

INSPECTION REPORT

PENNYCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pennycross, Plymouth

LEA area: City of Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113297

Headteacher: Mr Kevin Storey

Reporting inspector: Mrs Margaret Britton
17678

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd May 2003

Inspection number: 247344

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Arden Grove Pennycross Plymouth
Postcode:	PL2 3RL
Telephone number:	01752 705137
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Kenneth Hockley
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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17678	Margaret Britton	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage Music	How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11564	Jean McKay	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?
23917	Tony Clarke	Team inspector	English Art and design Physical education Special educational needs	
32606	Verna Derwas	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Religious education	
22330	Laurie Lewin	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Equal opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements 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

Pennycross is an average sized primary school with 259 pupils on roll. It caters for pupils aged between four and 11 years old in an area in the north west of Plymouth where a high proportion of families are socially and economically challenged. About half the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is well above the national average. When children start school in the reception class, they attain levels well below those expected nationally and locally for the age group. Sixty three pupils (24 per cent) are identified as having special educational needs; this is slightly above the national average. Of these pupils, two have Statements of Special Educational Needs. There are no pupils with English as an additional language which is very low when compared to the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with a welcoming, caring and harmonious ethos. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and pupils make good progress. There is a very good commitment to and potential for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school cares very well for pupils' personal and academic development.
- The headteacher, senior management team and governors lead and manage the school very well.
- Relationships between all staff are excellent and this makes a major contribution to the very strong sense of teamwork and commitment to the pupils and the school.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above those expected nationally.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and, as a result, pupils make good progress.
- Staff manage and promote good behaviour very well.
- There is very good provision for pupils' social development.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and they make good progress.
- The school provides parents with very good information and offers many good opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning.
- The school's links with the local community and with secondary and nursery schools make a very good contribution to pupils' personal and academic development.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- Standards in music for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- The organisation of the curriculum.
- The provision made for pupils' cultural development.
- The leadership role of some subject coordinators.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The rate of improvement since the last inspection is good. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked well together to meet the targets for improvement set for the school

at that time. They have achieved most of what they were asked to do and, in some instances, have gone further. Standards in English, mathematics and science have continued to rise although there is still need for improvement, particularly in pupils' language skills. There has been a good improvement in the curriculum throughout the school. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is much improved and there are now useful schemes of work for all the subjects of the National Curriculum. The procedures for assessment and the use of test results in English, mathematics and science are now good and are contributing to the rate of pupils' progress and the rise in standards. The role of the subject co-ordinator in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning still needs to be a focus for school improvement. The involvement of the governors in shaping the strategic direction for the school is very much improved. There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The school has maintained and sometimes improved upon many of the strengths identified at the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	E	E	E	D	well above average A
mathematics	E	C	E	E	above average B
science	E	A	E	D	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

When children start school in the Foundation Stage, levels of attainment are well below those expected nationally for the age group. They make good progress but standards are still below expectations when they transfer to Year 1. The national tests for seven year olds in 2002 show well below average results in reading and writing and below average results in mathematics compared to all other schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, standards in reading and writing were well below average; in mathematics, pupils attained average standards. Teachers' assessment of science in 2002 showed most pupils reaching an average level. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in this year's cohort of seven year olds attain below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics but average standards in science. Overall, pupils' achievement and progress by the age of seven is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6. Standards in science have improved and currently pupils attain average levels at the ages of seven and eleven. There is a trend of improvement in standards in English, mathematics and science that is similar to the rate of improvement nationally. Standards in ICT are above national expectations for seven and eleven year olds. In design and technology, standards are above the national expectations for seven year olds. Pupils' language skills are limited and this slows down their progress in most subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good throughout the school. Pupils are polite and friendly and generally work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good throughout the school. Pupils are considerate and co-operative and allow others to get on with their work. They are eager to please. The school council and peer mediation schemes are effective in promoting good behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils show care for others and proudly undertake responsibilities that contribute to the efficient running of the school. Staff provide excellent role models for the pupils.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are below the national average and are unsatisfactory.

Despite the best efforts of the school, attendance is unsatisfactory because of the number of families who take holidays in term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

A key strength of the teaching throughout the school is the way in which teachers make consistent and effective use of the school's strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. This builds pupils' self-esteem and enables them to concentrate. The teachers and teaching assistants work very well together and this has a very good effect on pupils' progress. Plans for teaching make clear what is to be taught and learnt. The quality of teaching in English is good. Teachers are enthusiastic, make good use of questions to develop understanding and use their time well to support and challenge pupils. In mathematics, the quality of teaching is good and tasks are well matched to pupils' learning needs. This helps them to make good gains in lessons and builds their confidence. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well throughout the school but not consistently planned for in other subjects. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school and they make good progress. The school makes good provision for the needs of all pupils. Pupils' learning is often slowed by their limited language skills and vocabulary. There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills by communicating their understanding and ideas in speech or answering questions at length.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a well-balanced curriculum of good quality for children in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactorily broad and relevant and meets statutory requirements. However, the balance of the curriculum is adversely affected by the focus on English and mathematics which means that the time for the other subjects is restricted.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are well matched to their needs and help them to make good progress. They are very well supported by the teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The provision made for pupils' moral development is very good and there is satisfactory provision for spiritual development. Pupils' cultural development is not sufficiently planned for and the provision is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very good level of care for the pupils. The staff know them very well and provide very good personal support and guidance for them.

The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are well embedded and have contributed to the rise in standards in English and mathematics. However, there are signs that the application of the strategies is too rigid and does not give enough flexibility to teachers to plan work in as interesting a way as they would ideally like to. The organisation of the timetable restricts opportunities for teachers to create a varied pattern of learning. For example, some of the sessions are too long and pupils' concentration and attention waned towards the end of these sessions.

The school's links with the local community make a very good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. The school is a caring and harmonious community based on trusting and respectful relationships in which everyone is valued and made to feel that they matter.

There are very good links with parents. Parents are given good quality information about their child's progress and school events. They are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school but only a minority respond to the school's efforts.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher provides clear vision for the development of the school and works very effectively with the deputy headteacher. They have been successful in building a strong sense of teamwork amongst a dedicated and hard working team of

	teachers and support staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil all their statutory duties and play a very good part in shaping the direction of the school. They work very effectively with the headteacher and staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school uses some good strategies to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning, standards and other aspects of school life. Honest evaluations are made and priorities in the school development plan provide a very useful agenda for school improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Financial and staffing resources are used very well to support educational developments.

There are sufficient well qualified and experienced teachers whose skills and expertise are satisfactorily matched to the needs of the curriculum. They are supported by a very good number of support staff whose skills are well matched to the work they do with pupils. A particular strength of the leadership and management of the school is the quality of the teamwork developed by the headteacher and deputy headteacher in their work with the staff and the good rate of school improvement that this has supported. They are given very good support by the administrative staff. The governors, headteacher and administrative staff have a good understanding of the principles of best value and make satisfactory use of them.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • They feel comfortable about approaching the teachers. • The school expects their children to work hard. • Behaviour in the school is good. • The school cares for their children and helps them to develop socially, emotionally and academically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and frequency of work children are given to do at home. • Closer links with parents. • The range of activities provided by the school. <p><i>Please note that each of these points is the view of, at the most, 21 parents.</i></p>

The inspection team agrees with the parents positive views of the school. The inspectors looked at the amount and frequency of the homework pupils are given and are of the opinion that it is appropriate for their age. Teachers and other staff in the school are available every day to speak to parents and they make many efforts to encourage parents to work with them but the response from some parents is poor. The school provides a very good range of educational activities during the school day, on residential visits and in after-school and lunchtime clubs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- Overall, as can be seen from the table below, standards have been maintained at broadly similar levels to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Of particular note, science standards have improved with most pupils currently attaining average levels at the ages of seven and 11 compared to below average levels previously. Also, the school has done well to sustain good standards in ICT since the last inspection, with most seven and 11 year olds attaining above average levels. Additionally, design and technology standards have been sustained at a good level for pupils at the age of seven. There are a few anomalies such as the apparent fall in mathematics standards. However, in analysing pupils' performances it is important to understand that the number of pupils with special educational needs, which is well above average compared to other schools, also varies significantly from year to year in each school year group. Also, the school suffers from a significant level of ¹pupil mobility. These factors together mean that pupils' attainment and their results in the national tests at the ages of seven and 11 can be expected to vary dramatically from one year to the next. Nevertheless, given that the school's national test results, particularly those for pupils at the age of eleven, vary in this way each year, the overall trend in standards is one of improvement in line with the national trend.

		Attainment – Last Inspection	Attainment – This Inspection
Attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage.		Below average	Below average
Attainment at the age of seven. (Year2).	English	Below average	Below average
	Mathematics	Below average	Below average
	Science	Below average	Average
	Art and design	Average	Average
	*DT	Above average	Above average
	Geography	Below average	Not enough evidence to judge attainment
	History	Average	Not enough evidence to judge attainment
	*ICT	Above average	Above average
	Music	Average	Not enough evidence to judge attainment
	*PE	Average	Average
	*RE	Average	Average
Attainment at the age of eleven (Year 6)	English	Below average	Below average
	Mathematics	Average	Below average
	Science	Below average	Average
	Art and design	Average	Average
	DT	Above average	Not enough evidence to judge attainment
	Geography	Below average	Not enough evidence to judge attainment
	History	Average	Not enough evidence to judge attainment
	ICT	Above average	Above average
	Music	Average	Below average
	PE	Average	Average
	RE	Average	Average

¹ Pupil mobility is the number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times of admission and transfer.

*DT – design and technology, ICT – information and communication technology, PE – physical education, RE – religious education.

2. Attainment of children when they begin school is well below average. Their achievement is good in the Foundation Stage. However, standards are still below average levels in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year. In the creative and physical areas of learning, most children reach the standards expected for five year olds.
3. The national tests in 2002 for seven year olds show well below average results in reading and writing and below average results in mathematics compared to all other schools nationally and well below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics when compared to other² similar schools. The results (when compared to other schools nationally) generally concur with inspection findings for the current cohort of seven year olds where pupils mainly show below average attainment in these areas. Teachers' assessment of science in 2002 showed most pupils reaching an average level. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in this year's cohort of seven year olds attain average standards in science. Overall, pupils' achievement by the age of seven is satisfactory.
4. Last year's test results for 11 year olds were well below average in English, mathematics and science in comparison with all schools nationally. The results were below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics when compared to similar schools. The inspection findings for the current cohort of Year 6 pupils reflects a similar picture to the test results with pupils attaining levels that are below the national expectations in English and mathematics. However, work seen in science for these pupils reflects a better picture – with overall average attainment – that is better than that represented by the test results. This view underlines the observations of the inspection team that the pupils achieve better with 'hands on' practical activities than they do with purely paper-based activities. The targets that the school sets itself for pupils' performances in the national tests for English and mathematics are appropriately challenging and the school came close to reaching these in 2002. The number of pupils reaching the expected levels was not as high as the school had predicted. However, given that the 2002 cohort contained an unusually high level of pupils with special educational needs at 43 per cent, the results still represent good achievement for these pupils. Other factors such as high pupil mobility and attendance at the school being below average also mitigate against the school's precision in target setting.
5. The school looks carefully at its national test results with a view to monitoring any differences in the performances of boys and girls. The 2002 national tests for 11 year olds did not show any significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in English although boys outperformed the girls in mathematics and science. During the inspection, the inspection team did not find any particular overall differences in the achievements of boys and girls. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs attain below the levels expected for pupils aged seven and pupils aged 11. However, they make good progress in relation to their prior achievement because the school's procedures for supporting these individuals are well developed. Also, higher attaining pupils are suitably extended by the work that they do.
6. Although pupils achieve well throughout the school, standards in English and in mathematics are below those expected for pupils at age seven and at age 11. These

² Similar schools throughout England are banded by the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

inspection findings confirm the school's own expectations which indicate that, although results this year will be below the national average, they will show considerable ³added value. The school's assessment data, which tracks pupils' progress throughout their time in school, demonstrates that pupils achieve well and the majority make good progress when taking into account the levels at which these pupils started school. A small number of pupils achieve above average levels in English and in mathematics.

