

INSPECTION REPORT

RUSHCOMBE FIRST SCHOOL

Corfe Mullen, Wimborne

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113684

Headteacher: Miss S Swift

Reporting inspector: Dr Colin Lee
21854

Dates of inspection: 31st March – 3rd April 2003

Inspection number: 247386

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Holland
Date of previous inspection:	13 th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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21854	Dr C Lee	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Physical education Religious education	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed What the school should do to improve further Educational inclusion
19693	Mrs S Hall	Lay inspector		How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
20950	Mr R Burgess	Team inspector	Science Geography History	The quality of the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils Special educational needs
22856	Mrs K Campbell	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	
27240	Mr W Hooper	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rushcombe is a large Community First School. Within reception to Year 4 there are 306 pupils, who are taught in five single-age year groups, by teams of two teachers in each year, apart from Year 3, which has three teachers. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. Pupils are from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds that, overall, are relatively advantaged. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. A very small proportion of pupils is of minority ethnic heritage and there are no pupils in the school for whom English is an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, at 14 per cent, is below average. The special needs cover a range of learning difficulties and there has been a recent rise in the proportion of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, no pupil currently has a Statement of special educational needs. The attainment of children when they start their reception year is above average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many significant strengths. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well and standards are high in both academic performance and personal development. Pupils' work in English and mathematics is especially good, being well above average by the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 4. The consistently very good progress made by pupils, of all abilities, results in standards being well above average in many other subjects by the end of Year 4. One of the main reasons for pupils reaching these levels of attainment is the consistently very good teaching. The very good leadership and management by the headteacher, and by many other staff with specific responsibilities, also plays a central role in the school's success, as does the strong sense of teamwork between the teachers, learning support staff and non-teaching staff. Together they ensure that the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision for the Foundation Stage¹ is outstanding and provides an excellent start to children's education.
- Standards are high, both in national tests and in work in lessons, and are well above average in many subjects by the time pupils reach the end of Year 4.
- Pupils' personal development is very good, as a result of the school's very good provision and thorough attention to all aspects of their development.
- Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school, with a high quality in the very good range of learning opportunities that is provided.
- Leadership and management are very good and all staff share the headteacher's excellent vision of the educational direction of the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in art and design, design and technology, and music, could be higher.
- The governing body is not sufficiently involved in the strategic planning for school development and improvement.
- The partnership with parents could be further developed to enable parents and carers to have greater impact on the work of the school.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to the parents and carers of all pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1997. There has been very good improvement since that time. The main areas for development arising from that inspection have been addressed very successfully. The quality of pupils' learning has been raised significantly, particularly in the aspects of creativity, reflection and initiative that were under-developed at the time of the last inspection. Standards in many non-core² subjects have been raised to the position now where, by Year 4, standards are well above expected levels in half of the eight non-core subjects. In addition to these issues, statutory requirements were not being fulfilled in the completion of registers and this has now been rectified. The school has additionally sought to improve other aspects of its work and this has, indeed, occurred in many areas. The last inspection described the school as a good school. This inspection judges that nearly all the

¹ The Foundation Stage caters for children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.

² The non-core subjects are those other than English, mathematics and science.

aspects judged good at the last inspection are now very good. Most significantly, this is the case in relation to standards, the quality of teaching, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. In Year 2, pupils attain standards that are high when compared with other schools and, by the end of Year 4, they are higher still than those expected of this age group. The school is in a very good position for the future because it is a reflective school with a strong commitment to continuing improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools ³
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	A	A	A	A
Writing	A	A	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	A	C

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

The overall trend in test results is rising. Mathematics showed a slight dip in 2002, because of a higher than usual number of pupils with specific learning difficulties in mathematics. Nevertheless, these pupils achieved very well in relation to the standards they had achieved in the past. Teachers assessed standards in science to be average overall. Percentages of pupils reaching the higher-than-expected Level 3 were well above average in all tests and in teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in science.

Standards are consistently better than those expected, at all ages, and reflect pupils' high levels of achievement and progress. This starts in reception, where children's work by the end of the year is well above expected levels in most areas of learning. By the end of Year 2, pupils' standards are well above average in English and mathematics, above average in science, geography, history, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education. Continuing very good progress in Years 3 and 4 results in standards by Year 4 being well above average in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, information and communication technology and religious education and above average in physical education. In both Year 2 and Year 4 standards are in line with expectations in art and design, design and technology and music.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about the school and they show high levels of interest in the work that they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good overall. Pupils behave very well in lessons, at playtimes and around the school. The behaviour of older pupils is exemplary and a fine example for younger pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall, and the extent to which pupils show initiative and accept personal responsibility is excellent.
Attendance	Good. Levels of attendance are above average, although unauthorised absence is slightly above average. Punctuality is very good.

³ 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Excellent	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching and learning are very good overall. While that in reception is consistently of the highest quality, similarly excellent teaching is also evident in each year group. Throughout the school, one of the greatest strengths in teaching is the thoroughness of planning, which is done in year-group teams. This planning is firmly based on the ongoing assessment of what pupils are learning, and thorough evaluation of the previous week's lessons. Teachers pay very good attention to planning learning activities that are carefully matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. This leads to very good learning by pupils of all abilities, including the highest-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs who, in both cases, additionally benefit from very good specialist support teaching. English is taught very well and the basic skills of literacy are applied and consolidated very successfully across the whole curriculum. The teaching of basic numeracy skills and mathematics, as a whole, is also very good. Teachers also make very good use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' learning in much of the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils make very good progress in learning in many lessons and this is helped by their own high levels of interest and concentration. They work hard to achieve the specific, individual targets that are set for them in literacy and numeracy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provided for the children in the Foundation Stage is a strength of the school and provision is outstanding. All other year groups experience a very good range of high-quality learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good overall. There is early identification of pupils with special educational needs, very good teaching and support, and regular reviews of pupils' progress towards the specific, short-term targets that have been set for them.
Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language	There are no pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, with strong emphasis on pupils' moral and social development that permeates all aspects of school life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good support for pupils' academic and personal development. The very good procedures for assessing pupils' learning ensure that their progress is constantly being reviewed. There is good attention to all aspects of pupils' welfare, including the procedures for child protection.

Parents have widely varying views about the school but those of the majority are satisfactory. The information provided for parents is good, and parents make a good contribution to their children's learning, particularly through their support of homework.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher provides an excellent educational direction for the school. She is supported very well by the senior managers and subject co-ordinators who carry out their management responsibilities enthusiastically and have clear action plans for the future development of their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need developing. Several individual governors have very good involvement in the development of specific subjects and special educational needs, but there is scope for governors to become more involved in strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The very good monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and of pupils' standards, enable the school to identify priorities, set itself targets, and pursue effective courses of action for future improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Physical and human resources are used very well. Finance is managed and administered very efficiently.

The school has good staffing levels and good learning resources. Accommodation, including external facilities, is very good. The school applies the principles of best value very well, particularly in the way that it constantly challenges itself to do better.

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. • Children are making good progress. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good. • Expectations are high. • Children are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information provided about their children's progress. • The range of activities outside lessons. • The school working more closely with parents. • The provision of homework.

Inspectors agree with all that pleases parents. The first two parental concerns are not generally substantiated, as the school provides good information about progress and, for a First school, the extra-curricular activities are good. However, the school could do more to consult parents, about homework, for example, and opportunities for parents to celebrate their children's and the school's successes are somewhat limited.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children's attainment on entry to the school is above average, especially in the key areas of mathematical and personal, social and emotional development. An important feature of the consistently high quality of teaching in the reception year is the way in which all planning of children's learning activities is guided by an impressively detailed assessment of children's learning. This is one of the reasons for children's very good achievement overall. Comparing standards at the end of the reception year with those when they started school, children achieve very well in all areas of learning. By the end of the year, most children's attainment is well above that expected. Most children achieve the Early Learning Goals⁴, well before the end of the reception year. These standards are higher than those found at the time of the last inspection.
2. Standards by the end of Year 2 show good improvement since the last inspection when reading, writing and mathematics were all above average. The rising standards are evident in both the work done in lessons and in performance in the National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 2. Results in these tests show a steady improvement overall, since 1998, with only a slight drop in mathematics in 2002 being against the upward trend. Nevertheless, in 2002, test results in reading, writing and mathematics were all well above the national averages and the school's thorough analysis of pupils' performance in the 2002 tests showed the result in mathematics to be a good achievement by the pupils concerned. The results of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in science showed standards to be average overall by the end of Year 2. Compared with the results achieved in similar schools, reading and writing were well above average, while mathematics was average, and science was below average. The school's good attention to the needs of higher-attaining pupils is evident in the results that they achieved. When compared with all schools, the percentage of pupils who reached the higher Level 3 in reading, writing, mathematics and science was well above average.
3. The standards reflected in the national test results are being maintained by the pupils now in Year 2. Their attainment is well above average in reading, writing and mathematics and above average in science. This, in fact, represents improvement in science. In all these subjects, a significant proportion are in line to achieve at least the higher-than-expected Level 3 in the national tests in 2003.
4. Overall, the standards in English are well above average. The foundation of this high level of achievement is the quality of pupils' speaking and listening skills. These are generally at a very high standard and this is seen in lessons in all subjects. Teachers constantly encourage pupils to think about their answers to questions and to explain themselves clearly and fully. In lessons and in conversation, many pupils speak confidently to partners, and pupils make very good oral contributions to lessons. To raise standards, the school places a particular priority on providing opportunities for role play in order to further raise confidence levels and improve the spoken vocabulary. Most pupils exceed expectations in their reading skills. As a result of setting clear, short-term targets for all reading activities, at school and at home, standards are rising. An additional effect of the focus on reading, and developing pupils' learning of the sounds of letters and the specific vocabulary in each subject, has been to improve standards of writing. Pupils have learned good strategies for spelling new words; they have good opportunities to talk about their work, and to write in all subjects. They also have specific targets to work towards in their writing and this contributes much to the enjoyment of writing that is evident in pupils of all abilities.
5. In mathematics, standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and these are evident across the subject, but particularly in number skills. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of strategies for mental calculation and work quickly and accurately. They explain their strategies clearly and show that they are developing good use of the vocabulary of mathematics. In science, standards that are above average are now seen in all aspects of pupils'

