the perils of Prahlada was suitably recorded.

152. Pupils' moral development is well developed through religious education teaching. Years 1 and 2 have written their own class rules. They have discussed and written down useful rules for the taking of medicines. Older Years 3 and 4 pupils have written in detail about who can help us, for example they said that teachers, policemen and nurses are there to help us. They write well about what makes a good friend.

153. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Effective learning methods are used when pupils learn to record their ideas about who they know is a leader. Good knowledge and understanding by the teacher ensures that pupils learn to think deeply about what makes a book special. Teachers' planning sets clear learning objectives, which ensures teachers are accurately focused on what pupils will be learning. However it does not record how more able pupils will be specifically challenged. Pupils behave well and listen carefully to their teachers due to effective management skills. The ends of lessons are used thoughtfully to discuss pupils' learning and so they achieve appropriately. This was seen when pupils read to the class from their writing about what makes a book special, although pupils rarely self-evaluate their work.

154. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements. Teachers' weekly planning now has learning objectives that are specific. The co-ordinator has worked effectively to develop the use of teachers' assessment and evaluation of learning. A two-year rolling programme has been developed and there are now far more opportunities for pupils to record their knowledge of religious education. Resources have been improved, but the co-ordinator has plans to further develop these so that there are a rich variety of artefacts to stimulate pupils.