7. In English, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills but standards remain below average at ages seven and 11. The lack of consistent, planned opportunities to develop these skills across the school limits the rate at which pupils extend their vocabulary and their ability to explain ideas and communicate their findings in speech and in writing. This has a negative effect on their progress and attainment across the curriculum. Standards in reading are rising but are still below average at age seven and age 11. Younger pupils make good progress in understanding and using letter sounds. Older pupils are held back when they read more complex texts because their limited vocabulary makes it difficult for them to use clues within the text to help them to decode unfamiliar words. Standards in writing have risen slightly since the last inspection but are still below the national average at age seven and age 11. Throughout the school, pupils learn to write for a range of purposes but their limited vocabulary affects their overall attainment. Pupils' accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is often erratic. Handwriting and presentation skills are practised regularly and although, overall, standards are satisfactory, they are variable.
8. In mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and good progress in Years 3 to 6 in all areas of the subject. They use and apply their developing skills in solving increasingly complex problems. They decide which strategies they will use and older pupils are beginning to both organise and check their work. For example, pupils in Year 6 use calculators to check the answers to problems involving decimals. However, many pupils are limited by their language skills in communicating their ideas and understanding. Year 2 pupils are able to sequence numbers to 100, have an understanding of odd and even number sequences and are becoming more secure in recalling addition and subtraction facts to ten. By age 11, most pupils can order random numbers including up to three decimal places, understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages and solve number problem using addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Year 2 pupils competently use mathematical names for common geometrical shapes and describe some of their properties such as 'corners' and 'sides' while 11 year olds find the perimeters of simple shapes and calculate areas. Seven year olds are gaining confidence in sorting and classifying objects and collecting information using tally charts and by the age of eleven, pupils are confident to collect data and represent and interpret the information in simple charts and graphs.
9. Pupils gain an appropriate knowledge and understanding in all areas of science. At both key stages, pupils develop competent skills of scientific enquiry. For example, Year 2 pupils make careful observations in their investigations and gain a suitable understanding of the need to show the reasons why things happen in the way that they do. Years 5 and 6 pupils carefully compare their predictions for tests with the actual results and write suitable explanations for why things happen as they do. They draw sensible conclusions and record their results properly in graphs and tables.

³ 'Added value' means that the results will show how much progress the pupils have made over their time in the school.

Year 2 pupils understand the basic facts about life cycles of animals and know the main parts of a flowering plant, while older juniors identify the major organs in a flowering plant and know the main differences between animal and plant cells. Year 2 pupils make good predictions about whether electrical circuits will work or not and by the age of eleven, pupils understand circuit diagrams, know that different liquids evaporate at different rates and that temperature affects this process. They understand the principles of condensation and know how solids, liquids and gases differ.

10. By the age of seven pupils use ICT facilities confidently to assist them in different areas of their work. They share and exchange ideas and use ICT models to assist them in finding things out. Individuals work rapidly through tasks, competently navigating through the programs they use. They know how to save, retrieve and print their work, have used computer games to support their work, for example in mathematics and science, know how to program and control a floor robot and have input information from surveys onto computers and made graphs. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils show good skills with devising a series of instructions for controlling events on the computer. They are familiar with methods such as using PowerPoint to present information in an interesting and attractive way, have worked with intricate programs, for example, to make interior designs, are familiar with using the Internet for research and use many different applications to support their work, for example, in literacy, numeracy, science, history, geography and religious education.
11. In design and technology (DT), pupils reach a good level in their work by the age of seven. Year 1 and 2 pupils' previous work shows that they make realistic plans/designs to satisfy a variety of needs – including detailed labelled sketches to show design details. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards in DT by the age of 11.
12. Since the last inspection, the school has placed an emphasis on raising standards in English, mathematics and science and has been successful. However, there has been less emphasis on other subjects and, although standards have generally been maintained, there is less evidence of improvement. In geography, history there was insufficient evidence available to support a secure judgement on standards at age seven or at age 11. In music, there was not enough evidence to support a secure judgement on standards at age seven but by age eleven standards are below those expected.
13. Provision for special educational needs is good. It is one of the strengths of the school. Reference to tracking records and individual education plans; discussions with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), class teachers and teaching assistants indicate that most pupils are making good progress towards meeting their individual learning targets. Provision is made very well for those pupils who have specific learning difficulties in English and mathematics. The provision for those pupils who have behavioural and physical difficulties is equally comprehensive and detailed, and they make the same good progress towards their individual targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupil's attitudes and behaviour throughout the school are good. Relationships with each other and with adults are excellent and their personal development is good. These positive features help to create a caring family atmosphere where pupils feel secure which contributes to the good rate of progress. The school has maintained and, in some cases, improved upon the good features in this aspect of its work since

the last inspection.

15. The attitude to learning of pupils with special educational needs is good and often very good. The behaviour of pupils without established behavioural difficulties is always good, with pupils showing courteous responses to their teachers and teaching assistants. Special educational needs status appears to have no negative effect on relationships within the school. The response of other pupils towards those selected for extra support is good and indeed a number of average pupils ask if they might be included in the withdrawal groups! Pupils with special educational needs are gaining in confidence because of the sensitive support they receive from all adults in the school, and from other pupils. They are equally well attentive in lessons as their classmates and make a great effort which enables them to make progress.
16. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour are underpinned by the excellent relationships throughout the school. Most pupils show curiosity by asking questions. In a few lessons, pupils became restless when the pace was slow and they lost concentration. All staff celebrate the achievements of pupils especially those with special educational needs. These achievements may not necessarily be academic, for example, when an eight year old boy told an inspector about the latest book by Michael Murpago. He had heard the author reading the story during a school visit to Nethercott Farm and had memorised its message which he could very ably pass on to others. Pupils listen thoughtfully to each other in class discussions about their experiences and often respond with enthusiasm. The school strives constantly to build the self-esteem and self-confidence of its pupils.
17. Some pupils take responsibilities as 'peer mediators'. They are trained by an outside organisation and wear distinctive green uniforms so that they are easily identifiable to their fellow pupils. They told members of the team how, helped by teachers and the headteacher, they are able to diffuse difficult situations that arise in the playground and also help fellow pupils with personal problems. A nine year old pupil, who was doing peer mediation work, said it had led her to believe she would like a career as a solicitor. Other pupils told inspectors of their aspirations, such as wanting to go in the army or to become a hairdresser.
18. Children in the Foundation Stage are encouraged to develop skills of independence. A good example of this is their self-registration in the morning which is followed by the more formal marking of the register with the teacher. The children work with satisfactory independence on their activities and help to put equipment away correctly and safely. However, opportunities for older pupils to develop independent learning skills and take the initiative in some of their learning are limited. They are developing a good ability to co-operate and to share resources as was seen in an art lesson. Pupils, towards the end of the school, were seen to confidently present a range of opinions in class debates which reflected a respect for their personal health and for the wider community.
19. The quality of pupils' relationships and personal development is excellent and is a strength of the school. They show care and consideration for others and value learning success and achievements. Where pupils are given responsibilities they take them on conscientiously and are trustworthy. Younger pupils proudly undertake responsibilities such as being members of the 'School Council', where their opinions are treated with courtesy and consideration. They respond readily to opportunities to raise funds for charities and to take part in competitions. Some pupils are training on Dartmoor to take part in the Junior Ten Tors walk. They welcome opportunities to become a librarian or helper during assemblies. By Years 5 and 6 and with the help of the dedicated lunchtime staff, the majority of pupils have very good strategies for resolving playground conflict amicably.

20. Throughout the school, pupils are taught that obeying rules is important when living in a community. A few pupils with special needs, who occasionally have difficulty in dealing with their emotions, are well managed. They are fully integrated into the life of the school. Their classmates have a very mature way of dealing with a problem when it arises and follow the guidance given by the school. Two pupils from each class are elected as members of the 'School Council' to talk about issues that arise from behaviour, the environment or health matters.
21. Attendance levels are below the national average and are unsatisfactory, despite the best efforts of the school. This figure is largely caused by a number of families who take holidays in term time. The school frequently reminds parents of the importance of regular attendance on the attainment and progress of its pupils. The unauthorised absence figure is in line with national figures. No pupils have been excluded from school over the last two school years. Pupils mainly arrive at school on time and registers are completed quickly, enabling a prompt start to be made to lessons. Parents say that their children enjoy coming to school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and ranges from very good to satisfactory. The quality of teaching was good or better in three out of four lessons. In the remaining lessons, it was satisfactory. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall but unsatisfactory in one out of every ten lessons. The improvement in the quality of teaching has had a positive effect on pupils' progress and this has contributed to the trend of improvement in the standards they attain in the national end of key stage tests and assessments.
23. A key strength of the teaching throughout the school is the consistent way in which the teachers make good and sometimes very good use of the school's agreed strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. These strategies, which include a range of well thought out rewards and sanctions, help them to build very good relationships with the pupils. As a result, almost all the pupils are eager to please and sustain their concentration in lessons. This means that lessons are rarely interrupted by incidents of inappropriate behaviour and pupils are able to make good progress.
24. The quality of teaching for children in the reception classes was good or better in all the lessons observed. A particular strength is the teachers' knowledge of the way in which young children learn through stimulating and well-planned play activities for each area of learning. They use relevant activities to promote the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and number. This helps the children to make good progress over their time in reception and provides a firm foundation for the other areas of learning and in Year 1. The plans for teaching take good account of the individual needs of the children and their stage of development. Areas of the classroom are resourced well to engage children's interest and to encourage them to develop their vocabulary and express ideas and feelings. For example, the children were absorbed by blowing bubbles in the outdoor classroom; an adult provided a good model of language and lots of opportunities for them to talk about the bubbles. The staff intervened in the children's learning to support, guide and challenge them. This helped the children to extend their concentration span and to use their developing language skills. Where there was direct teaching and intervention in the learning, the children made good progress and acquired skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. However, teaching and learning was less effective when too much time

was spent on following the formal literacy and numeracy strategy lesson structure. The structure of these sessions is not well suited to the age range or the prior attainment of the children. The pace of learning slowed because the teachers' time was focussed for too long on one group and children's learning was not supported or extended in the other activities offered.

25. The quality of teaching for pupils in Years 1 and 2 was good or better in 12 of the 17 lessons observed. In the remaining lessons, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. The teachers' lesson plans are detailed and activities and resources are generally well matched to the pupils' interests. The teaching builds well on the pupils' prior learning. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and this enables pupils to start their work promptly so that little time is wasted in lessons. Teachers have high expectations for the rate of pupils' work and often remind them of the time remaining to complete task. This has a positive impact on the efforts pupils make and helps them to develop good work habits.
26. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching was good or better in 33 of the 45 lessons. The quality of teaching in the remaining lessons was satisfactory. Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to plan challenging lessons for the pupils and to teach enthusiastically and with confidence. For example, in a Years 3/4 ICT lesson, the teacher had high expectations for the pupils' learning, was enthusiastic and confident and the lesson moved at a flowing pace. As a result, the pupils achieved very well within the lesson. Plans for lessons are detailed and describe clearly what is to be taught and what is to be learnt. Opportunities for assessing pupils' progress are identified and the information used as a basis for the plans for subsequent lessons. Tasks and activities are well matched to the needs of pupils and this enables them to make good progress in the lessons.
27. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well throughout Years 1 to 6. However, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' language skills through providing opportunities for them to answer questions at length or to express their knowledge and understanding in speech rather than in writing. Similarly, opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their numeracy skills in other subjects are not well planned.
28. In lessons where the quality of teaching is very good, teachers make very good use of the time available to achieve an effective balance between the time allocated to explanations and instructions and the time available for pupils to take an active part in the learning. Questions are used well to challenge pupils' thinking, activities are varied and stimulating and the last few minutes of the lesson are used very well to check for misconceptions, reinforce or extend the learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 5, the teacher made use of a lively question and answer session, paired and small group work and used the last few minutes of the lesson to ensure that any problems were dealt with so that the pupils ended the lesson feeling positive about their progress. Very good use was made of opportunities for pupils to explain and demonstrate their strategies to the class. In a Year 2 music lesson, the pupils' interest was engaged and held because the teacher was confident and enthusiastic and used a good blend of teacher talk, small group work and opportunities for pupils to perform. Consequently, the pupils were fully and actively involved in the learning throughout the lesson and made good progress.
29. The quality of learning is good throughout the school. The pupils learn best when they are given a variety of interesting activities within a lesson and the pace of learning is brisk. Where the direct teaching for the whole class is interspersed with activities that make intellectual demands of the pupils, they concentrate, achieve success and are

motivated to greater efforts. Pupils' learning was sometimes slowed when activities were over directed by the teacher and they had few opportunities to develop independent learning skills by choosing some of the approaches they used to investigate or record an activity. In Years 1 and 2, there were too few opportunities for pupils to extend and consolidate their learning through structured play activities.

30. Shortcomings in teaching and in learning occur when lessons are too long and there are too few opportunities for pupils to engage in strategies such as role-play, discussion and oral presentations. The richness and variety of their vocabulary and sentence structure is not sufficiently developed and this limits their ability to write and speak succinctly to communicate their knowledge and understanding.
31. Teaching assistants play an invaluable role throughout the school. They are very well deployed by the teachers who include them in the plans for teaching and in evaluating pupils' progress. This enables them to make good use of their time in lessons and to take the initiative when they work with groups and individuals. The partnership between the teachers and the teaching assistants and learning support staff is strong and this has a positive impact on the rate of pupils' learning.
32. The quality of teaching in English is good throughout Years 1 to 6. In mathematics, the quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Although pupils learn and use the subject vocabulary they are taught, many have only limited spoken language skills and struggle to explain some of their ideas. Opportunities are missed to plan for pupils to use and practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
33. In Years 1 to 6, the quality of teaching was very good in ICT, good in science and satisfactory in physical education. Because it was only possible to see a small sample of lessons in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education, there was insufficient evidence to support an overall judgement on the quality of teaching in these subjects. However, an examination of lesson plans and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that the quality of teaching is likely to be at least satisfactory in these subjects.
34. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. All teachers are aware of pupils who have specific learning difficulties and in their plans for teaching, they describe suitable activities to promote learning. Teachers match the tasks they set for pupils well to their learning needs and this helps them to make progress. Teachers show patience and understanding and have high expectations of both the academic performance and the behaviour of pupils identified as having special educational needs. They are given very good, skilled assistance from the well-qualified, experienced and committed teaching assistants, both in classrooms and in withdrawal situations. The combined attention of teachers and assistants has a most positive impact upon the good progress that the pupils make.
35. Teachers make satisfactory provision for homework across the school and the work set provides appropriate enhancement to the work that pupils carry out during the day.
36. Teachers' planning has improved since the last inspection and now lesson plans indicate clearly, how and when pupils' learning is to be appraised. In all lessons ongoing assessment feedback in class is good. Teachers give frequent verbal guidance and support, and praise is used well to encourage pupils to try even harder. There are examples of good, detailed, helpful marking, particularly in English towards the end of the juniors. However, the analysis of pupils' work showed some

inconsistencies, and there were instances where the opportunities to guide and extend pupils' learning were missed.