⁴ The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

learning. They have acquired a wide range of knowledge of the topics they are taught and have a good knowledge and understanding of the principles of investigation. They record results of investigations well, using mathematical and writing skills well for this recording.

6. Standards in Year 2 in English, mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection. The same is also true of standards in geography, history, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education. In all these subjects, standards are now above the national expectations. These improvements reflect the good progress made by the school in developing the subject curricula, and the overall quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Standards in art and design and music have been maintained at levels that are in line with expectations. Design and technology was formerly above expectations but is now in line.
7. By Year 4, pupils' very good continuing achievement is reflected in the impressive quality of their work across much of the curriculum. Standards are well above those expected in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, information and communication technology and religious education. Standards in all these subjects have improved since the last inspection, as they have in physical education where they are now above expectations. In art and design, design and technology and music, standards remain in line with expectations. The standards in English, mathematics and science typify the pupils' progress and there is evidence of significant numbers of pupils in Year 4 approaching standards that are expected of eleven-year-olds. Standards in English and mathematics are very positively influenced by the opportunities that are planned for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
8. In each year group there is a wide gap between the highest- and lowest-attaining pupils, yet the majority of pupils achieve very well. This is due to the excellent attention that teachers, throughout the school, pay to the differing needs of specific groups of pupils. In the case of pupils with special educational needs, the achievement of children in Reception is excellent, and it is very good for pupils within Years 1 to 4. Pupils benefit from the very effective support of the support teacher and teaching assistants, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. Pupils show interest in their work and persevere. They receive very good support both in and out of the classroom. This, together with the realistic targets set in their independent learning plans, contributes well to the pupils' attainment and learning. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Pupils benefit from inclusion in the full range of activities so that they gain self-esteem and success. Higher-attaining pupils are identified from an early age and there is very good provision, especially in literacy and numeracy, which helps these pupils to maintain very good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils throughout the school have very good attitudes to the school and everything they do there, which is better than at the last inspection when attitudes were judged to be good. Pupils enjoy school and arrive in good time. They talk enthusiastically about the work that they have done, as well as what they are currently engaged in, and are eager to take part in activities. The positive attitudes of pupils in lessons have a very good impact on their learning. Provision for the personal and social development of children in the Foundation Stage is excellent. As a result, children in reception grow in confidence, within a very secure learning environment. Very strong relationships between adults and children make a significant contribution towards children's enjoyment of school, high standards of behaviour, and impressive levels of independence.
10. Pupils are eager to answer questions and contribute to class discussions. They settle down to the tasks given by teachers quickly, and work with concentration and enthusiasm, trying to complete their work. They are very independent and take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils show pride in the work they produce. This is reflected in their written work, when talking about their work, and in lessons. Again, this is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
11. Behaviour, in and out of class, is very good, and better than at the time of the last inspection. The pupils behave maturely and move around the school in a sensible, orderly way, although there is plenty of enjoyment and letting off of steam on the playground. The oldest pupils often display excellent self-control, setting a very good example to the youngest. Behaviour in lessons is very

good. Pupils are quiet, thoughtful and attentive. They concentrate very well, asking questions sensibly and listening attentively to replies. They follow teachers' instructions carefully and work independently when asked. The initiative that older pupils, in particular, show is exceptional. In an information and communication technology lesson in Year 4, on developing research skills, for instance, pupils showed independent thinking in framing questions, choosing the most appropriate search engines, and working as part of a small group. When one group's computer failed, they decided to use books from the library to complete their topic and had no need to ask the teacher what to do. This use of initiative is an improvement from the previous inspection, which mentioned the lack of co-operation within classes in Year 4.

12. Pupils develop very good relationships with adults and with each other. They are very polite and courteous. They speak confidently to adults. The working atmosphere in classrooms benefits from the positive relationships pupils enjoy with their teachers. Pupils have a caring attitude towards their classmates and other pupils in the school. They are supportive of each other's work in the classroom, for example, when working on performance poetry in a lesson in Year 2, the pupils watched each other's performances with great respect, and made very positive appraisals of the work of others. The pupils work well together and are very good at taking turns. Pupils in all year groups share computers without fuss and work very well together.
13. The extent to which pupils show initiative and personal responsibility is excellent. They make a valuable contribution to school life. Pupils in Year 4 speak enthusiastically of tasks, such as acting as a mediator. The school council makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils from all year groups are members of the school council and treat their duties seriously. They feel that their views are taken into consideration and that they can make a difference to their community. One pupil in Year 4, for example, explained that younger pupils sometimes felt the need for support at playtimes. This was discussed in the school council and the 'buddy' and 'mediator' system evolved. Pupils treat property, including teaching resources, with a great deal of respect. In an art and design lesson in a Year 4 class, for instance, the pupils shared resources thoughtfully, taking care of them and, in all lessons, pupils tidy and put materials and equipment away, with little need for prompting by teachers. The school is free from litter or any other evidence of neglect for the surroundings. Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors and take an evident pride in their school.

Attendance

14. The pupils' attendance is good, but levels have fallen slightly since the last inspection. The attendance rate of 95.2 per cent for 2001/02 was above the national average and parents say that their children love coming to school. The pupils' good attendance levels have a positive impact on their learning. The greater than average unauthorised absence rate of 0.6 per cent is because parents have taken their children on holiday for more than two weeks or, despite frequent reminders, parents have not explained why their children were away from school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school has improved since the last inspection, with far higher proportions of teaching and learning that are good or better.
16. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is excellent overall. All the lessons observed were of a consistently high standard. Planning is meticulous and the organisation of a complex curriculum is flawless. Team teaching is a strong, positive feature, as it is throughout the school. Record keeping is impressive and children evaluate their own level of understanding in a simple but effective way. In Years 1 to 4, teaching is very good overall, with some that is excellent in each year. This consistently high quality throughout the school is the major reason for the pupils' high standards in academic and personal development. Teaching has many strengths, but two factors are particularly influential. First, the exemplary lesson planning that identifies what pupils of different abilities are to learn, and details the stimulating learning activities that help the learning intentions to be achieved. All planning establishes, very clearly, the way that pupils' learning is to be assessed and the information from the assessments is used to plan the next stage in pupils' learning. Planning is formally addressed in weekly team meetings, but there is daily consultation between

team members to ensure that the day's activities take account of pupils' learning in previous lessons.

17. The second influence on teaching and learning throughout the school is the excellence of the school's policy for teaching and learning. This innovative policy guides teachers on the strategies that best fit the different ways in which different pupils learn most effectively. By applying their very good knowledge of how pupils learn, teachers ensure that the learning activities planned for groups of pupils of different abilities are matched very carefully to their needs. Pupils are, therefore, consequently being motivated by being successful at a learning activity that has just the right amount of challenge for them. They respond with great enthusiasm and, because they are involved in tasks that are right for them, from an early age they maintain very good levels of concentration and a mature ability to work independently. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work, attitudes, and behaviour, are high and pupils strive to meet these expectations. Pupils have clear short-term targets for their learning and are, therefore, able to gauge the extent of their learning well. Teachers reinforce this well by encouraging frequent self-assessment, by pupils, of the extent to which they understand what they are being taught and whether, for example, they feel that they need extra help. Teachers place a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to ask questions and, as they get older, to debate. This means that, by Year 4, pupils are not only confident to ask questions of their teachers, but they also listen to other pupils and comment on what they have had to say.
18. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teaching is focused well and pupils are helped to set their own targets and recognise their own improvements. Class teachers and support assistants have positive approaches to pupils with special educational needs.
19. Pupils with special educational needs are mostly taught within the classroom setting. In literacy and numeracy lessons, appropriate work, adult support and specific resources are clearly identified. Teachers and non-teaching staff have clear knowledge of pupils' needs and know how to meet them. Non-teaching staff are involved in the planning which identifies opportunities for pupils to benefit from inclusion in whole-class activities and, also, to work in groups, or as individuals. The withdrawal of pupils for additional support is also planned and sited well, so that pupils can concentrate in an undisturbed environment. In science and the non-core subjects, teachers prepare simplified worksheets and appropriate texts so that pupils can achieve success. When non-teaching or other adult support is available, it is well planned. When there is no available adult support, teachers plan for pupils to work in pairs, or groups, with more able pupils so that they gain success. This strategy works particularly successfully in information and communication technology, where, for example, when working at computers, pupils occasionally work in mixed-ability pairs for some activities. Higher-attaining pupils gain from the opportunity to explain or demonstrate, which consolidates their learning, and lower-attaining pupils benefit from this one-to-one instruction.
20. The modification of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs is successful. It is usually in the form of support and expectation. The outcomes expected are modified so that pupils are included in lessons, but produce simpler and less work. Teaching materials, including simple computer programs, reading programmes and tactile mathematical equipment, help pupils to gain independence as they work things out for themselves.
21. Teachers and support assistants also ensure that special educational needs pupils are included in class discussions. Non-teaching assistants ensure pupils keep on working and promote good levels of learning. They are involved in teaching particular aspects, as identified in the lesson plans, for example, new letter patterns. They promote pupils' independence well, by setting clear objectives, and expecting pupils to play their part in reaching them during lessons, and in other activities, for example, when goals for improvements in behaviour are set. Overall, the quality of teaching and the effective use of additional help make a very good contribution to the achievement of pupils with special educational needs.
22. The needs of higher-attaining pupils are met very successfully by teachers' planning of learning activities that are appropriately challenging. In literacy and numeracy, these learning opportunities include weekly sessions when these pupils are withdrawn for specialist teaching.

23. Teachers generally have very good levels of subject knowledge although there is some variation between subjects with English and mathematics being particularly strong while art and design and music are satisfactory overall. The teaching of basic literacy skills is very good. Teachers are implementing the National Literacy Strategy very effectively. Teachers successfully use lessons in subjects other than English to develop pupils' writing and speaking and listening skills. Writing skills in particular are applied and developed very well in other subjects, for example in the varied approaches to writing about the results of scientific investigations. The National Numeracy Strategy is also implemented very well. Enthusiastic teaching of number work is leading to many pupils naming mathematics as their favourite subject. Good opportunities are created for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example, through measurement in design and technology, and in working with numbers, when working on map co-ordinates in geography.
24. The view of parents is that teaching is good and inspectors go further than this by judging it to be very good across the school as a whole. Parents have expressed some concerns about homework. Teachers use homework well. All pupils are given practice in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy that consolidates well their learning in lessons. Additionally, pupils are set occasional 'finding out' activities related to topics in other subjects. However, the amount of homework is sometimes extensive, and its timing could be more flexible than the current arrangement of being set on a Friday for return on the following Tuesday.

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

25. The curriculum is very good, meets statutory requirements and includes all required subjects. It is broad, well balanced and provides a stimulating and varied learning experience for all its pupils. The school is very successful in allocating appropriate time to all subjects. The organisation of morning sessions is particularly imaginative with time used very well and the timetable organised so that there is a good variety in the subjects being taught. The provision for art and design, design and technology, and music, is satisfactory. In all other subjects provision is at least good and often very good. The teaching of religious education follows Dorset's Agreed Syllabus and the daily act of collective worship meets requirements. There is a very good policy for personal, social and health education, which includes a drugs awareness theme. Sex education is not taught as a separate element.
26. The curriculum provided for the youngest children is a strength of the school. Detailed schemes of work cover the six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage, and very good principles for education in the early years effectively support the excellent teaching, management of support staff, and the broad range of stimulating resources. Activities adhere totally to the six areas of learning. Children receive a wide range of high quality, fun, learning experiences. Every minute of the day is used purposefully to promote learning and all abilities receive effective, targeted activities to match their needs. The provision for children's personal, social and health education is excellent. All staff are very successful in developing the personal, social and emotional development of children in the Foundation Stage, which allows them to become independent and co-operate very well, as they move from the Early Learning Goals⁵ to the National Curriculum.
27. In Years 1 to 4, the school is also very successful in promoting pupils' personal and social development. For example, pupils participate in sporting events, such as the sports week held in Summer 2002, and cultural events, such as a combined music and drama performance with other local schools, and a visit to a local art gallery to study the work of modern artists.
28. All subject areas are supported very well by very good policies, and schemes of work have been developed for all National Curriculum subjects, which have been reviewed by staff, co-ordinators and governors. Planning of the curriculum is very good with detailed documentation for each subject area in place.

⁵ The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

29. Opportunities for all pupils, including those who are talented and those with special educational needs, effectively ensure all have equal opportunity and access to the curriculum, reflecting the school's aim to prepare each child for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Support assistants have received very good training and are well briefed by teachers. The early identification of pupils with special educational needs is a good improvement since the last inspection. Individual education plans are detailed and are regularly updated. Review procedures for pupils are carried out according to requirements. The Code of Practice is fully in place. Teachers set appropriate tasks for those pupils identified as high attainers to ensure that they make progress in accordance with their abilities. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they make very good progress because of the high quality, well-structured support they receive. The special educational needs policy promotes equality of opportunity and there is a positive ethos in the school. Pupils with learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties or physical difficulties are all included sensitively through good lesson planning and daylong support through the very good teamwork of staff. Teachers, non-teaching assistants and lunchtime staff work well together to ensure that every pupil is supported well. Appropriate worksheets, reading materials and other resources are readily available for pupils as necessary.
30. As at the time of the last inspection, the school provides good opportunities for extra-curricular activities. The inspection team does not share the views of a significant minority of parents who feel that the school does not provide a good range of school clubs. However, although a wide range of activities is offered, this is presently limited to pupils in Year 4, nearly all of who make the most of these varied opportunities. The French club is very popular, and the pupils extend their learning in literacy through the poetry club. Pupils are able to develop their sporting skills, for example, through football and gymnastics clubs, and competitive games of football, netball and swimming with other local schools.
31. The school has maintained its satisfactory links with the community, but, as at the time of the last inspection, there are only limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work. Visitors to school, such as the community policeman, and workshops on the Egyptians enrich the curriculum. The school arranges an appropriate range of visits, for example, to the Roman Baths and on a field study of a local river. Two volunteers from the community make significant contributions to pupils' learning by helping in the classrooms each week. The school has established good links with local churches. Members of the clergy take part in some assemblies and a church is used for special services. The school encourages the pupils to think of others, through raising money for local and international charities. These aspects of the school's life enrich the curriculum and contribute very effectively to pupils' personal, spiritual and cultural development.
32. The school has established good links with its partner institutions. In reception, teachers visit the local pre-school groups and induction arrangements for children new to the school are good. The school is working closely with neighbouring schools to appoint a parent liaison officer, with a focus on encouraging parents to work more closely with schools on a shared approach to managing behaviour. The good links with middle schools ensure that the transfer from one stage of education to another is as smooth as possible. There are few opportunities, within the area, for staff from different schools to discuss the curriculum.

Provision for pupils' personal development

33. Significant improvements in provision have taken place since the previous inspection. At that time, the school did not provide enough opportunity for pupils to develop creativity, reflection and initiative. There is now a very good policy in place covering all aspects of personal development, including citizenship. This contributes very effectively to pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to lead confident, healthy and independent lives. Provision overall is now very good.
34. The provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved and is now good. The school recognises its importance and follows excellent curriculum guidelines, linked to the religious education syllabus. It is successful in producing highly reflective pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on values beyond the functional. For example, in the reception classes, the respect and care that children receive contribute very well to their spiritual development, and most children

respond by being polite, kind and helpful to others. In other year groups, high quality teaching promotes a feeling of self-esteem in all pupils, through sustained encouragement and praise. Pupils at Rushcombe know they are part of a very caring community.