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

37. The school provides a good curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. Stimulating opportunities are provided to help children to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in all six areas of learning. There is a satisfactory curriculum for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2. The curriculum is suitably broad and provides reasonable coverage of all of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and appropriate coverage of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. However, the curriculum is not well balanced because of the emphasis placed on the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and the way in which this limits the time available for the other subjects. The last inspection report identified the needs to ensure full coverage of the Programmes of Study in certain subjects, to ensure full planning systems were in place and to ensure that planning catered for pupils of differing attainment. All of these points have been fully addressed and this marks a good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection
38. The school has clear planning systems established for all teaching based on a well organised two-year curriculum map which lays out the main strands of subject coverage for each term in each year group. The planning works well for all subjects except for science where there is some inconsistency in the depth and range of coverage between some classes in the same year groups. The school has identified rightly the need to review this area in the next phase of its development plan. In areas such as design and technology and ICT, clear opportunities are identified for establishing links between different subjects. However, this enrichment of the curriculum by providing experiences that allow pupils to make connections between different areas of their learning is not fully developed in other subjects.
39. The school has established sound programmes of study for personal, social and health education (PSHE). This ensures that pupils gain a firm grounding in areas connected with healthy eating and living as well as providing good opportunities for pupils to acquire a wider social understanding in areas such as citizenship. Some of the work covered is incorporated into Circle Time⁴ sessions in each class. Teachers also make good efforts to weave strands of the PSHE work into other areas of planned work. The school has proper procedures for ensuring pupils receive suitable sex education and drugs education.
40. A strong emphasis is placed within the curriculum on provision for teaching literacy and numeracy and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented and are well embedded across the school. However, there are signs that the application of the strategies is too rigid and does not give enough flexibility to teachers to plan work in as interesting a way as they would ideally like. Coupled with this is the fact that the school's timetable contains too many long sessions, for example, back-to-back literacy and numeracy sessions. Several observations during the inspection showed that pupils' concentration and interest were waning significantly towards the latter parts of such sessions. The organisation of the timetable in this way also reduces the opportunity for teachers to inject variety into

⁴ Circle Time usually involves pupils sitting in circle and taking it in turns to share ideas or express their views while the rest of the class listen carefully.

their daily planning. Where teachers include strategies such as practical activities, group discussion, paired work and structured play in their teaching the pupils' remain motivated and the curriculum is more stimulating and relevant.

41. The school makes good provision for providing a programme of extra curricular activities. The good range of clubs provided includes: orienteering, recorders, dance, chess, football, gardening, ICT, tag rugby and art (for parents and pupils). The school also makes good provision for visitors to the school and visits out of school by classes which clearly enhance the work carried out, for example, the farm visit made by younger pupils. Year 6 pupils are given good chances to experience adventurous outdoor activities with courses on sailing and climbing. One assembly presentation, given by pupils from Years 4 and 5, showed that they had gained a substantial understanding about the working of a real farm during their residential stay on one. The stay also enhanced their social awareness and ability to take on responsibility.
42. Pupils with special educational needs have access to a broad curriculum. Individual education plans, compiled by the class teachers and co-ordinator in consultation with support staff, are reviewed regularly and learning targets modified accordingly. The overall quality of the individual education plans is good; they are detailed, clear and generally give precise attainable learning targets. However, the current format of the plans is to be reviewed and a number of amendments are to be considered. The quality of the records collated by the co-ordinator is good. Good use is made of collating electronic data. However, pupils the progress of those identified as having special educational needs is not always clearly identified.
43. Overall, the school makes good provision for ensuring that pupils have equality of access to all school activities. Every effort is made to ensure all groups of pupils are fully incorporated into all activities, for example, where pupils are withdrawn from classes for extra support, care is taken to withdraw them at different times each week so that they do not always miss the same lessons. Teachers are vigilant and show a good awareness to ensuring the involvement of all groups of pupils. The school's inclusion co-ordinator has carried out a comprehensive review of all areas where educational inclusion impacts and she has drawn up a useful list of areas for development in the future to strengthen further the school's approach in this aspect.
44. The effective links established with the local community praised in the last inspection report have been maintained and now make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils' consideration for the needs of others in the wider community is successfully fostered through a number of activities. For example, pupils collect toys and substantial amounts of money for children's charities. Letters received from local pensioners thank pupils for their gifts following the school's harvest festival. The school is used by schools from across the city to train pupils for the Junior Ten Tors event. Members of the local community also use it for blood donor sessions, computer classes and for other occasions including birthday parties. Local pensioners said how much they enjoyed coming into school for lunch, and talking to the pupils. Regular visitors to the school have included storytellers, artists, a Hindu priest and the Life Education Caravan. The Life Education Caravan visits the school regularly and gives pupils opportunities to discuss aspects of health, drug misuse and the dangers of smoking. The Beacon Park Social Club donated over £700 to the school to help fund educational visits. The photographic evidence and wall displays of these visits to places such as Pennywell Farm, Dartmoor, and Nethercott Farm demonstrate pupils' enjoyment and excitement at being able to experience the contrasting environments. Parents spoken to during the inspection also thought these trips played an important part in building their children's self-confidence and

- self-esteem. All these links have a beneficial effect on pupils' learning and understanding of their place in the community.
45. There are very good links with the nearby local education authority nursery. Parents said they very much valued the induction advice they received from the school about the curriculum and about suitable toys to buy for their children. There are also very good links with the secondary school. Pupils visit the school before entering the next stage of their education, and were eager to tell the inspection team how much they were looking forward to this visit. Teachers from the comprehensive school also teach occasional lessons at Pennycross and share teaching resources. These links have a positive effect on the progress pupils make.
 46. Good opportunities are provided for pupils' personal development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Although opportunities for spiritual development are not always planned in assemblies or across the curriculum, when they do happen they are effective. A good example of this was seen during a religious education lesson when pupils gasped in wonder at the beauty of an Islamic prayer mat. Daily acts of collective worship are of a broadly Christian nature and are used well to establish and affirm the common and shared values of the school. They take place in a positive, supportive and reverent atmosphere. Pupils and visiting speakers make a good contribution. However, opportunities to develop spiritual awareness through moments of quiet reflection and prayer are not always exploited.
 47. The provision for the development of pupils' moral development is good and they are taught the difference between right and wrong through many planned curricular opportunities. Pupils are acutely aware of what is acceptable behaviour and what sanctions are imposed if anyone misbehaves, for example, by missing a football match! Moral issues are explored in circle time and in assemblies when pupils are encouraged to share their feelings and ideas. They also explore moral issues through literature and in history, geography and religious education lessons. Awards for good behaviour and effort are given weekly and pupils have a very good understanding of what they have to do to win one. Family celebration assemblies celebrate good work and good behaviour. Parents spoken to after one such occasion, and especially those who were old pupils of the school, said how much the school had improved since they were pupils. They are proud of the way the school helps in building their children's self esteem and self-confidence and promotes their academic progress.
 48. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. From the time they enter the Foundation Stage, children's social skills are promoted effectively. For instance, they are encouraged to play as part of a group, share the wheeled toys and help each other at snack time by pouring drinks and washing up. Older pupils are given many opportunities to develop their social skills by making decisions and working together in groups. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils organise a dance club on Thursdays and hand out "well done" certificates that they have printed themselves. In all lessons pupils were seen to exchange ideas, work co-operatively and collaboratively and make constructive, mature suggestions. Through strategies, such as drawing up their own Golden Rules for the classroom, pupils learn to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour. They take responsibility for many aspects of school life including caring for new and younger pupils at lunchtime. Pupils also learn good social skills by discussing the inappropriate behaviour of some pupils and suggesting ways in which their behaviour could be improved.
 49. Overall provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. Several opportunities are made for pupils to understand English traditions and to understand the worship of other cultures. Some pupils have an opportunity to work with artists to

create a mural and a sculptor to create a willow tunnel but, overall, pupils are not exposed to visits to the theatre, concerts or art galleries or to hear live music. The school recognises that there is a need to broaden the curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge about how the rich diversity of cultural life is celebrated and to understand Britain as a multi-cultural society. The Racial Equality Council is working on the school's schemes of work to see how an awareness of race issues can be fitted into the curriculum. Members of the Council told inspectors that they were delighted that the school had taken up their offer of help.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. The school cares for its pupils very well and makes very good provision for their personal and educational welfare. Parents spoken to during the inspection feel that the school is a harmonious community based on trusting and respectful relationships. Everyone is valued and made to feel that they matter. Every member of the school and its wider community trusts and respects the contributions made by others. This has a very significant impact on the personal and professional development of all those associated with the school including governors, support staff and pupils, and results in positive attitudes, secure relationships and an effective learning environment.
51. There are very good procedures in place for child protection. The school's Child Protection coordinator ensures there is clear guidance for all staff in respect of the Child Protection Policy. The headteacher has good links with the local social services department, and teachers and support staff are kept informed of child protection issues and procedures. Parents are aware of the procedures for reporting absence, and rules for attendance and absence are printed in the School Prospectus. The school places the attendance figures on the computer, which enables absenteeism and latecomers to be tracked efficiently. The school reminds parents frequently of the importance of regular attendance and its effect on the attainment and progress of their children.
52. The school follows the local education authority's procedures for health and safety. Governors and teachers make regular risk assessments and take the necessary steps to deal with problems. When asked, pupils were able to say exactly what they should do in the event of a fire. The accident book is up to date and a number of staff are trained in first aid procedures. Risk assessments take place before pupils go on residential visits. Regular visits to the school by the Education Welfare Officer and the School Nurse are used well to ensure pupils' welfare. The school is cleaned to a high standard and there is no vandalism or litter. Although the school has installed a chair lift to the new mezzanine computer suite, the split-level access to other classrooms could cause problems for disabled pupils and at present there are no toilet facilities for the disabled. The exterior of two of the outside classrooms is in a state of deterioration and there are cracks on various paths in the infant playground that could be hazardous. Otherwise, the building provides a safe and secure environment for the pupils.
53. In order to establish that pupils with special educational needs are identified as early as possible, the school has developed good links with the local nursery school. The head teacher, special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and Foundation Stage teacher closely monitor the development of these children. They take appropriate steps, including meeting with parents so that they are fully prepared to meet the children's needs as they enter school. Links with outside agencies and the local

secondary school are good and supportive. Pupils are continually assessed and the gathered information is fed back into individual education plans in order to set new targets. Parents spoken to during the inspection felt that the school involved them well in their children's individual education plans.

54. The school's procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic progress in English, mathematics and science and in ICT are comprehensive and good. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, when the implementation, recording and use of regular informative assessment was a Key Issue for development. The school carefully tracks pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science through the results of national tests, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority optional tests, and primary reading tests. The assessment procedures in the other National Curriculum subjects are not as well developed. The school has identified the need to develop assessment in all subjects in its current management plan. There is an assessment coordinator who works with the headteacher and members of the senior management team to take decisions related to the overall assessment strategy.
55. The information gathered from assessments is carefully analysed, collated and used well to provide an overall picture of the achievements of individuals and different groups of pupils. Subsequently individual and group learning targets are set and the progress made by each pupil throughout the school is recorded. The school has computerised all records so that ready access to information can be gained quickly and the progress of individual pupils can be tracked easily, highlighting pupils needing support when they are not doing as well as expected. Identified pupils receive additional support through the national literacy and numeracy additional support initiatives. Older pupils join booster groups to help them achieve better end of Year 6 test results. Teachers maintain a wide range of information about pupils' attainment in their record books and, consequently, have a clear picture of individual achievements that they use to plan future work. In English and mathematics, pupils have specific targets and they are encouraged to refer to these when completing work. Teachers use the achievement of particular targets as indicators of pupils' progress in relation to national targets. Similarly, targets for pupils with special educational needs are used well by teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that the work set is challenging.
56. The school has built on the good procedures reported in the last inspection for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour. The procedures are now very good. Inspection evidence shows that these facets of school life have been improved and are regularly updated. Most parents responding to the questionnaire thought that pupils' behaviour was good. This was confirmed by parents at the school during the inspection. They were pleased with the very good way in which the school supports the personal development of those pupils who present challenging behaviour. The strategies being used are proving successful and, even though it is early days for a few of the pupils, the procedures are working well and are having a very positive impact. A calm working atmosphere has been created. The system of rewards and sanctions is used consistently by staff and is known and understood by parents and pupils. Members of staff are very good role models and treat pupils with respect. Effective procedures are used to eliminate intimidating and oppressive behaviour. There is a clear anti-bullying policy and, during the inspection, pupils discussed in a very mature way the strategies they had used to deal with bullying. They were confident that they could discuss any problems with adults in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. There are very good links with parents and this is a strength of the school. During the inspection approximately 25 parents were interviewed and all thought the school dealt well with suggestions or complaints. They said that staff always made time to see them. Parents felt very strongly that the school had improved since the previous inspection. Some parents had been pupils at the school and they said that there was a marked improvement since that time. Some parents said they brought their children a considerable distance to attend this school, purely because of its caring and supportive ethos. They are very appreciative of the formal meetings held each year to discuss their children's progress and the informal feedback given to them by class teachers at the beginning or end of the school day. Parents believe that, during the last few years, governors, the headteacher and staff have worked hard to engender good relationships and a close working partnership with parents. They believe these good relationships have a positive effect on pupils' learning.
58. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school and a number do, for instance, helping on educational visits, with football coaching and hearing children read. The school does everything it can to encourage this interest and is hoping that eventually more parents will come into school, either to help in lessons or to take advantage of the schemes such as the computer course which a number of parents have found very helpful. Parents who accompanied their children on the Nethercott Farm residential week spoke enthusiastically of how much they had enjoyed the visit themselves. Parents enthusiastically join in with the 'Whiz Art' project with their children funded by the Family Education Unit. This Unit also supports the after-school computer learning initiative in the newly refurbished computer suite. Governors, including parent governors, demonstrate their interest and involvement by helping in school. The school firmly believes that these very good relationships have a positive effect on pupils' learning.
59. Parents of pupils with special educational needs speak highly of the good efforts of the school to improve both learning and behaviour problems. Parents are involved in setting realistic and achievable targets for their children and pupils' individual educational plans are informative and up to date. Inspectors' evidence gathered during the inspection supports these views.
60. Some parents at the meeting and in letters to the inspection team expressed concern about the lack of homework but inspection evidence showed that sufficient homework is carried out by pupils and is marked regularly by teachers.
61. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. There are regular newsletters of good quality and the annual pupil reports to parents contain a section on attendance, as well as comments on their child's progress and targets for improvement. Parents respond very well to the opportunity to discuss the report with the teachers and there is usually full attendance at parent-teacher consultation meetings. The annual governors' report to parents provides a satisfactory range of additional information about the work of the school. Homework diaries go home, and parents can also use the diary to write to the class teacher. Parents of children starting in the Foundation Stage are invited into school for an induction day and receive good information on how their children will be encouraged to learn, and also on the importance of buying toys that will support this learning. Most parents think that the school gives them a clear understanding of what is taught.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The headteacher, senior management team and governors provide very good leadership for a dedicated and hard working team of teachers and support staff. The headteacher provides a clear vision for the development of the school and has been particularly successful in building a strong sense of teamwork amongst all the staff and governors. The staff show strong commitment to school improvement and this has contributed to the good rate of improvement in some important areas of the school's work since the last inspection. The staff provide a consistent and coherent approach that is reflected in the caring ethos of the school.
63. The headteacher and staff have the support of the governing body and parents who recognise the amount of work done and the changes achieved. The school's agreed aims and values are very well promoted and the school has a welcoming atmosphere in which it is clear that the needs of the pupils are central. For example, each child is supported both academically and personally and is enabled to achieve well in the statutory curriculum and in other aspects of school life. There is a very strong commitment to improve the school further and a very good capacity to succeed.
64. Responsibilities are well delegated and staff are fully involved in school improvement strategies and in the decision making process. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together, sharing the responsibilities to make best use of their individual skills and expertise. They are well supported by the senior management team and, with them, provide a strong steer for raising standards and the overall educational direction of the school. The day-to-day management of the school is very effective and the school runs smoothly because procedures and routines are well established and understood.
65. Teachers with responsibility for coordinating a subject or aspect of the school's work provide at least satisfactory and in some instances, good leadership. The leadership provided by coordinators of English, mathematics, science, ICT and special educational needs is strong and they have a good understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses in the provision for their subject or aspect. They have been effective in supporting and challenging their colleagues in the drive to raise standards. In general, the role of subject coordinators for the remaining National Curriculum subjects is satisfactory. They have developed useful schemes of work, checked their colleagues' plans for teaching, provided good subject expertise for their colleagues and managed the subject resources well. However, their role in monitoring and evaluating standards and the quality of teaching and learning in their subject is underdeveloped.
66. The management of the curriculum has been improved since the last inspection. A change in the leadership of the Foundation Stage has been instrumental in bringing about good improvements to the curriculum offered to the youngest children. Changes to the curriculum for older pupils have been managed well and the school has met the targets set by the last inspection. However, the school recognises the need to improve the management of the curriculum further to ensure that there is a secure overview of provision so that pupils receive a more varied diet of lessons and learning strategies each day.
67. The systems to ensure educational inclusion are good and help the school to identify pupils with special educational needs and to plan support for them soon after their admission to the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator is very experienced, enthusiastic and most diligent in her co-ordinating role. She ensures

that all pupils have access to any necessary support and that their needs are met in lessons and in group withdrawal sessions. She liaises well with fellow teachers and support staff and is in regular contact with concerned external agencies such as the learning support service, educational psychology service, social services and relevant medical staff. Early contact is made with all parents as soon as concerns are noted about their children, and there is evidence of parental involvement in all stages of the Code of Practice. Parents, together with those agencies providing support, invariably speak highly of the concern and care shown by all the school staff. Some gifted and talented pupils have been identified and given extra support, for example, in mathematics, but this is an area for development across the curriculum.

68. The governing body fulfils all its statutory duties well and governors have a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities between the headteacher and the governing body. The governors are well led by the chair of governors and provide strong and challenging support for the headteacher and staff. They play a very good part in shaping the direction of the school. They are consulted on the full range of issues and are fully involved in the decision-making process. They are very well informed about the school and its strengths and relative weaknesses because of the detailed information they receive from the headteacher but also because of their commitment to visiting the school and linking with class teachers and subject leaders. They use this knowledge well when they make decisions. The governors work very effectively in committees that take responsibility for a range of aspects including finance, curriculum and personnel. They have delegated powers that enable them to make decisions and recommend a course of action to the full governing body. This is efficient and makes good use of meeting time.
69. The governors monitor the school's progress towards the priorities in the school development plan and the national test and assessment results and set targets for improvements in standards and are playing a strong role in school improvement. This reflects a good improvement in their role as 'critical friend' to the school.
70. The priorities of the school development plan are well focused on raising standards. An annual audit is used well to involve parents, governors and staff in identifying areas for development. The priorities have been discussed and agreed with governors and then included in the school development plan. The plan provides a very useful agenda for school improvement and is having a positive impact on standards and on the quality of education. There is a satisfactory time scale for improvement and financial and other resources are well linked to the targets for improvement. However, success criteria are not consistently measurable. Consequently, evaluation of the impact of the planned change on quality and standards is less effective.
71. The headteacher and staff have taken appropriate and successful action to bring about a steady improvement in standards and are now ready to review the curriculum in order to bring about changes that will help them to maintain the trend of improvement. They make good use of the analysis of the results of statutory and other assessments of pupils' progress to target groups and individual pupils for additional support and to bring about changes to teaching. The headteacher, senior management team and governors have taken appropriate action to achieve the targets they have set in the school development plan and in achieving targets set for the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
72. Since the time of the last inspection, good improvements have been made in the strategies the school uses to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and in learning. For example, the headteacher carries out a rigorous programme of

classroom observation to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. He makes very good use of these opportunities to identify where support or challenge is needed and to respond to the individual needs of teachers. This has been very effective in improving the quality of teaching and, as a result, pupils' rate of learning has increased and standards have risen. The coordinators for English and mathematics have carried out a rigorous programme of classroom observations. This has been a contributory factor in improving the quality of teaching and in raising standards in these subjects.

73. The governing body fulfils its financial planning role very well. Educational developments are supported well and the governors have a very good understanding of the current budget and future issues. They make good use of forecast information and take advice from the school's administrative officer and from the headteacher. They have clear priorities for spending decisions and base these on their knowledge of the school and their vision for its long-term strategic development. They have a good understanding of the principles of best value and make satisfactory use of them. Expenditure is carefully monitored but measures for evaluating the impact of spending on provision and standards are not clearly established.
74. The administrative officer operates secure, efficient and effective systems for financial control. The minor recommendations of the most recent auditor's report have been put in place. Administrative tasks are carried out very efficiently and the day-to-day organisation of the school runs smoothly. Very good use is made of ICT to support the management of finances and administrative tasks. The administrative staff provide very efficient support for the headteacher and staff enabling them to focus on their work with the children. They play a valuable role in supporting and training a trainee assistant. They provide friendly support for parents, pupils and visitors to the school.
75. There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers whose skills and expertise are matched satisfactorily to the needs of the curriculum. They are supported by a very good number of support staff whose skills are well matched to the work they do with pupils. The school has good arrangements for the appraisal of the work of teachers and other staff. The arrangements for performance management are in place and targets have been set and agreed with all teachers. The school provides very good support for newly qualified teachers, teachers new to the school and for teachers in training. The good arrangements for the professional development of all staff are well linked to the school's priorities for improvement.
76. There is sufficient accommodation to enable the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage curriculum to be taught. The temporary classrooms in the playground provide satisfactory teaching space but are in variable states of repair. Teachers go to a lot of trouble to ensure that all the classrooms, corridors and shared areas provide a pleasant, bright and purposeful learning environment that supports the school's aims for children's learning. Pupils' work is carefully mounted and displayed and celebrates their achievements. The Foundation Stage classroom is generous in size and allows the staff to provide a stimulating and varied range of learning opportunities for the children. The outdoor area is satisfactory and allows continuous access throughout the day. There are interesting plans in place to develop this further. The playground for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is of an adequate size and there is a small field. A willow tunnel, seating and murals have been introduced to provide more interest for the pupils.

77. There is an adequate range of learning resources of good quality to support the teaching of the National Curriculum. The range and quality of resources for the Foundation Stage and ICT are good. Resources are stored to give staff and pupils easy access. The staff provide attractive, good quality learning resources in lessons and pupils respond well by handling them carefully. The library provides a satisfactory range of books to support the curriculum. The pupils enjoy their visits to the library and have a good understanding of how to access the information they need.
78. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked well together to meet the targets for improvement set for the school at the time of the last inspection. They have achieved most of what they were asked to do and, in some instances, have gone further. Standards in English, mathematics and science have continued to rise since the last inspection. There has been particularly good improvement in science but there is still need for improvement in English and mathematics. Pupils' language skills are still an issue for the school. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is much improved and there are now useful schemes of work for all the subjects of the National Curriculum. This represents good improvement. The procedures for assessment and the use of the results in English, mathematics and science are now good and are contributing to the rate of pupils' progress and the rise in standards. The development of the role of the subject coordinator still needs to be a focus for school improvement. The involvement of the governors in shaping the strategic direction for the school is very much improved. The inspection evidence shows significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The school has maintained and sometimes improved upon many of the strengths identified at the last inspection. Overall, improvement is judged to be good and the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

79. In order to further raise standards and improve the quality of education, the headteacher, staff and governors should work together to fulfil the intentions of the agreed school improvement plan and focus on:
1. Further raising standards in English, particularly pupils' spoken language skills, throughout the school. *Paragraphs: 3-7, 27, 87, 97 and 100-111*
 2. Further raising standards in mathematics throughout the school. *Paragraphs: 3-6, 8, 27, 112-121*
 3. Raising standards in music, particularly in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - raising the profile of the subject throughout the school;
 - ensuring that teachers' subject knowledge is secure.*Paragraphs: 1, 12, 156-162*
 4. Reviewing the use of curriculum time so that pupils are provided with a more varied pattern of learning.
For example,
 - *adapt the pattern of teaching in the literacy and numeracy lessons;*
 - *adjust the length of some of the lessons;*
 - *develop the use of practical activities so that pupils have access to a wider range of approaches to learning;*
 - *provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills, particularly their speaking skills, across the curriculum.**Paragraphs: 24, 28 –30, 32, 38, 40, 66, 87, 97, 102, 105, 106, 127, 139, 149, 153, 166 and 168*
 5. Enriching the broad curriculum by including more opportunities for pupils' cultural development; *Paragraphs: 49, 132, 144 and 161*
 6. Developing the role of some subject co-ordinators to include the use of focused monitoring and evaluation by, for example, analysing samples of pupils' work to identify areas for improvement and observations of teaching and learning.
Paragraphs: 65, 128, 139, 145, 149, 155, 162 and 169

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	12	38	18	0	0	0
Percentage	0	18	56	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	259
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	124

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	63

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	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	24	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	15	19
	Girls	17	18	20
	Total	34	33	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (51)	73 (69)	87 (77)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	18	19
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	32	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	71 (56)	76 (67)	78 (62)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	24	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	19
	Girls	15	10	13
	Total	27	22	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (56)	51 (79)	74 (98)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	12	12
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	22	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	51 (60)	56 (77)	58 (86)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	177	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	59	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	212

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
	£
Total income	695,421
Total expenditure	667,680
Expenditure per pupil	2,558
Balance brought forward from previous year	20,770
Balance carried forward to next year	27,741

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	259
Number of questionnaires returned	58

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	34	2	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	45	5	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	60	5	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	43	10	12	2
The teaching is good.	45	41	9	3	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	40	19	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	36	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	48	5	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	48	19	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	43	41	7	7	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	48	9	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	31	28	9	9

Please note that each parent's response represents almost 2 percentage points.