35. Acts of collective worship are planned well. Pupils value these occasions and want to be involved. Many participate by saying their own prayers. In an assembly for Years 1 and 2, the headteacher created a very special moment as she unravelled the mystery surrounding the Indian celebration of 'Holi'. Pupils were so absorbed in the story that they gasped in disbelief as the king decided he was going to become the new God. Occasionally, however, the school misses valuable opportunities to bring the community even closer together, for example, during the inspection there was little evidence of communal hymn singing, or using moments in assemblies for reflection.
36. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is very good and contributes well to their personal growth. Pupils of all ages distinguish very clearly between right and wrong. The school's positive approach successfully promotes high standards of behaviour. The home-school agreement also establishes a secure framework of expectations for pupils, staff and parents. Teaching and support staff provide very good role models, and the vast majority of pupils do not want to upset or disappoint others. In striving for excellence, the school is seeking to improve its current provision in order to cater as effectively as possible for the very small minority of pupils who come into the school 'not socially prepared'.
37. Teachers nurture pupils' social development particularly well. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in learning and decision making. The school rightly regards its pupils as stakeholders and its ethos allows pupils to become successful learners. Pupils regularly share thoughts in lessons and express feelings during discussion. Collaboration and co-operation are very strong features of all lessons. 'Buddies' and 'mediators' provide effective support for pupils who experience difficulties in the playground and the School Council exercises its duties in a reflective, mature manner. Educational visits, after-school clubs, and school concerts, not only promote independence very well, but also foster social co-operation. Pupils are encouraged to think of people outside their school community, for example, by collecting money for many charities.
38. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils gain valuable knowledge about other beliefs in their study of world religions. Visits from, for example, a person who follows the Hindu faith further enhance pupils' learning. Pupils have a very secure understanding of the lives of others, through their links with Nigeria, as part of their personal, social and health education lessons, and they develop an appreciation of literature from different cultures. Pupils express feelings and emotions when listening to music. Multi-cultural awareness is promoted well through debate and questioning about moral and social issues. Pupils discuss topics, such as 'The Untouchables', and Indian castes, in order to gain greater insight. Events during a 'Creative Fortnight' provide pupils with an intensive array of workshops, visits and visitors. These give pupils a real flavour of the importance of art and music. However, there is still room for improvement in this aspect of provision, so that creatively talented pupils can reach their full potential.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school has maintained the good standard of care found at the time of the last inspection. The school's strengths lie in its very good monitoring and supporting of pupils' personal development and the staff's close attention to promoting good behaviour. These initiatives have resulted in confident and mature pupils who understand the consequences of their actions. The school has dealt successfully with the issues relating to care which were raised in the previous inspection.
40. The school provides very good educational and personal support for its pupils. The teachers know the pupils very well and treat them with respect. Other adults working in school including teaching assistants, office staff and midday supervisors also make valuable contributions in caring for pupils. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Staff keep track of pupils' personal, social and emotional development, by listening to pupils, especially through circle time⁶, and the opportunity that this provides for discussion of matters of personal

⁶ Circle time is a session provided for pupils to discuss certain matters as a class, following strict rules about listening to others and taking turns to speak.

relevance, such as bullying. Teachers make detailed and helpful comments about pupils' progress in pupils' annual reports. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure active pursuance of racial equality and for ensuring that suitable safeguards for Internet safety protect pupils.

41. The school has good procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Appropriate procedures are in place for emergency evacuations and testing of electrical equipment. A risk assessment has been undertaken, but the health and safety policy does not include details of procedures for risk assessment.
42. The school has adequate arrangements for child protection. The headteacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and carries out her duties effectively. The school recognises the need to train another senior member of staff to ensure good coverage. The absence of a child protection policy raised in the last inspection report has been dealt with and the school has drawn up an appropriate policy. However, as at the time of the last inspection, not all non-teaching staff are aware of the procedures to report any concerns. The arrangements for pupils in public care have not been formalised.
43. The arrangements for first-aid are good and the pupils receive good care and attention. A member of staff is qualified in first-aid and several others have received basic training. The school keeps good records of treatment and informs parents as necessary. The school does not keep records when medication is given.
44. The school's arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The issue of incomplete registers raised at the time of the last inspection has been addressed. Registers are completed correctly and monitoring of attendance has improved through the use of a computerised system. Unexplained absences are swiftly followed up and the school works with the educational welfare officer when attendance or punctuality is a concern.
45. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. This is not a highly regimented community, but one where the school's ethos of treating everyone with courtesy and consideration touches all aspects of school life. The staff have high expectations of behaviour and are very good role models. Rewards such as 'VIP's' and 'star of the week' are effective, and sanctions are rarely needed. The school has invested considerable time and effort into ensuring that staff can manage the small number of pupils with behaviour difficulties. These strategies are being developed by staff and are already having a positive impact.
46. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The school has a brief anti-bullying statement and parents feel that procedures to deal with bullying are good. In the playground some older pupils take their roles as mediators and buddies very seriously. They support pupils who have no one to play with and help pupils who have fallen out with each other.

Assessment

47. The school has very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The testing and recording system is very well developed and the information gained is used consistently and effectively. There is a consistency of marking that enables pupils to gain a clear understanding of their capabilities. There is regular assessment of pupils with special educational needs and the information is used to prepare effective individual education plans, which are used well to support pupils.
48. From the time children start school, their achievements and progress are carefully tracked. Assessment procedures at the Foundation Stage are very secure. Initial assessments to establish children's various stages of development on entry to the school are used very effectively to plan future work that matches ability, set individual targets for development and identify children who may have learning difficulties. Day-to-day assessment and tracking are of very high quality.
49. Teachers ensure pupils have good knowledge of their learning and motivate them well. Very good use is made of test results. A variety of tests and assessments provide the information needed for class teachers to maintain comprehensive records of pupil's attainment. Teachers analyse results

of assessments and adjust their lessons and plans to challenge pupils appropriately. Results are used to check the progress of individuals and year groups and to set school targets. Data analysis is developed well in the school and teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of the information provided.

50. Assessments of pupils with special educational needs are managed very well, used effectively, and promote pupils' progress. All staff work together well as a team, and the monitoring of pupils is very good on a day-to-day basis. Procedures for monitoring, both termly and annually, are well established. Findings are used well to inform planning. Overall, assessment and monitoring procedures and processes support and enhance the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The school's partnership with its parents and carers is satisfactory. The parents are very interested in their children's education and the school provides parents with good information. The school's links with parents are not strong and the school has had only limited success in involving the majority of parents in the work of the school.
52. The parents and carers are satisfied with the school, but there is a wide range of opinions. Some feel that the school is very good and send their children here from some distance away, whilst others are dissatisfied about many aspects of school life. The vast majority consider that teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard. They say that their children like coming to school and that they are making good progress. They are pleased about the good standard of behaviour and feel that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection team shares these positive views. Of the parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, over a third are unhappy about the level of extra-curricular activities. The inspection finds that there is a good range of clubs, although these are restricted to the oldest pupils.
53. A significant minority of parents who returned the questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting feel that the school does not work closely with parents. The inspection team judges that the school has satisfactory links with its parents. The home-school links books are an effective means of communication between teachers and parents and evidence indicates that the school generally responds appropriately when parents, come into school to discuss their concerns. The school has recently conducted a survey of parents' views on behaviour. The school does not do enough to reach out to its parents and some parents do not feel welcome in school. Parents are not currently invited into celebration assemblies.
54. The information, which the school provides for parents, is good and helps parents to support their children's learning. New parents are well informed through visits and meetings. The prospectus and annual governors reports are informative, but, as at the time of the last inspection, the governors' annual report does not contain all the required information. The school invites parents to useful 'meet the base' sessions, at the beginning of the year, and parents receive helpful information about the topics their children will be studying. Newsletters provide parents with timely and relevant information, as well as celebrating the school's successes. The pupils' annual reports are good and provide parents with information about what their children can do and how they can improve their work. Termly consultations with teachers offer parents good opportunities to review and set new targets for their children.
55. The parents' involvement with the school is satisfactory. A few parents are very involved in the work of the school, but many remain passive, on the sidelines. The parent-governors are supportive, but a position for a parent-governor remains vacant. The active parent-teacher association is also struggling for members, but the vast majority of parents enjoy attending the events that the group organises. All parents have signed the home-school agreement.
56. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is good. The school values the help offered by the parents who assist in the classrooms. Most parents are very interested in their children's education and attendance at the termly consultations is very high. Parents are very supportive of the work their children do at home and this has a positive impact on the children's progress. A

significant minority of parents have concerns about homework, mainly because they feel there is too much to be completed in a limited time. The inspection team find that homework makes a good contribution to learning, but the timing and the actual amounts of homework being set for different year groups are in need of review.

57. The staff in the reception classes develop very good relationships with parents. They provide high quality information. Formal visits, supplemented by a staged admission programme, establish very strong links between home and school. Consequently, parents are supportive and make a very valuable contribution towards their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff

58. The headteacher provides very good leadership and ensures an excellent educational direction for the school. The clarity of her vision of the school's aims and values is reflected in practical terms through the emphasis on these in all the school's work. She sets high standards for all members of the school community, and a shared sense of purpose and commitment enables these high standards to be realised. She has a leadership style that aims very successfully for ongoing school improvement, through purposeful direction, team spirit and the highest possible quality of teaching. In the latter, she leads by example, having demonstrated, by taking the place of an absent teacher during the inspection, that the quality of her own teaching is of a very high calibre.
59. All teaching staff have areas of specific responsibility within the management structure of the school. The successful performance of roles and responsibilities by individual staff results from a combination of their own enthusiasm and expertise and the guidance they receive through the school's very good policies and procedures relating to leadership and management. The co-ordinator for Early Years is a practitioner of the highest calibre. Provision of such impressive quality is directly attributable to her leadership and organisational skills.
60. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the provision very well. Staff are deployed very well, so that the school's policy of inclusion is met very effectively. By working closely with class teachers, the co-ordinator ensures that pupils benefit from thoughtful planning and appropriate inclusion or withdrawal. She also works effectively with subject co-ordinators to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately adapted and resourced to meet the needs of all pupils. Individual education plans and annual reviews are managed well. Record keeping is very good and pupils' files are kept up to date very efficiently.
61. The very good special educational needs policy clearly sets out the school's philosophy and provision for pupils. It is shared appropriately with teachers and parents. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is clearly stated. Arrangements for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs, including class teaching and withdrawal activities, are spelt out clearly. The role of the co-ordinator for special educational needs is clearly stated. Support from outside the school is outlined, including local education authority learning support services, support for sensory impairment and educational psychologist support. The requirements are clearly outlined and there is local education authority guidance on what should be provided for each level of support.
62. There is a very good match between the policy and practice. Processes are firmly in place so that pupils are identified as early as possible, parents are involved and helpful individual education plans provide very good support for pupils. Teaching and non-teaching staff work together very well to ensure that pupils are included in whole class activities and their individual needs are met in one-to-one and group sessions.
63. Strategic planning is based on practical analysis of current school practice and an annual audit of special educational needs funds. Staffing levels and placement of support are considered well. Specific funds are used appropriately and provision is reviewed regularly to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs have equal access to all that the school has to offer. There is well

planned training for all staff, including non-teaching assistants. The co-ordinator monitors classroom teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs.

64. The headteacher has achieved very good delegation of responsibility that is strengthened by her absolute commitment to ensuring good professional development for all staff. By responding to the needs of individual staff, and the school as a whole, ongoing staff development has established a high degree of consistency in approaches to lesson planning and evaluation, in the very effective tracking of individual pupils' progress and in addressing priorities in school development. School development planning is very purposeful and incorporates action plans with clear targets for all aspects of the school's work. The major focus of development planning is used as the theme of an annual two-day residential conference that is attended by teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Governors also have opportunity to attend.
65. The very effective deputy headteacher provides good reinforcement of the educational direction for school development. Subject and other co-ordinators provide further very good support through their leadership, management and knowledge of performance in their respective areas of responsibility. Several of these co-ordinators are new to their roles but, due to the clear expectations of the headteacher, all are quickly developing the effectiveness of their management. Judged collectively, senior management and other key staff with specific responsibilities are providing very good leadership and management.
66. Overall, school improvement since the last inspection in 1997 has been very good. There have been many staff changes, but the headteacher's leadership has maintained the momentum for improvement. Most significantly, there has been a good improvement in the areas identified for development by the last inspection, and in pupils' standards and in the quality of teaching and learning. However, although the last inspection judged Rushcombe to be a good school, nearly all the major judgements made at that time now show improvement. Such a breadth of improvement is a tremendous achievement by staff and pupils alike.

The Governing Body

67. The governing body is fulfilling its responsibilities and statutory duties satisfactorily. It shares the headteacher's vision and is committed to maintaining the school's strengths. The governors are supportive of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. This arises from the information provided by the headteacher and the very strong commitment of the governors responsible for links with literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and special educational needs. However, the governors are operating at less than full strength, as there are four vacancies, and the governing body is having difficulty attracting candidates. This leads to a large workload for a small number of governors and a limit to what they can achieve. For example, governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of the school's work, nor do they take a strategic role in preparing the school improvement plan. Consequently, the governors' role in shaping the direction of the school is limited.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance

68. There has been good improvement in procedures for self-evaluation since the last inspection. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its own performance are now very good in every respect. There are high levels of rigour and consistency in its procedures for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' work. Teaching is monitored, through regular lesson observations, and this has been very effective in refining teachers' skills. Subject leaders monitor standards of pupils' work, through periodic work sampling. Further monitoring of standards occurs through analysis of National Curriculum test results and additional work sampling. Test results are analysed in commendable detail in terms of performance by different groups of pupils such as gender or ability as shown by past performance. The data is used very constructively to predict pupils' future performance and set specific learning targets for pupils.
69. The headteacher has provided excellent guidance for different forms of monitoring, with clear criteria to be used by co-ordinators in their monitoring activities. Through good use of part-time

staff, and of time, there are good arrangements for ensuring that co-ordinators have time to carry out their responsibilities.

70. The school has policies for subject leadership, monitoring and review, and performance management, and these are having a strong impact on school improvement. The subject co-ordinators review annual developments in their subjects, and these evaluations are used well to identify clear targets for the following year. The arrangements for performance management set clear targets for teachers to work towards within their own professional development.

Strategic use of resources

71. Financial matters are managed very well. Very good use is made of information and communication technology for the storage of information and for planning and managing the budget. Secure accounting systems produce accurate and useful management information, so that governors are able to reflect on how they are getting the best value for the school. The recent audit in February 2003 found that systems are good and that the recommendations of the previous audit had been fully met. Four minor recommendations were made, which have already been met. The school is using funds very well to improve the quality of provision and the standard of accommodation and has very good plans within the current school improvement plan to continue with this programme of improvement making very good use of the funds available.
72. Specific grants, for example, those for pupils with special educational needs and for staff training, are used very effectively for their designated purpose. Funding has been used effectively to improve pupils' achievement through raised self-esteem. Governors manage the finances of the school well and give appropriate consideration to the effectiveness of their spending. Resources are obtained at the most competitive prices and the school uses them in the best possible way. Day-to-day routine matters are dealt with promptly and teachers are left to get on with their teaching uninterrupted.

Principles of best value

73. The governors monitor the school budget rigorously and on a regular basis. There are good financial controls in place. The principles of best value are applied very well. The school seeks competitive tenders for all major expenditure decisions to ensure good value for money. The school assesses its performance in comparison with other schools. Day-to-day administration is efficient and computers are used very effectively for placing orders and maintaining financial records.
74. The school receives an average amount of income per pupil and spends this wisely. The very good effectiveness of the school is evident in the high standards being achieved by pupils and the very good quality of education that they receive. For these reasons, the school is providing very good value for money.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

75. Overall, the level of staffing is good, which is an improvement from the time of the last inspection. The range of teaching and support staff and their experience meet the demands of the curriculum well. There is a genuine team approach that supports new staff well and they establish themselves quickly. Support staff feel that the guidance given by the school is effective at helping them to fulfil their roles. The newly qualified teacher benefits from very good support as the school has implemented very effective procedures. He is released from class teaching on a regular basis and the school has helped him to draw up a well-structured programme to further his professional development using this release time. The school has an effective handbook and detailed job descriptions that make responsibilities clear.
76. Overall, the accommodation is very good. Inside the building, the school has made good use of space. There are large areas for each year group, which provide flexible teaching spaces. They are in good condition, well decorated, and provide attractive learning environments. There are two large rooms, called the 'Study' and the 'Studio', which are airy and bright areas. They are of more than adequate size for any class in the school. The 'Study' is also used as a mini computer-suite,

and houses eight computers. The 'Studio' contains many of the percussion and other musical resources and is used as a music room. These areas give the opportunity for very flexible teaching arrangements. The outdoor areas are attractive, used effectively, and well maintained. The woods and 'wild area', used for nature walks and other activities, is a useful resource for promoting environmental education. The accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage is spacious and attractive. There is a good range of high quality learning resources and outdoor play equipment. Outdoor areas are used well to extend children's knowledge.