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

80. The Foundation Stage is made up of two reception classes taught in one large classroom. At the time of the inspection, there were 35 children in the reception classes. Six Year 1 pupils are also taught in the setting. Children join the reception classes in September or January of the school year in which they are five. There is a teacher and a nursery nurse for each class. Most children do not have the benefit of pre-school education in a nursery school or class before starting school at Pennycross.
81. The staff formally assess the children shortly after they start school using a nationally standardised baseline assessment scheme. On entry to the reception class, the children display a wide range of skills but overall the standards they reach are well below those typical of children of their age. Many have poorly developed language skills and limited personal and social skills. Throughout the Foundation Stage, teachers use the results of assessment well to check children's progress and to help them to plan for the next steps in their learning. In consequence, teachers set tasks which match and challenge children across the range of abilities within the classes. Children make good progress in all six areas of learning but by the time they transfer to Year 1, many still do not reach the levels typical for their age in communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their personal, social and emotional development. The staff work well together to enable children with special educational needs to settle well and make good progress in all the areas of learning.
82. Before they start school, children visit the school with their parents as part of a sensitive induction programme. These arrangements encourage children to gain confidence and enable parents and carers to establish good links with the school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning by, for example, joining in class activities and sharing books and games with them at home. The staff have worked well together to create a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment where learning is made fun and children are encouraged to care for and respect each other. The classes make good provision for all the children, including those with special educational needs, and give them a good start to their formal education.
83. There have been considerable improvements in the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. The curriculum provision that was unsatisfactory is now good. Children now make good progress whereas progress was generally slow. The quality of teaching was satisfactory but is now good. Insufficient emphasis was placed on children's language development. There is now a strong emphasis on language skills but this is still an area for further improvement.

Personal, social and emotional development

84. Nearly all the children start school in the reception class with limited skills in personal, social and emotional development. By the time they move to Year 1, the majority are well on their way to attaining the national Early Learning Goals for children of this age in this area of learning. This is a clear indication of the good progress children make because of the sensitive, skilful teaching and well-planned learning opportunities. The positive relationships of the staff with parents, the well established routines and

interesting activities enable children to settle quickly and make good progress. They quickly gain the confidence to choose what they want to do and to play alongside others. They are keen to participate in activities and many are developing their concentration. For example, three boys worked with the construction toys for more than twenty minutes and persevered to make improvements to their models. The children are encouraged to work together in pairs and in small groups and some are beginning to initiate conversations with others. For example, a group of children working in the sand tray began to talk imaginatively together about the objects in the sand. Almost all the children dress, undress and manage their personal hygiene independently.

85. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good. Staff provide very good role models for the children, always treating each other and the children with respect. As a result, children share and take turns and are beginning to communicate with other children as they play. The adults give the children opportunities to take responsibility for tasks in the classroom. For example, at snack time they help by pouring out the drinks for their friends and washing up the cups. Children's behaviour is managed very well by the staff and this helps the children to know what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the classroom. As a result, they behave very well. The staff make very good use of their knowledge of the children's learning needs to plan relevant and stimulating activities that give them opportunities to work alone and in small and large groups. Resources that the children use are easily accessible so that children are helped to become independent. Good use is made of circle time to help children develop an awareness of their own feelings and to be sensitive to the needs of others. This was reinforced, for example, by involving children in a 'nursery' role play area where they looked after the baby dolls.

Communication, language and literacy

86. Most children have poor skills in communication, language and literacy when they start school. They make good progress in this area of learning because of the good quality of teaching. Despite this good rate of progress, many do not reach the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception classes. Whilst most children are well on their way to reaching the early learning goals for reading and writing by the time they transfer to Year 1, they are unlikely to reach the expected levels in spoken language by the end of the reception year. The most important strengths of the teaching are the staff's knowledge and understanding of how children's language skills develop, their systematic approach to teaching phonics and the good opportunities they provide for the development of communication skills.
87. Although the staff provide relevant opportunities for the children to develop their speaking skills through well planned play activities, this is an area for further development. The teaching emphasis has been placed on the National Literacy Strategy. The methodology does not provide enough opportunities for children to develop their spoken language and this slows their progress in the other five areas of learning. Where the teaching is most effective, the adults develop the children's spoken language through their play. For example, the children were encouraged to talk about the bubbles they blew whilst in the outside classroom. Most of the children made little or no response to the questions and prompts they were given. Those who did talk made only two or three word utterances. Many found it hard to talk about the experience because of their limited vocabulary and the staff have identified that the children need many opportunities such as this to help them to develop their language skills. The adults promoted children's speaking and listening skills through whole class and small group discussions about things they have experienced or the stories

they have heard. Some children were able to talk about the characters and events of familiar stories but most of the responses were one or two word answers. Many children are still at the stage of using short phrases and use a limited vocabulary.

88. The children enjoy listening to stories. They listen carefully and are beginning to join in with repeated phrases. They recall the events of stories in the correct sequence, for example, when they retell the story of 'The Cat on the Mat' using small toys. The children enjoy sharing books with adults but most do not concentrate when they look at books independently. They are eager to take books home to share with their parents. The staff teach the children about the features of books such as the title, the author and the illustrator and many know that the author writes the book. Many children understand the concept of 'a word' and recognise that the convention is to leave a space between words. The older and more able children are beginning to use their knowledge of initial sounds and pictures to make sense of simple text. However, many find it difficult to talk about what has been read because of their limited language skills and vocabulary. Some children made good gains in hearing the sound 'p' at the beginning of words when they used dough to create 'pizza pies', 'pancake pies' and 'peanut sausages'. They use their developing reading skills to identify resources and to find their name card as they self-register each morning. They are making good progress towards the early learning goals for reading.
89. Opportunities to learn about writing for different purposes are well organised. For example, children wrote labels for the toys they had brought to school and for the models that they made in the construction area. They use recognisable letters as part of their invented spellings. When they wrote their plans for the session's activities, the children used their knowledge of letter sounds to form simple words with some support from the adults. They have written simple sentences in response, for example, to the story of 'The bear hunt'. Almost all the children write their name independently. Most children are well on their way to attaining the early learning goals for writing by the end of the reception year.

Mathematical development

90. Teachers' plans for this area of learning are based on the National Numeracy Strategy materials. Children make most progress where the teachers have adapted the materials to meet the needs of the children. At these times, they reduce the amount of time taken for direct teaching with the class group and teach the children in smaller groups through play and practical activities. When children are taught in this way, they make good progress in knowledge, skills and understanding. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good. The plans for teaching are detailed and activities meet the needs of different groups of children. Explanations are clear and good use was made of repetition to ensure that the children have a good understanding of the mathematical ideas. For example, children practised addition of numbers to ten using dice and then reinforced their knowledge using a well chosen computer program. Although progress is good, many of the children will not achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year.
91. The staff use rhymes, action songs and games to make the learning of mathematics fun. The higher attaining children are confident in counting at least to ten and sometimes beyond. The children sort sets of objects. For example, they sorted out clothes by their fastenings. When they used the computer, children matched the numerals one to five to the correct number of objects. Children are beginning to order numerals one to ten. The staff use the sand and water play well to develop and extend children's mathematical vocabulary. For example, they learnt to use 'circle' to

describe the bubbles that they blow and model mathematical language such as 'full', 'half full' and 'empty' when they use containers. Most children are beginning to recognise and name some two and three-dimensional shapes. When children compare the weight of objects, they generally understand the concept 'heavier than'. However, despite the good modelling of the correct vocabulary by the staff, the children were unable to use the words to talk about the objects.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

92. When they start school, most children have a very limited understanding of the world around them. Through well chosen practical activities, children's curiosity is aroused and they are encouraged to observe and talk about what they see and hear. They have used all their senses to investigate objects and materials. For example, children have found and observed garden snails, planted seeds that they found in the outdoor classroom, made and tasted fruit salad and collected sticks and helped to build a Jewish 'Sukkoth'. They have planned and made box model robots and many concentrated really well when they made puppets. Their understanding of their own and other cultures has been developed through role-play. For example, they have acted out the story of Christmas and used a Muslim prayer mat.
93. Children use the computer with confidence and achieve at least the levels expected nationally for their age. The children can switch on the computer and load the program they want to use. They understand how to use icons and how to select another game within the program they are using. They can close down the computer correctly. However, most do not have the language skills to explain how technology is used in everyday life. These activities engage and hold the children's interest but the progress of many in this area of learning is delayed by their limited language skills.
94. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good. Interesting activities are carefully planned to support the children's development and provide a challenge for them. The activities are well prepared to provide children with good quality resources. The staff interact with the children well to model the use of equipment and vocabulary. They make good use of questions to encourage the children to explore new activities. For example, in the topic on 'toys' the children were able to make simple comparisons between the toys they had brought to school because of the effective way in which staff had modelled language.

Physical development

95. Almost all the children are on course to achieve at least the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning by the time they leave the reception class. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good. Children's physical development is promoted in the indoor and outdoor classrooms and in physical education lessons. The planned activities give children a good range of activities in which to develop physical control. The staff challenge and encourage the children to help them to improve their skills.
96. The children run, jump, climb and balance with increasing confidence. They show an increasing awareness of the need to move safely and give others space as they use wheeled toys or run around the hall. Most control a large ball well with two hands when they roll it towards a target. Some are able to bounce the ball and others control it with their feet. Staff use these opportunities well to reinforce children's understanding of positional vocabulary such as 'under', 'over', 'around' or 'next to'. The children use small implements such as pencils, paintbrushes, scissors and glue

spreaders with increasing control and confidence. They control a pencil well to write recognisable letters and numbers of an appropriate size. Generally children handle resources carefully and show good control when they pour milk at snack time, use tools in the sand tray or fasten construction toys together. When they use the computer, they use the mouse accurately to point to an object or to drag it across the screen.

Creative development

97. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals. They are unlikely to reach the expected levels in expressing and communicating their ideas and feelings through speech but the artefacts and paintings they make are typical for the age group. Where the staff interacted with the children and joined in the play, the children made good progress but when they withdrew, children were usually unable to sustain the creative ideas. The good quality teaching is characterised by the wide range of activities planned to stimulate children's imagination and the way in which these activities are linked to the other areas of learning.
98. Children are given opportunities to experiment with different materials and tools to create pictures and models. They have drawn pictures from their observations of fruits and are beginning to record colours and shape with greater accuracy. They have created patterns and prints using different materials. For example, they have used geometrical shapes to create repeating patterns. When they made puppets, they were able to give their product a name but unable to talk imaginatively about the character they had created.
99. Children join in songs and rhymes with enjoyment and have had the experience of performing some of these for the school. Children have used simple musical instruments to create musical sounds. A well-resourced role-play area was used to encourage children to create stories using the puppets. However, because of their limited language skills and experience this reverted to home play when an adult was not present. Some children are beginning to talk to others and develop an imaginative idea as they play in the sand or in the role-play area.

ENGLISH

100. When pupils enter the school, their literacy skills are well below those expected for their age. Test results show that standards in English are well below those typical for seven year olds and 11 year olds nationally. The findings of this inspection are that standards at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 are below those expected nationally, although there is continued improvement over time. These findings confirm the school's own expectations which indicate that, although results this year will be below the national average, they will clearly show considerable added value. The school's assessment data which tracks pupils' passage throughout their time in school demonstrates that pupils achieve well and the majority make good progress when taking into account the levels at which these pupils entered the school. A small number of pupils achieve above average levels.
101. The school historically has a high percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and a high proportion of low attainers. The current Year 6 pupils reflect this pattern; many of these pupils benefit from the good teaching and the very good informed guidance of the experienced teaching assistants and make good progress

towards meeting the learning targets set for them. Despite this, their literacy skills are still well below average and this makes learning across the curriculum difficult.