77. Overall, the provision of resources is good which is similar to the situation at the last inspection. Resources in most subject areas are good and none are less than satisfactory. Information and communication technology is particularly well resourced, with the school having a ratio of computers to pupils that is well above that recommended in government guidance.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. In order to improve the standards of work and the quality of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- Raise pupils' standards in art and design, design and technology and music by:
 - reviewing long-term planning in these subjects and amending this to ensure that there is a clear, step-by-step progression in pupils' learning of the basic skills;
 - establishing a balance between the different aspects of these subjects as indicated in National Curriculum programmes of Study;
 - introducing suitable forms of permanent recording of pupils' work;
 - in music, developing subject expertise and a greater understanding of the standards pupils can and should achieve. (*Paragraphs 6, 7, 127, 128, 131, 132, 153, 154, 157 and 160*)

 - Increase the Governing Body's contribution to school strategic planning through:
 - early involvement in the process of school improvement planning;
 - developing a planned programme of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. (*Paragraph 67*)

 - Extend parental impact on the work of the school by:
 - developing further procedures for consulting parents;
 - creating more opportunities for parents to share in celebrating pupils' achievements and the school's successes. (*Paragraphs 51 and 53*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

55

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

25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	12	23	17	3	0	0	0
Percentage	22	42	31	5	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

	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	306
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	43

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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	29	31	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	28	25
	Girls	31	31	30
	Total	57	59	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (97)	98 (99)	92 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	25	27
	Girls	31	30	30
	Total	58	55	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (99)	92 (100)	95 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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	242	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	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	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	27.8

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	222

Financial year	2002/03
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	£
Total income	604,758
Total expenditure	625,388
Expenditure per pupil	2,044
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,000
Balance carried forward to next year	17,370

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	275
Number of questionnaires returned	92
Percentage of questionnaires returned	33

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	37	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	57	2	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	46	14	9	0
The teaching is good.	50	43	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	49	11	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	38	10	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	39	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	49	12	9	2
The school is well led and managed.	42	47	3	5	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	46	4	3	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	33	17	18	14

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

79. Provision overall is outstanding, with many excellent features.
80. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well because the quality of teaching is outstanding. It is rare to find such consistently high standards. Provision has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection. Opportunities for independent learning have improved considerably and the development of children's personal and social skills is now impressively good. It permeates every facet of provision. The Foundation Stage is rightly regarded highly by parents. All staff present a totally professional, but friendly, introduction to children's education. It is not surprising that children blossom and flourish as they move through the school, after such a positive start.
81. Children enter the reception classes during the autumn term. Younger children attend on a part time basis until the start of the spring term. A good range of information for parents, combined with pre-visits and initial part-time attendance, mean that children settle happily into school. They enter with an above-average level of attainment. The area of mathematical development is particularly strong and children's personal and social skills are well developed. Children are confident and articulate and display good speaking and listening skills. Early reading and writing skills are not quite as advanced but children of all abilities make very rapid progress. Most of the children have already achieved the Early Learning Goals, and are on course to move into Year 1 with language, linguistic and numeracy skills that are well above average.
82. The organisation of a complex curriculum is flawless. Every minute of the day is used purposefully to promote learning and all abilities receive effective, focused, input. Team teaching is a strong positive feature. Many activities are taught in small groups so that individual children are targeted at exactly the right level. Planning is meticulous and adheres totally to the six areas of learning for children this age. The school provides a stimulating range of exciting experiences that accelerate learning very successfully. Provision for children with special educational needs is excellent. Record keeping is impressive and provides a wealth of information about individual children's achievement. It clearly identifies levels of understanding, rates of progress and targets for future development. It forms a secure base on which to build. Children evaluate their own level of understanding well, on a simple but accurate level. Homework provides very good opportunity for children and parents to work together on a lively and interesting range of activities. Teachers and teaching assistants display enthusiasm and commitment. They provide excellent role models and are of high calibre. Relationships are very strong and, although two of the current members of staff are new, teamwork is developing well.
83. Accommodation is spacious and attractive. Vibrant displays celebrate children's success across all six areas of learning. The school grounds are used very effectively to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Outdoor play areas form an integral part of learning and effectively take the curriculum into the playground. The quality of resources is good and makes a very positive contribution to children's learning. There is a wide range of reading books to interest children of all abilities and these successfully encourage the development of good reading habits.
84. The co-ordinator is a skilled practitioner of the highest calibre, who leads by example. Provision of such high quality is directly attributable to her leadership and impressive organisational skills. Every aspect of provision is carefully monitored and evaluated and there is total commitment towards striving for excellence.

Personal, social and emotional development

85. The teaching in this area of learning is excellent. Most children become very self-assured and are naturally at ease with adults and other children. They demonstrate real pride in their own achievement and enjoy the success of others. 'Review Time' is a particularly valuable occasion, when children come together in small groups to find out what activities others had been doing. They enjoy being inquisitive and frequently applaud spontaneously when they like someone else's work.

Behaviour is always of a very high standard. In one session, many children were intrigued to find out whether anyone had managed to make a drawbridge to get into the giant's castle. One very capable boy showed great maturity as he asked his friend whether he would make his drawbridge in the same way if he did it again. Children of all abilities confidently contributed because they knew their ideas were valued. There are numerous other examples, such as 'Talk Time' and 'Golden Rules', which develop very positive attitudes and behaviour.

86. All children become very aware of the feelings of others and develop strong relationships. There is a sense of mutual respect and children know they are part of a deeply caring community. Work revolves totally around co-operation, negotiation, sharing and self-esteem. In an action-packed physical education lesson, levels of co-operation were high, as children worked with a partner. They showed genuine appreciation of each other's work and confidently expressed opinions. One pair spontaneously asked the teacher if anyone would like to know more about what they were doing. Several were keen to respond. Routines are very well established and children work with impressive independence. Representatives from the reception classes also make a valuable contribution to the work of the School Council.

Communication, language and literacy

87. Most children get off to a very good start in developing their communication, language and literacy skills, because they are offered a wealth of opportunities to express ideas and opinions, learn early writing skills, and share books with adults. All children receive a high level of challenge. In lessons where the quality of teaching is outstanding, children's learning is extensive. A good proportion of the children currently in reception will move into Year 1 with well above average levels of attainment. The consistently high quality input by both teaching and support staff makes a major contribution to children's success.
88. Speaking and listening skills are developed particularly well. Children are encouraged to question and discuss work with a friend in many lessons. There are also many opportunities for children to engage in extended conversations and develop listening skills. The 'Rushcombe Post Office' provides a busy meeting place for posting letters or buying lottery tickets. Regular postal deliveries throughout the day stimulate animated conversation and widespread excitement.
89. Children of all abilities are given numerous opportunities to develop their writing and handwriting skills. 'Thank you' cards contain recognisable marks or words, and some more able children write short accurate sentences. Nearly all write their name legibly and develop a neat handwriting style. Opportunities for spontaneous independent writing are widespread, and intense, focused sessions on letter sounds and word patterns, at each child's individual level, are very effective.
90. In an excellent lesson on writing a shopping list for the giant's 'thank you lunch', everyone knew the initial sound as they wrote eggs and bread on their list. They made plausible attempts at words such as lemon and the teacher supported children who lacked the confidence to write unaided. Most were 'green for go' or, put plainly, ready to get on by themselves. They frequently referred to the visual prompts on their tables and could regularly be heard repeating 'say, hear, write' to themselves as they devised their own shopping list. A very enjoyable, purposeful learning experience. Resources are good and children use very appropriate computer programs effectively to extend their knowledge of letter sounds.
91. Reading is a delightful and rewarding experience. Children make very swift progress because they are taught so well. In discussion about books, children of all abilities perceived themselves as readers. They displayed a high level of general knowledge. One very capable boy went into great detail about killer whales. He read unaided. Other children were clear in their preferences and showing they enjoyed the humour in stories most.
92. Parents play an important part in their children's reading success. They regularly share a wide variety of stories. Many strike up a helpful, informal written dialogue with their child's teacher that aids progress greatly.

Mathematical development

93. Most children enter the school with very secure levels of mathematical understanding. They make excellent progress because teaching is of a consistently high quality. They are confident with numbers to 20, and often far beyond, and have a secure understanding of shapes, such as triangles, rectangles and circles. Higher-attaining children have a good practical understanding of cones, cuboids and spheres in their model making. Children of all abilities attempt to solve problems right from the start. In one very well planned activity, the teacher successfully introduced the difficult concept of partitioning by dividing the children into two sets according to age. The idea was simple but very effective. When children moved on to trying to find different ways of dividing the ten leaves on the giant's beanstalk, some made incredible progress. They co-operated with their partner and conversation revolved totally around sorting out the problem in hand. Levels of success were very high because the children were well motivated by the task. A rich variety of interesting activities, including counting exercises on the computer, improve number recognition further. Teaching assistants support groups and individuals very effectively during activities to ensure all children are fully involved and making appropriate progress. All adults promote mathematical language very well. Every activity provides a high quality learning experience and children of all abilities enjoy the challenge of mathematics. Most children have advanced mathematical skills by the time they reach Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

94. As in many other areas of learning, standards are well above average by the time children reach Year 1, because teaching is of the highest quality and children make excellent progress. Most children have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.
95. 'Let's Explore' sessions provide a rich variety of activities that allow children to experiment and discover. Teachers plan well around themes and use visitors, such as the police and fire fighters, to enhance learning. Lessons include numerous opportunities for children to explore textures and materials, experiment with construction tools, and develop impressively independent computer skills. In one activity, children demonstrated high levels of understanding, as they added water to a bowl of breakfast cereal to find out what happened. One boy explained in meticulous detail how the water had soaked into his Weetabix; another went to great lengths to show that the sugar in his bowl had also disappeared. They demonstrated high levels of understanding.
96. The children learn about significant events. They offer a wealth of information about their birthdays and are very aware that other celebrations, such as Mothers' Day, are also very important occasions. Very effective use of the school grounds, and other places of interest, extends children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are currently preparing to plant a colour garden as part of their investigation work.

Physical development

97. The children make impressively good gains in developing physical skills, as a result of excellent teaching. Currently, children in reception have already achieved the Early Learning Goals. In one lesson, children changed quickly with complete independence. All knew the routines well. They were very aware of each other's space as they moved round the hall and many showed good control as they balanced on hands and feet. Levels of co-operation were very high. With further encouragement and experimentation, children started to balance on different parts of the body. The lesson was packed with learning and children succeeded because expectations were very high and children's creativity was not stifled.
98. In addition to the school playground, children have unlimited access to their own outdoor play area. They use the space well and display great enjoyment. A well-structured programme enables children to extend their physical skills well, co-operate successfully, and work as a team.
99. Children make good use of a variety of tools for drawing, colouring and cutting. Most show a high level of dexterity as they work with pencils, scissors and paintbrushes of various sizes. Their manipulative skills also develop well, as they learn to roll, squeeze and knead malleable materials.

Creative development

100. The high quality teaching ensures children are given a rich variety of opportunities to develop their creative skills and to express their feelings through music, story making and imaginative play. They make very good progress and reach Year 1 with above average skills. In one very effective lesson, children demonstrated good control and impressive feeling for colour as they tried to match shades in the style of a Van Gogh painting. Discussion was of very high quality, as children decided which part of the painting they wanted to reproduce. Some children found the task very challenging, but all succeeded through determination and concentration. They were immediately rewarded when their work was put in place on the display. It was a very productive and purposeful fun learning experience.
101. Children regularly have opportunities to sing songs and nursery rhymes. 'The Grand Old Duke of York' was a particular favourite during the week of the inspection. They sang with vitality and enthusiasm.
102. Children use painting programs on the computer to create imaginative artwork. Visits to places of artistic interest, such as Poole Gallery, further enhance the provision and contribute to the high standards achieved.

ENGLISH

103. Pupils in Year 2 attain standards that are well above the national average. The standards of pupils in Year 4 are similarly well above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. By the end of Year 1, many pupils show increasing confidence in speaking and begin to use more formal speech patterns. Younger pupils are given opportunities to practice these skills in their literacy lessons. An example of this was in a good lesson in Year 2, when pupils were encouraged to make up their own definitions of words in a text. Their answers were thoughtful and articulate. Pupils listened to each other and made positive suggestions about ways of improving definitions. Pupils are happy about discussing their work, and express themselves clearly. In an excellent lesson for pupils in Year 3, the teacher discussed the ways in which pupils could add an element of performance to the poems they had written. The pupils responded well and were eager to volunteer ideas. In a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils talked clearly about the way they would research their project on India and framed questions skilfully. Again, pupils listened to each other attentively and volunteered suggestions about making questions more effective. During the inspection there was some use of role-play in religious education to develop speaking and listening skills. Learning support assistants in the classroom have a valuable part to play. They clarify questions, explain new vocabulary and encourage pupils to offer answers.
104. Standards in reading are well above national expectations. Younger pupils develop skills that help them to read the text. Pupils in Year 2 read many words confidently, and talk about their reading books. The higher attaining pupils in Year 2 use a variety of strategies to work out words that they find difficult, such as splitting up the words, sounding out the letters, and gaining clues from the illustrations. Some pupils read expressively, as a result of the good models that teachers provide in shared reading sessions. However, even some of the higher-attaining pupils in this age range were unsure how to use their knowledge of the alphabet to locate books. Most pupils were good at talking about their books and some spoke confidently about what the likely outcome of the story might be, or the feelings of the characters. Older pupils read fluently and expressively. None had any difficulty with the words in their reading books. Most could talk knowledgeably about authors and books. They expressed preferences about types of book, and talked about characters and events in stories in a thoughtful and articulate way. Most pupils enjoy reading and read both fiction and non-fiction texts. The home-school booklets foster links between home and school very effectively by getting parents and carers to add comments, which help children to develop their reading skills. There is a library that is centrally situated. It is an attractive and welcoming space. There is a good range of both fiction and non-fiction material and the books are coded either by colour or simplified Dewey numbers. Pupils, especially the older ones, use these classifications confidently to help them when finding information. There are also computers in the library area, which pupils use to access the Internet and CD-ROMs, such as an electronic encyclopaedia to

help them with their work. Class libraries provide extra reading material. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of the support for reading.

105. From the samples of pupils' written work seen during the inspection the standards attained in Years 1 and 2 are well above the national average, and there are many pupils in Year 2 who are producing work that is already at the higher-than-expected Level 3. Teachers follow the school's policy on handwriting closely, and pupils develop cursive handwriting quickly and use capital letters and full stops to demarcate sentences. Most pupils spell short, common words and longer, regular words correctly. Where the words are spelt incorrectly, the majority of pupils manage a version that is phonetically sound. Older pupils have very good standards of written work, and much of what was seen in Year 4 during the inspection approached the standards normally not attained until Year 6. The work seen in pupils' books covers the various areas of the National Curriculum well. Teachers set pupils a challenging and stimulating range of work that gives them experience of a wide range of writing styles. There were some lively play-scripts on the theme of 'The Romans' and many of these had been drafted and re-drafted using computers. The school makes good use of links between subjects and literacy is supported well in all subject areas. The higher-attaining pupils organise ideas into grammatically correct sentences and show an increasing understanding of speech and question marks. In a display of poems, pupils created a mood and setting by imaginative language choices, for example, *'The sea was a wavy blue ribbon that slopped against the creaking wooden planks of the ancient boat'*. Teachers develop pupils' spelling by regularly setting spelling lists as homework.
106. Teachers take opportunities in other subjects to encourage pupils to increase their technical vocabulary and their use of spoken English. There were some good examples of this in information and communication technology lessons where teachers used terms like 'search engine' and 'hyperlink' and encouraged pupils to use them. This was also the case in art, where the teachers were careful to use the correct names for the various media, such as, 'charcoal', 'oil' and 'pastels', as a natural part of the teaching.
107. The teaching seen during the inspection ranged from good to excellent. Overall, the teaching of the subject is very good and this teaching has helped pupils achieve very well. Skilful questioning and explanations ensure that pupils understand their work. Praise is used well to show pupils that their work is valued and to encourage higher standards. Teachers follow the National Literacy Strategy closely in their planning and this ensures that pupils cover the various writing styles that are needed for the National Curriculum. In a very good lesson in Year 2, on using homophones, the teacher set a brisk pace and made effective use of a variety of strategies that kept pupils thinking about words that sound the same but are spelt differently. Teachers mark the pupils' work thoroughly, make regular comments to encourage and instruct, and give effective points for improvement. This is consistent across all classes and helps to ensure good progress. The targets for the lesson are shared with the class so that they are all clear about what they will be learning. Relationships are very good and teachers manage behaviour well. As a result, pupils work hard, show interest and sustain their concentration throughout the lesson. Pupils co-operate well in paired and group work and the subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the moral and social development of pupils.
108. The literacy co-ordinator is an experienced teacher who has been in charge of this area of school life for some time. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of National Curriculum levels and this is helpful in assessing the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. There is a comprehensive system of assessment that measures pupils' progress both in the short and longer term, and planning is modified to take account of the information gathered. There are very good resources for the subject. The school has developed the use of information and communication technology to support literacy very well. Pupils in all year groups use computers to draft and re-draft work for improvement. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of the effective arrangements for their support. There is good communication between the learning support assistants and class teachers so the planning for these sessions takes account of the main focus of the work that the rest of the class is doing.