102. Pupils enter the school lacking confidence in speaking and their listening skills are poor. Despite making good progress, a considerable number of pupils enter Year 1 with standards below those expected. Satisfactory progress is made throughout Years 1 and 2 and a number of pupils make good progress through Years 3 to 6, but inspection evidence indicates that attainment is below average in speaking and listening at the age of seven and eleven. Whilst there have been improvements in teachers' planning as a consequence of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, the rather rigid approach adopted to delivering the strategy is not well matched to the particular needs of these low attaining pupils. The lack of consistent, planned opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills specifically across the school restricts the chances for pupils to acquire a broader vocabulary. In turn, this limits their ability to explain ideas and communicate their findings. Many teachers encourage careful listening, clarity of speech and the development of appropriate subject vocabulary which has a positive impact on oral skills. However, there are too few planned opportunities provided for all pupils to express their own views and to fully extend their vocabulary by usage. As a result, many pupils are hesitant, speak indistinctly with poor pronunciation and become frustrated at their failure to express themselves. Consequently, there is a tendency for a significant number of older pupils to sit passively unless specifically encouraged by teachers to respond.
103. Standards in reading are rising but are still below average at the age of seven and 11. The rise in attainment is down to the school encouraging pupils to read regularly and supporting them with a variety of teaching strategies designed to improve their phonic skills. During Years 1 and 2, pupils develop their reading skills with a strong emphasis on the sounds words make and word building. The use of the Progression in Phonics scheme is particularly effective in this. Attention is also paid to increasing vocabulary as pupils' very limited language skills have a negative impact on their understanding of sounds and their ability to decode new words. As a result, although attainment in reading falls short of national expectations, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. Throughout Year 1 and 2, teachers' plans are based on the literacy strategy and pupils are introduced to a range of texts through which their reading skills are systematically developed and reinforced. The guided reading sessions are used well in this regard although some of the whole class shared reading sessions are not always appropriately targeted at the less able pupils. More able younger pupils can read simple books with fluency. They draw upon their recognition of words and knowledge of letter sounds to make sense of unfamiliar words. However, a significant number of pupils in Year 2 do not yet have a firm understanding of letter sounds and blends and often make inappropriate guesses at words when reading.
104. Although pupils have a much firmer knowledge of basic skills by the end of the juniors, standards remain below national expectations. Higher attaining pupils have developed fluency and confidence in their reading and express opinions about the main characters and events in a wide range of challenging texts such as Tolkein's 'Lord of the Rings' and Horowitz's 'Point Blanc'. However, many pupils are unable to use context clues to read unfamiliar words in more complex texts because of their limited vocabulary they find it difficult to use inference and deduction. As, for example, in Year 6 when pupils considered how two poems might be linked. The class reading of the poems was reasonably accurate but only a few pupils understood that time was the linking theme. Similarly, in the following group activity pupils could read most of the polysyllabic words but could not explain the text. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good support they receive from their

teachers and teaching assistants. The progress owes much to the structured reading scheme, the provision of the Additional and Early Literacy Support initiatives, Progression in Phonics material and the focused input from external speech and language support services. Most older pupils appear to understand the purpose and organisation of a library and the basic skills of information retrieval, however, few pupils would use the library by choice. A novel initiative whereby pupils save to buy books brought into the school by a local book seller is well supported and very effective in ensuring that all pupils have access to a range of texts.

105. Standards in writing have risen slightly since the last inspection but are still below the national average at both seven and eleven. A number of seven year olds can write simple sentences, spell some words correctly and use capital letters and full stops with increasing accuracy. Spelling is taught through structured phonic work which emphasises links between reading and writing. However, with their weak language skills, a significant number of pupils do not yet understand how words are built up from individual letter sounds and blends and consequently their spelling is erratic, for example, *aithe* for *after*, *dotsaid* for *outside* and *impacket* for *impact*. Some older pupils are achieving well in those aspects of English covered but their limited vocabulary, particularly of the lower attainers, restricts their attainment. The use of writing across other subjects encourages the development of vocabulary, as when pupils write and illustrate plant diaries logging seed growth and when they write about a visit to Pennywell farm.
106. Throughout the juniors, within the literacy hour, grammar and punctuation are taught systematically and pupils extend their range of writing to include stories, report writing, formal and informal letters, instructions and persuasive arguments. Overall, older pupils are achieving well but their limited vocabulary affects their overall attainment, particularly in extended and creative writing. A few higher attainers have a good command of the language and their writing is exciting and interesting. For example: *'His bright orange hair flying out behind him. I was transfixed – my legs turned to jelly.... I screamed a shrill scream that would shatter windows.'* In the best instances, punctuation and grammar skills are in line with national expectations but many pupils fail to reach these standards. Handwriting is practised regularly and good presentation is encouraged. Although overall standards are satisfactory they are variable and there are occasions when insufficient attention is given to both. A particularly noteworthy feature in displays around the school is the wealth of good quality writing arising from a World War Two topic. Newspaper reports were produced on the Blitz, accounts written from the perspective of evacuees, poems, information and opinions presented. Splendid links were made with history, geography and information technology was used most effectively to present the topic. The response, interest and productivity are clear indications of the teaching and learning strategies that the pupils of Pennycross find appealing.
107. The quality of teaching is good overall. In more than eight out of 10 lessons the quality of teaching was good or better and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers across the school have a good understanding of how to teach reading and writing, and all are very confident and competent in delivering the National Literacy Strategy. However, it is not always tailored suitably to meet the needs of all pupils. Teaching assistants work well with teachers. They are well trained, committed and give very good support to pupils, particularly to those with special educational needs. They are also very active during the shared and group activities encouraging, controlling and generally helping pupils take as full a part in lessons as possible. Teachers make good use of questioning to develop understanding and extend learning and they pay good attention to developing subject specific vocabulary. Teachers show enthusiasm

for the subject which has a positive effect on pupils' confidence and interest. Other characteristics of the good teaching are well-planned lessons and very good management of pupils and support staff.

108. Relationships are excellent. Teachers use praise well to reward pupils' efforts, raise self esteem and encourage pupils to achieve as well as they are able. This has a positive impact upon learning and progress. There are many good examples of on-going assessment and the use of assessment of pupils' work to plan lessons is generally well established. In most lessons, the last few minutes are used well to challenge pupils to analyse their own learning and to highlight the purpose of the lessons. There are examples of supportive and analytical marking, particularly in Year 6. It is regular and helpful and has a positive impact upon progress.
109. The management of English is good. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership through her monitoring of teaching and planning. Lesson observations and the detailed feeding back of findings to staff have a positive effect upon the quality of teaching. The school now makes detailed analyses of periodic standard and national tests and use their findings to adjust the plans for teaching and learning at the long and medium term planning stage. Individual targets are set and extra support organised to help pupils meet their targets. The provision of focused curriculum weeks on 'Books', 'Speaking and Listening' and 'Writing' and the input of poets and authors such as Michael Morpurgo highlight emphatically the school's commitment to raising standards of literacy. There is corporate recognition of the need to improve standards in English overall and the priorities included in the school action plan indicate that the school is in a good position to move forward.
110. The overall improvements in the teaching and management of English represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, the raising of standards in speaking and listening skills has not been as noticeable.
111. Resources for the teaching of English are satisfactory and they are used well within classrooms. The school has made considerable investment in acquiring a suitable range of books and the library contains a satisfactory range of fiction and non-fiction texts. The enhancement of resources for English is a good improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

112. When children start school in the reception class, their mathematical skills are well below those expected nationally for their age. By the time they transfer to Year 1, standards are still below expectations even though they have made good progress. National test results for 2002 showed that standards in mathematics were below those typical for seven year olds but similar to those achieved by pupils in similar schools. The number of seven year olds who achieved above average levels was similar to the national average. The results of the national tests for 11 year olds showed that standards were well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who attained above average levels was also well below the national average. However, despite these results there has been a trend of steady improvement in standards since the last inspection. There has been good improvement in standards by the end of Year 2. The findings of this inspection are that standards at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 are below those expected, although there is continued improvement over time.

113. Many of the pupils enter Year 1 with attainment that is below average. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. In Year 1, lower attaining pupils use their fingers to add together two numbers totalling less than ten. None of the higher attaining pupils know the pairs of numbers that add together to make ten but, with support, they are able to work out that if six plus a missing number is ten, then the missing number must be four. The pupils create tally charts, count money up to ten pence and learn the sequence of the days of the week and the events of the day. They know that add and plus mean the same thing and are beginning to use the equals sign when they record the additions they have done. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils have progressed sufficiently to adding on 20 and 30 to a given number, can sequence numbers up to a 100 and have an understanding of odd and even numbers. Most pupils add numbers to 20 and are able to count in tens. They explain the strategies they use to solve simple number problems. Pupils learn some of the features of shapes such as squares and triangles and identify 'corners' and 'sides'. Higher attaining pupils create and interpret simple bar graphs and pictograms.
114. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in Years 3 to 6. Pupils in Year 3 know and understand the terms 'multiply', 'divide', 'add' and 'subtract' and solve whole number problems using addition, doubling and halving numbers. Pupils use their understanding of units of capacity, halving, and doubling to work out simple problems such as, *'If one litre of pop costs £1.00, how much does 500ml cost?'* Lower attaining pupils in Year 4, know addition and subtraction number facts up to 20 and use these to solve puzzles. Most pupils use appropriate strategies and explain them clearly when they add two sets of two or three digit numbers.
115. In Year 5, pupils have a good understanding of the relationship between fractions, percentages and decimals. For example, they know that 80 per cent is the same as 0.80, eight tenths and 80 hundredths. Pupils are able to work out discounted prices in questions such as '15 per cent of £19.00'. Higher attaining pupils demonstrated very good progress in understanding how to calculate the additional amount to be added to a sum of money when value added tax is applied. They used strategies including halving and quartering numbers, and were able to explain their methodology to the rest of the class. They learn more about the characteristics of shapes and learn to measure angles. Pupils use a tally chart to record the number of letters in the names of football teams and create bar charts to illustrate the results. Lower attaining Year 6 pupils show a good understanding of standard units of capacity: they were able to make sensible estimates about the size of a container needed to hold half a litre of liquid. Most pupils are able to extract information from a simple table. Most Year 6 pupils confidently ordered random numbers with up to three decimal places. They add together correctly a column of numbers, including decimals, and make competent use of a calculator to check their answers. They have learnt about symmetry, area and perimeters and most have a secure understanding. Pupils' presentation skills are not well developed and this sometimes leads to them making mistakes in calculations.
116. The National Numeracy Strategy is well embedded and teachers make good use of the three parts of the lesson; this has contributed to the improvement in standards throughout the school. Opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in practical situations across the curriculum are not well developed or consistently planned. This is a shortcoming in the provision because pupils are not regularly helped to see how their learning can be applied to day-to-day situations.

117. Throughout the school, pupils often struggle to explain what they know and understand because of their limited vocabulary and spoken language skills. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils and enables pupils to work with an older age group so that the learning materials are well matched to their needs. They have had opportunities to extend their skills in, for example, a local education authority initiative for talented mathematicians. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and are supported by individual education plans and the well matched tasks prepared by the class teachers. Additional support is provided by teaching assistants and this helps pupils to make good progress in lessons.
118. Generally pupils enjoy mathematics lessons and behave well. They are particularly well involved when the teacher provides challenging, relevant and interesting tasks. For example, Year 6 pupils were absorbed by an activity where they examined holiday information and worked out the availability of hotels and flight times. They made good progress in the lesson because they concentrated and worked hard.
119. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' planning is of good quality and they match the tasks well to the pupils learning needs so that pupils are well challenged by the work and make good progress. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher had planned different tasks for each ability group of pupils; these were well matched to really make them think but also to allow them to be successful. Where the quality of teaching is very good, the teacher uses a variety of learning strategies including a quick fire question and answer session, work in pairs and in small groups and gives opportunities for pupils to explain their mathematical strategies. Homework is set regularly and generally supports or extends the work that pupils have done in school. Teachers make good use of immediate feedback to pupils to motivate them and to make clear what they need to do to improve their work. Written marking for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is variable in quality. Teaching assistants are very well deployed by teachers and play an important role in raising standards in the subject because of the very good quality of the support they give the pupils.
120. Assessment data from the national tests and assessments and optional tests is used well to match the teaching to the pupils learning needs. Generally pupils are not encouraged to evaluate their own learning, although there is a pupil's personal assessment sheet available. Some pupils in the mixed age classes in Years 3 to 6 are given detailed target lists with a checklist of expectations but it is unclear how these help the pupils to make progress.
121. Since the last inspection, the teachers have benefited from additional training linked to the National Numeracy Strategy and from well focused feedback on their teaching from the co-ordinator. The school has made good use of interventions such as the Springboard and Booster programmes to support the progress of older pupils. All these factors have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum which have, in turn, had a positive impact on the rate of pupils' progress. The co-ordinator has given a good, strong lead to her colleagues.

SCIENCE

122. By the ages of seven and 11, most pupils reach average standards in science. This marks an improvement since the last inspection when pupils attained below average standards. Standards noted during this inspection reflect a better picture than that reflected by the 2002 national test results for 11 year olds, which were well below average compared to other schools nationally and below average when compared to

similar schools. Inspection observations indicate that pupils achieve better with the practically based classroom work than they do with the paper-based type of work in tests.

123. At both key stages, teachers provide pupils with a good range of opportunities to expand their abilities with scientific enquiry. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 get a close up knowledge of how farm animals live through their visit to a farm and the subsequent follow up work. Clear demonstrations and very good management of activities help pupils to develop their investigative skills. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were shown how to make careful observations in order to check what needed to happen for a bulb to light up in a circuit; they gained a suitable understanding of the need to show the reasons why it does/does not light. Teachers are good at involving pupils in discussions and whole class activities. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the teacher's good questioning techniques coupled with a good use of resources promoted an intensive discussion. As a result, pupils formulated and recorded their ideas competently and in detail. A similar approach in a Years 5 and 6 class resulted in pupils carefully comparing their predictions for tests in germinating seeds with the actual results and helped to consolidate pupils' knowledge that seeds need warmth, light and water to grow properly. Year 6 pupils' books show them to be writing suitable explanations for why things happen as they do, drawing sensible conclusions and recording their results properly in graphs and tables.
124. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge and understanding at both key stages about life and living processes and teachers very usefully incorporate work on healthy living as well as sex and drugs education into this area of study. For example, Year 2 pupils have discussed medicines/drugs within the topic 'Will it make you better?' They know about life cycles of animals and know the main parts of a flowering plant. Older juniors identify the major organs in a flowering plant and Year 6 pupils know the main differences between animal and plant cells. In one lesson, the good use of a computer microscope by the Year 6 teacher enabled pupils to get a full insight into making a close up investigation of the cells in a piece of onion skin.
125. At both key stages, teachers generally ensure that pupils have a good range of opportunities to learn about materials and their properties and physical processes. Year 2 pupils make good predictions about the electrical circuits they study through activities that have been well organised to extend their ideas. For example, in one lesson, the teacher and teaching assistant ensured that pupils gave proper reasons for their deductions, asking pupils to make clear statements such as ... 'The bulb won't light because it isn't a proper circuit'. By the age of 11, pupils understand diagrams of electrical circuits, know that different liquids evaporate at different rates and that temperature affects this process. They understand the principles of condensation and know how solids, liquids and gases differ.
126. Pupils enjoy their science lessons and, in most cases, because of the interesting ways in which teachers present the work, they concentrate fully and try hard with the activities provided. Most pupils show interest and enthusiasm for the topics studied. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils' spiritual awareness was well promoted when they investigated a range of fruits from around the world. The comparison of the size of seeds such as the coconut compared to strawberry seeds excited and surprised them.
127. Teaching is good. Teachers prepare their lessons well and use effective strategies such as clearly focused discussion and interesting practical work to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs are fully involved

wherever possible. Teachers are good at organising activities that encourage collaboration and this is a particularly good feature of the way in which pupils' are supported in developing their social skills. Teaching assistants work well in supporting teachers and pupils, often working unobtrusively in the background - monitoring and guiding individuals with special educational needs to ensure, where necessary, that individuals keep abreast of the understanding gained by the rest of the class.

128. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well and has, for example, made a good job of auditing and organising the resources for science to ensure that there is an adequate range of resources available and that they are easily accessible. Full planning systems are in place to support the teaching of science, but the school has recognised, rightly, the need to review these to ensure that all teachers use them in a consistent way. For example, the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work showed that there are occasional differences in the breadth and depth of coverage between classes in the same year group. In addition, the school has identified correctly the need for the co-ordinator to re-institute a programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. With these areas of development in mind, the school has given science a high priority in the next phase of its development plan.

ART AND DESIGN

129. Two lessons in Years 5 and 6 were observed during the inspection. On the evidence of these, together with displays, pupils' sketchbooks, previous work and photographic records standards are judged to be in line with those expected in most schools at seven and 11. A number of pupils produce good quality work. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
130. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. They learn to weave colourful patterns using a variety of materials. When illustrating activities, they draw and paint appropriately using a variety of techniques and their drawings of animals and plants show a reasonable sense of proportion. Junior pupils make the same satisfactory progress. They use sketchbooks to explore ideas very effectively, for example, to experiment with shading and to design and modify patterns for printing and sewing. They explore a range of ideas through using materials such as paint, clay and collage. Different techniques are investigated such as joining and forming clay, stencilling and printing. A very effective display by older pupils created the impression of moving figures by printing from polystyrene cuts. In the lessons seen pupils showed acceptable skills when designing and making fabric panels using a variety of materials and joining techniques.
131. A limited range of attractively displayed artwork around the school shows that pupils have used an appropriately varied range of materials and processes. Displays and books also show appropriate links between art and other subjects, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have made observational drawings of plant growth in a science linked activity and when using their art to illustrate reports of a farm visit. Older pupils decorate containers in a design and technology linked project; they create a colourful frieze showing well their learning about the Ancient Egyptians. They apply their understanding of two-dimensional mathematical shapes effectively when creating a colourful range of symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns. The work is carefully presented which reflects the importance that teachers place on celebrating pupils' efforts. Pupils with special educational needs and challenging behaviour are integrated well into lessons and take a full and productive part. The practical nature of

the learning activities and the encouragement of teachers and their assistants ensure that these pupils make progress at the same rate as their peers.

132. A number of whole school projects are particularly praiseworthy, reflecting both interest and industry. Visiting artists have directed the making of quite beautiful, printed fabric hangings in the main hall. The walls of the rather dilapidated outside changing rooms have been transformed into a vibrant, evocative sea-side mural and a living willow sculpture created in the shape of the school emblem will be a lasting focus of interest and pleasure. The enthusiasm generated by their participation in such projects has a significantly positive impact upon pupils' appreciation of their part in creating and sustaining an attractive environment. In all years pupils are given the opportunity to draw from direct observation and are introduced to the work of different famous artists. However, their experiences are limited and the opportunities to develop an understanding of the richness and significance of art from different countries and cultures are largely missed.
133. The quality of teaching in the two lessons seen was good. Good use is made of demonstration and resources and teachers have good subject knowledge. Planning is appropriate, being based upon national guidelines. Pupils are encouraged to work purposefully and at good pace. Their imaginations are stimulated and much emphasis is placed upon valuing their personal skills and contributions, doing much to enhance confidence and self-esteem. Good use is made of ICT. Pupils find out about the work of other artists and create designs and illustrations. Adults and classmates warmly acknowledge individual efforts and this in turn encourages good attitudes and learning.
134. The subject is managed satisfactorily by the deputy headteacher acting in a 'caretaking' capacity.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. It was only possible to observe a few lessons with pupils in Years 3 and 4 during this inspection and so there is too little information on which to make overall judgements about pupils' attitudes and the quality of teaching at either key stage. Samples of work from pupils in Years 1 and 2 show that, as at the time of the previous inspection, pupils produce good quality designs and products by the time they are seven. At Key Stage 2, too little evidence of previous work was available to enable a judgement to be made about the standard of pupils' work by the age of 11.
136. A scrutiny of Year 1 and 2 pupils' previous work shows that they make realistic plans/designs to satisfy a variety of needs – including detailed labelled sketches to show the design details. In a project to design and make wheeled vehicles they have evaluated and compared a range of vehicles, examined the working mechanisms in toy cars, drawn pictures of the vehicles they wanted to make and drawn up lists of the parts needed. The vehicles made show that much care was taken in adhering to the design and the vehicles have been well made and finished. Photographs on display show that pupils used saws and other equipment with reasonable precision and care in completing the work as accurately as possible. Pupils have clearly thought hard about their efforts and carefully evaluated the outcomes with written statements such as ... 'I like my car but the best bit of all is the wheels ... I am proud of my car a lot'.
137. In the lessons in Years 3 and 4, pupils worked enthusiastically while constructing lever and pivot mechanisms as part of their projects to make moving toys. Through

clear demonstrations and explanations by their teachers, individuals gained a good understanding of the mechanisms and they understood how levers, pivots and cranks work. In the three sessions seen, the teaching was good with teachers giving pupils strong support and guidance. In the Year 3 session, pupils fitted together their pivot and lever mechanisms successfully and designed some interesting items to fit onto the moving part of the toy. In the Years 3/4 class and Year 4 sessions, pupils worked closely with the teachers to decide actions such as where to punch holes for the split pin pivots to be inserted in the board strips. They successfully orientated and fitted together the strips in order to make the 'lazy tong' designs. Teachers used the discussion sessions well to help develop pupils speaking and listening skills. Good organisation of different levels of tasks in the Year 4 session meant that the work was particularly effective at challenging all groups of pupils. In all of the sessions, pupils acquired a good understanding and use of the appropriate vocabulary. Work on display in the Year 5 class shows that pupils have designed good quality 'moving picture' mechanisms utilising a cam mechanism. The models are well finished and attractive.

138. Pupils enjoyed the work in the sessions seen and most worked with good concentration. In some cases, the level of involvement was such that pupils were reluctant to stop when asked to do so by their teachers. Pupils collaborated well in these lessons – discussing, supporting and guiding one another as needed. The provision of this sort of opportunity by the teachers strongly enhances pupils' social development.
139. The co-ordinator manages this subject well. He has created clear planning systems that usefully identify links to other subject areas and he provides a good level of support and guidance for colleagues. The co-ordinator notes that with the pressure to raise standards in English and mathematics, the time available for design and technology work has been eroded to the minimum level since the last inspection. Therefore, pupils do not get the same range of opportunities to carry out practical activities, in which they are clearly capable of a good degree of success, as they did previously. The co-ordinator rightly identifies the need to establish opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in this subject. The school has a good range of resources for this subject and they are well organised and easy for teachers to access.

GEOGRAPHY

140. Judgements are based on evidence from three lessons, a sample of pupils' work, displays in classrooms and discussions with Year 6 pupils and with the subject co-ordinator. There is insufficient evidence to support judgements on standards, the overall quality of teaching and learning and pupils' attitudes to the subject.
141. By the end of Year 2, many pupils were able to recognise the human features of the local area and relate them to each other by producing picture plans where places are clearly labelled. Guided by the teacher's skilful questioning they are able to sort key words under the headings of human and physical geographical features. Most pupils are able to explain the differences between the two categories.
142. By the end of Year 6, most pupils know and understand some geographical features of rivers and their effect on the landscape. However, they are less secure when asked to consider environmental issues. For example, they were interested in environmental issues like the recent 'Prestige' oil tanker disaster and talked about the

effects of such a disaster but were not able to offer any possible solutions to prevent such an event happening again. Year 6 pupils used ICT to find information for a river study. However, their reading skills limited the use they could make of the program.

143. Pupils' attitudes in the lessons available for observation were generally satisfactory. When instructions were clear and the tasks and resources were well matched to the pupils' interests and abilities, they remained interested and involved in the learning. An effective lesson was characterised by the teacher's confidence and enthusiasm and the good quality of resources used.
144. The scheme of work is based on national guidance and ensures that statutory requirements are met but it is left to individual teachers to modify any unit to their own needs. As a result, there is a lack of cohesion. Insufficient guidance is given to ensure appropriate progression and development of skills throughout the school. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of field trips and visits in the summer term. For example, groups of pupils visit Cadover Bridge, Mount Edgcumbe, Cawsand, Wembury and a local farm. Relatively few opportunities are taken to develop the pupils' awareness of local or national culture or the cultural links between Plymouth and the rest of the world.
145. The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership for her colleagues but her role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning is underdeveloped. The current focus for development is to revise the policy statement. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop an approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress. There are some good resources that are well organised and accessible to teachers and pupils.

HISTORY

146. Only one lesson was available for observation during the inspection period but evidence was also taken from a sample of pupils' work and from classroom displays. There was insufficient evidence to support judgements on standards, pupils' attitudes to the subject or the quality of teaching.
147. Pupils in a Years 5 and 6 class, including those with special educational needs, were beginning to develop a sense of chronology through producing timelines that linked events in the past to pupils' lives today. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have produced some work of good quality as part of their study of the Second World War period. They have considered the differences in housework at that period and in the present day. Pupils have imagined that they were evacuees and have written 'letters home'. These demonstrate that they have a good understanding of the feelings and key changes to the lives of children of their own age. They have examined artefacts such as gasmasks and ration books and write clearly about them and their use. They explain the reasons for building air-raid shelters or using underground stations for protection. The well presented work indicates that pupils' have a positive attitude towards the topic. There were some good links with the pupils' learning in literacy in this work and in the newspaper articles they wrote about the Roman attack on Maiden castle.
148. In the Years 1 and 2 lesson about famous people from the past, most pupils were absorbed and involved by a role-play about Grace Darling. They were able to empathise with her situation. For example, one pupil taking the role of Grace Darling said, 'Dad, Dad! This is really hard work!' The strengths of the teaching were in the

clear learning objectives and explanations, the good use of role-play and question and answer sessions that actively involved the pupils in learning.

149. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has good subject knowledge. She has developed good schemes of work based on national guidance that reflect the context of the school and its pupils. She receives 'end of unit' evaluations from each teacher and has used this information to make adaptations to the scheme of work. The co-ordinator recognises the need to monitor and evaluate standards and the quality of teaching and learning in more detail. The emphasis placed on raising standards in English and mathematics since the last inspection means that the time available for the subject has been eroded to the minimum level and pupils do not get the same range of opportunities to engage in historical investigation or to develop the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy through the subject. There is a lack of continuity in assessing and recording pupils' progress. As the subject has not been a focus in the school's development plan no specific subject training has been available for teachers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. At the ages of seven and 11 pupils' attainment in ICT is above average. Standards have been sustained at an above average level since the last inspection. The school has continued to place a high priority on developing ICT in terms of improving the facilities as well as improving the quality of the ICT curriculum and teaching. The opening of a spacious and well equipped ICT suite as well as a major drive to broaden the use of ICT across the curriculum has placed the school in a strong position to maintain the current good rate of development.
151. By the age of seven, pupils use ICT facilities confidently to assist them in different areas of their work. They share and exchange ideas and use ICT models to assist them in finding things out. For example, in a Year 2 lesson in the computer suite, pupils responded to the teacher's well prepared geographical questions to research information within a computer program. The teacher showed confident subject knowledge and used the facilities effectively so that individuals worked rapidly through the tasks, competently navigating through the program. The pupils showed good typing skills for their age and these skills were further enhanced by the teacher setting targets for pupils' improvement in a typing practice program. Discussions with pupils showed that they know how to save, retrieve and print their work; have used computer games to support their work, for example, in mathematics and science; know how to program and control a floor robot; and have input information from surveys onto computers and made graphs.
152. Teachers use good quality programs to accelerate pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, the use of an 'Email Detectives' program with a Years 3/4 class helped them to rapidly improve their understanding of the main principles of sending and receiving Emails. The pupils understood how this means of working provides the possibility of transferring information very quickly from one person to another. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils show good skills with devising a series of instructions for controlling events. In several lessons they showed precision in formulating, for example, the right sequences of instructions to control the light changes on a set of traffic lights and for making car headlights and indicators flash in a predetermined way. Discussions with pupils show they are familiar with methods such as using PowerPoint to present information in an interesting and attractive way

and they spoke with enthusiasm about a project they had completed to prepare a slide show of the 'Three Little Pigs' story for younger children in the school. They also described their experiences of working with an interior design program – working with a fixed budget to furnish and decorate some accommodation. The pupils were proud of the fact that they had successfully manipulated the spreadsheet figures and 'adjusted their spending' to reach the target figure. Pupils are familiar with using the Internet for research and talked about many different applications to support their work in literacy, numeracy, science, history, geography and religious education.

153. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic users of ICT and discussions with them show that they look forward to their lessons. While many of the pupils, especially those with special educational needs, experience difficulties with areas of their day-to-day literacy and numeracy work, it is clear that they all respond well to the 'hands on' interactive learning style afforded them by the teachers' carefully selected and well presented modules of ICT learning. Good opportunities are provided in lessons to help develop pupils' spiritual awareness. For example, the use of a computer microscope to look at plant cells in a Year 6 science lesson, the use of the Internet and the use of programs to produce spectacular looking artwork designs all serve to encourage an excitement in learning and develop pupils' curiosity and involvement in the world beyond their immediate situation.
154. Teaching is very good at both key stages. This is clear not just from the lessons observed but also from the confident and enthusiastic attitudes that have been instilled in the pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively in managing pupils in the ICT suite to get the best out of the sessions and individuals therefore often progress at a very good rate with their learning. Teachers use the resources in the computer suite well. In particular, in most of the sessions observed the teachers used the central control facility very effectively. By this means, the teacher's computer screen was relayed to selected screens in the suite so that all individuals gained a rapid understanding of how to use different features. For example, in the Years 3/4 session, the teacher showed pupils how to use editing facilities within a word processing program. She set high expectations for what the pupils should achieve in the session so that all pupils worked very efficiently editing a sample letter. The work provided very good support in developing individuals' literacy skills. A similar approach was successfully employed in other observed sessions.
155. The subject is very well led and managed by the current co-ordinator who has enthusiastically taken on the post to build upon the very effective work of the previous co-ordinator this year. Clear and detailed planning systems have been established to support teachers and lessons around the school are systematically monitored and evaluated. Through close liaison with backup support services, the equipment is maintained to an efficient operational level. The school now has a good level of very well used facilities and resources. The co-ordinator is currently developing a very effective system for assessing and recording pupils' progress. Clear and detailed action plans are in place to show how ICT developments will be implemented throughout the year. However, the co-ordinator realises rightly the need to develop a longer-term strategic development plan for the subject in order to maintain the momentum of the school's good progress. The school runs extra-curricular session for pupils in the computer suite and the work carried out in these sessions clearly enhances further the progress of the pupils concerned. Several occasions were noted in lessons where individuals who attend the computer clubs confidently assisted and supported other pupils with whom they worked.

MUSIC

156. Judgements are based on one lesson in Year 2, three lessons in Years 3 to 6, singing in collective worship, singing sessions for pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key stage 2 and a discussion with the subject co-ordinator. There is insufficient evidence to support an overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning or standards in Years 1 and 2.
157. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below those expected nationally for the age group. This is a fall in standards since the last inspection when standards were judged to be in line with the national expectations at the end of both key stages. With the pressure to raise literacy and numeracy standards, the time available for music has been eroded to the minimum level since the last inspection. Pupils do not get the same range of opportunities to carry out musical activities, in which they are clearly capable of success, as they did previously. Pupils at both key stages know a satisfactory range of hymns and songs and sang rhythmically and enthusiastically with good diction. There was little attention to phrasing and expression and tuning was often inaccurate. Although older pupils sing and play rounds, there was no evidence of them having learnt to sing and sustain different parts in a song. There was little difference in the quality of singing in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6 indicating that there is insufficient progress in singing skills. Pupils in Years 3/4 kept a steady beat when they accompanied their singing using percussion instruments. Pupils in Year 6 sustained a rhythmic pattern when they clapped to accompany a melody and are beginning to understand that the way in which notes are written in conventional notation indicates their duration. They recognised a syncopated rhythm and one pupil was able to describe this as 'a rhythm that is broken up into pieces'.
158. Pupils throughout the school learn new melodies quickly indicating that they listen carefully to the tune and the rhythms. However, they have only limited opportunities to listen to and appraise the work of other musicians and this limits the progress they make in their knowledge and understanding of music. In Year 2, pupils listened attentively to their friends when they performed a song. Pupils in Years 3/4 recognised high and low sounds in a melody. Year 6 pupils listened carefully to a melody and were able to identify different sections within the song. There was no evidence available to support a judgement on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of composition.
159. In the Year 2 lesson, pupils made good progress in adapting and performing a song that they knew well because of the teacher's lively and enthusiastic approach and the good variety of whole class and small activities used. Throughout the school, teachers base the lessons on a commercial scheme of work and plans are adapted to provide pupils with interesting musical activities. The quality of teaching seen in lessons for Years 3 to 6 was satisfactory overall. In all the lessons, teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour, were well prepared and managed and organised the pupils and resources well. This helped all the pupils to make good progress in lessons. However, teachers subject knowledge is limited and this means that expectations are not consistently high; this limits the progress that pupils make throughout the school. In all four lessons, pupils with special educational needs were well supported by the teacher and support staff. As a result, they were able to take a full part in the lessons and made satisfactory progress.
160. Most pupils have good attitudes to music. They behave well in lessons, sing with confidence and enjoyment and respond promptly to the teachers' instructions. This helped the lessons to move along at a good pace and the pupils to make good

progress. When pupils in Year 2 worked in small groups to write some new words for a song, they cooperated well and, with support from the adults, were able to enjoy and gain confidence in performing for the class. A few pupils in Years 5 and 6 regularly give up their time to attend a lunchtime club where they are learning to play the recorder.

161. The curriculum is based on a commercial scheme of work that provides satisfactory guidance. Composition, listening to, and appraising music are not as well developed as other elements of the curriculum. The curriculum for pupils in Years 5 and 6 has been enriched by the provision of a recorder group but there are no other opportunities for pupils to learn to play a musical instrument. Few opportunities are provided for pupils to hear other musicians perform or to take part in performances for their parents or the community. The subject makes only a limited contribution to pupils' cultural development. For example, opportunities for them to hear or perform music from a variety of traditions including classical, chamber, traditional, religious and popular music from the western European tradition and a range of world music are missed.
162. The subject co-ordinator has only just taken on the responsibility and, as yet, has had no opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision or standards. She is enthusiastic about developing the curriculum and providing pupils with a richer experience of music. There is a satisfactory range of instruments and recorded music to support the teaching of the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

163. During the week of the inspection pupils were observed taking part in dance and games lessons. Inspection evidence is drawn from the observation of these lessons and from discussions with pupils and from observations of them at play.
164. Standards in physical education are in line with those expected at the end of both key stages. Most pupils reach the standard in swimming expected of pupils by the time they are 11. (To swim 25 metres.) Swimming teaching is prioritised and currently undertaken by professional instructors at a local pool. A number of extra-curricular activities are well supported, and the school soccer team (coached by a parent) is poised to be promoted to a higher division.
165. Throughout the school pupils make expected progress in developing control and co-ordination in gymnastic skills, and when running, jumping and balancing. They are broadening their experiences of dance activities and are acquiring competence in a range of swimming and games activities. Residential visits give pupils the opportunities to develop skills in sailing, climbing and orienteering. Some pupils extend their experiences by taking part in the Junior Ten Tors challenge.
166. Seven year olds demonstrate sound co-ordination and good cooperative skills when taking part in team games aimed at developing bat/ball skills. Older pupils show sound competence when creating group dance sequences to a musical stimulus. They cooperate well and appreciate each other's efforts with applause but the opportunity to encourage a more oral evaluation was missed. The same group of pupils demonstrates expected levels of catching and fielding skills in rounders based games. However, in this competitive situation a number of boys become quite aggressive and rely too much on their individual efforts rather than on teamwork and strategy.

167. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. They take a full and active part in all activities, making sound progress and achieving results that enhance their self-esteem.
168. In the few lessons observed the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and place emphasis on pupils achieving and co-operating well. They make their expectations clear, use demonstrations appropriately and control pupils well in the open outdoor situations. Pupils are encouraged to observe and evaluate but opportunities are missed for pupils to develop their language skills by commenting critically on performances.
169. The co-ordinator who has recently taken up the position manages the subject satisfactorily. She is enthusiastic and diligent, recently overseeing the production of a revised policy. The scheme of work, focussing on national and local guidance is a useful starting point. However, currently, because of the lack of monitoring, the presentation of an appropriate range of work to all pupils cannot be guaranteed. The experience gained by pupils on residential visits enhances the physical education curriculum, and the good provision of a number of extra curricular activities allows the pupils opportunities to improve their physical and social skills.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

170. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and pupils, including those with special educational needs, have made satisfactory progress in knowledge and understanding across both key stages. This is similar to the standards found in the last inspection.
171. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are taught some of the important religious stories and learn about some religious festivals. They recognise certain features of religious buildings. For example, pupils had visited a local church and then, in pairs, were able to identify, name and describe the use of a number of features from photographs. They are becoming aware of the way in which symbolism is used. For example, they know that a candle is used by Christians to symbolise Christ as 'the light of the world'.
172. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress in learning about the major religions found in Britain today. They learn some of the key stories of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity and why religious books and art are important expressions of faith for believers. Pupils in Year 4 know that the Muslim's holy book is called the Qu'ran and learn to show respect in the way they handle it. Pupils in Year 5 have good understanding of the way in which the five precepts of the Buddhist faith are used to guide people's lives and how they relate to the Christian commandments. After hearing the Buddhist story of 'Saddartha and the Swan', most Year 6 pupils were able to make a connection between the story and the beliefs of members of other faith groups. However, most were unable to relate it to their own values and lives. For example, one boy spoke of a vague time in the future when he might have to make a moral choice between right and wrong.
173. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject, especially when lessons involve them in discussions and opportunities to investigate artefacts. Generally they behave well and concentrate on the tasks they are given. When they work in pairs or small groups, they collaborate and cooperate well and make good progress in understanding the key points of the lesson. For example, pupils in a Year 5 lesson

worked with concentration and co-operated well with their group to plan a present-day scenario that illustrated the key elements of Buddhism.

174. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding and the effectiveness of lesson plans were the key strengths of teaching. Tasks were usually well chosen to motivate and involve the pupils and, as a result, they were able to make good progress in the lesson. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils made good progress because the teacher used a range of learning strategies including well directed questions, small group discussion and asking pupils to report back to the class. This helped them to sustain their interest because they were actively involved at all times. Teachers made good use of good quality artefacts as when Year 4 pupils' interest was aroused by seeing and handling a Muslim prayer mat and a copy of the Qur'an.
175. The school fully meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. A scheme of work has been developed since the last inspection; this is a good improvement because it has ensured greater consistency in what is taught. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. The skilful telling of the Buddhist story of 'Saddartha and the Swan' had all pupils fully absorbed and involved and this made a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils' cultural development was well promoted in the lesson where they learnt to show respect for artefacts used by members of the Muslim faith. Stories told in collective worship make a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of Christianity.
176. The subject has been a target for improvement in the school's development plan and professional development has been provided for teachers. Some effective curriculum links have been made with the pupils' learning in ICT and English. The acting co-ordinator monitors the plans for teaching and ensures that standards are maintained by sampling pupils' work. Good use is made of resources borrowed from the local education authority's centre.