MATHEMATICS

109. Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be above average and the quality of teaching and learning was good. The quality of teaching is now very good overall in Years 1 to 4, and pupils make greater progress. Consequently, standards have risen.
110. The results of the National Curriculum assessment tests in 2002 indicated that, by the end of Year 2, the number of pupils reaching average and higher levels was well above average, when compared to schools nationally. However, when compared with similar schools, standards were average overall, and the proportion reaching higher levels was above average. This represented a slight decline on previous results. Well-documented evidence clearly shows the reason for the dip. A group of pupils in that year group, despite making very good progress, did not achieve the same high standards as others. In Year 4, standards were well above average.
111. Inspection findings support the view that the standards attained by the current pupils are well above average overall. The group of pupils previously mentioned still find mathematics a difficult subject, but continue to develop a greater understanding, through well-targeted support. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school also make very good progress because they receive work at exactly the right level to match their needs. Boys and girls achieve equally well, both in lessons and in national tests. More able pupils reach standards appropriate to their ability because they are constantly challenged and motivated. The consistently high quality of teaching and the school's impressive procedures for tracking progress, play a significant part in the standards achieved.
112. In Year 2, the vast majority of pupils have very secure numeracy skills. They display high levels of understanding across all elements of the mathematics curriculum. Problem-solving activities permeate every aspect of provision and are the key to the school's success. Pupils of all abilities have the confidence to apply a variety of strategies to their work. Higher-attaining pupils display an impressive breadth and depth of knowledge. They have a good basic understanding of difficult topics, such as fractions, and display very secure knowledge of shapes, co-ordinates and complex symmetry. Pupils of average attainment demonstrate a good knowledge of three-dimensional shapes. Lower-attaining pupils work at a simpler level, but still demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge confidently.
113. By Year 4, pupils have made very good progress because they are taught so well. The most noticeable strength of provision can be found, not only in lessons, but also in looking at previous work. Problem solving develops strongly and is impressively good by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils of all abilities display mature, logical thinking and use mathematical vocabulary very well, both in their written work and in discussion. In a Year 4 lesson, several pupils demonstrated very logical thinking in their work, involving numbers to two decimal places. Activities matched pupils' ability perfectly, and they were highly motivated by challenging tasks and computer games. Throughout the school, pupils have a wealth of opportunity to develop numeracy skills through other subjects and by using information and communication technology. Pupils incorporate graphs on rock samples into their science topic and produce tally charts to show where they would like to live in St. Lucia. Information and communication technology links are very strong. In Year 4, pupils use the Logo screen turtle very effectively to show how a Roman soldier moves around the city, and they produce temperature comparisons between Bangalore and London.
114. The quality of teaching is very good overall in Years 1 to 4. In Years 1 and 2, two excellent lessons were observed. In these lessons, expectations were exceptionally high and the pace of learning incredibly fast. Teachers throughout the school are very confident with the National Numeracy Strategy and teach basic skills very well. Planning is exemplary and tasks precisely match the needs of all abilities. Mental calculation forms a purposeful start to lessons and motivates pupils well. These sessions develop pupils' speaking and listening skills very effectively. In discussion, pupils are articulate and enjoy using the correct terminology in their explanations. They are never afraid to explain their thought processes and are never held back by lack of literacy skills in their written work. Most pupils have very positive attitudes towards mathematics and enjoy their work. Teachers manage pupils very well and capitalise on their enthusiasm. They challenge and question with considerable skill. They provide many opportunities for collaboration, co-operation and

discussion; thus ensuring mathematics makes a strong contribution towards pupils' personal development.

115. In an excellent lesson in Year 2, on partitioning and place value, the teacher generated an air of excitement about the activity. Although this was a group of lower-attaining pupils, their self-esteem was high because the teacher created exactly the right climate for learning. Pupils knew they were part of a very high quality lesson. In another very good Year 4 lesson on decimals, the teacher targeted individual pupils very precisely. There were no passengers in this lesson. She provided numerous opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning and teaching assistant support was of high quality. This group of pupils made very good progress. The teacher used assessment of previous work very effectively to give further input to pupils who had not yet grasped the concept, resulting in a highly successful lesson.
116. The school works hard to provide an appropriate range of interesting activities for pupils to do at home. Homework supplements class work well. Targets for future development are also purposeful and very specific to individual needs. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking and presentation. Although there are many examples of marking being used very constructively to help pupils improve their work, there are also other examples of marking not being used effectively to aid progress. In addition, although most work is presented with pride and care, some is untidy and does not always reflect the ability of individual pupils.
117. The co-ordinator is an accomplished practitioner who provides excellent leadership and a very clear sense of direction for the subject. Monitoring and evaluation of provision is meticulous. Assessment forms an integral part of all work and the school's tracking systems are of the highest quality. They show precisely whether individual pupils are achieving as well as they should. The governor responsible for numeracy is well informed, committed and supportive. The additional teacher, who works with several groups of pupils, has a wealth of high quality work to show for her efforts. She successfully provides the appropriate level of challenge to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding. Resources are of high quality and the accommodation lends itself well to whole class, group and individual teaching.
118. The school strives for excellence and all teachers have very good insight into pupils' levels of understanding and know the standards they should achieve. It is not surprising that pupils flourish and develop mathematically within provision of such high quality.

SCIENCE

119. Teachers' assessments of the attainment of pupils in Year 2, in 2002, showed pupils achieved average standards overall in science. Inspection findings show that the pupils currently in Year 2 achieve standards above national expectations and, in Year 4, standards that are well above the national expectations. Pupils make very good progress.
120. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a good understanding of life processes, properties of materials and physical processes. For example, they know that electricity is a source of energy and they are able to relate life process to the animals and plants they find in the environmental area in the school grounds. Their work on materials is good. They know how some materials are changed by heat and they explore words that describe the characteristics of different materials. There are good opportunities for investigations and experimentation. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is very good and shows improvement since the last inspection. Two very good lessons in Years 1 and 2, where pupils investigated pushing and pulling forces, illustrated several features of very good teaching that extended pupils' learning very successfully.
121. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 work hard and build steadily on their previous science knowledge. They undertake a wide range of investigations, for example, they have investigated which materials are best for insulating a container of water. They have a very good understanding of how to set up a fair test and record the result of their investigations. Some very good teaching was observed, which led to pupils having a very good understanding of resistance and gravity, and how they work against each other. The use of the correct terminology, by pupils, to describe forces, was impressive. From looking at pupils' work, it is clear that Year 4 pupils understand the importance of

a fair test, with a clear understanding of constant and variable factors, and can draw conclusions from the results of their experiments. Pupils benefit greatly from devising their own experiments and following up their own ideas through research activities.

122. Throughout the school pupils have very good attitudes towards science. They are well motivated and keen to learn. Pupils in all year groups work well together and adopt safe practices when using and handling equipment and resources.
123. In the lessons seen the teaching was very good. Teaching rightly places a strong emphasis on pupils undertaking experiments and investigations to find things out. This is developing their scientific vocabulary and improving their enquiry skills and their ability to record efficiently what they have found. Teachers establish positive working relationships with pupils in the class. They take the opportunity to emphasise important principles, such as the idea of fair testing, and the use of prediction in supporting scientific enquiry. Teachers use a wide range of recording techniques, such as descriptive writing, diagrams and charts to record and display work.
124. Lessons are based on the nationally recommended scheme of work. The newly appointed co-ordinator gives very good leadership in the subject and has identified science as a whole-school development priority in the school improvement plan in order to improve the subject's links with other areas of the curriculum, and use of information and communication technology skills within science work. The policy and scheme of work are due for routine review later this year. Resources for science are satisfactory. The work in science benefits from the very extensive grounds, which have been particularly well developed as a resource for the study of natural and environmental science.

ART AND DESIGN

125. There were few lessons seen during the inspection. Taking these lessons, display material, and interviews with relevant staff into account, pupils' attainment in art and design, in Year 2, is in line with expectations, as it is in Year 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards for the older pupils were judged to be below expectations. As they move through the school, pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievement is in line with the standards expected, by the time they get to Year 4. Pupils with special educational needs achieve equally as well, as a result of the support they are given.
126. In Year 1, the pupils have learned how to weave materials and have produced colourful and well-made woven pieces of work using textiles and plastic. Their collages and paintings are colourful and executed competently. The pupils have produced some careful observational drawings, using charcoal and pencil. Their painting shows a sound technique and care. Pupils in this age range have learned simple colour mixing and are confident about it. A pupil in Year 2 commented that, 'You get brown when you mix all the primary colours'.
127. Teachers have worked at encouraging pupils to improve their observational skills and the drawings of candle holders by pupils in Year 2 showed that most pupils were drawing what was in front of them, rather than what they thought they saw. There are displays of art in the year bases and this is often a celebration of pupils' own efforts. There are posters of works by famous artists available for pupils to look at in the library, but these are kept in a folder rather than being on display. This makes the resource less effective as an ongoing means of stimulating the interest of pupils and exposing them to a wide range of good quality art. However, there are good displays of work that pupils did when they took part in workshops run by local artists. These have helped pupils to broaden their horizons, and will help to raise standards over time, as the techniques and ideas are beginning to filter into their own work. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are widening their vocabulary as demonstrated when they talked about their drawings and paintings, and how they could be improved. In a lesson in Year 4, pupils used an earlier piece of work as a starting point for producing a more detailed piece, with an increased range of colour effects. Pupils mixed watercolours and poster paints, confidently, and some were clear about how they would get the effects that they were after. However, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have no sketchbooks. Although their work is kept in folders, this is not effective as a record of their progress and development. It also gives the message that pieces of work are transitory and undervalues their work in art and design,

in comparison with other subjects. There is limited evidence of three-dimensional work, although the pupils report that they have used clay to make pottery.

128. The older pupils study the work of a range of famous artists, including Matisse, Monet, Picasso, and Van Gogh. However, pupils in Year 4, who were interviewed, only had a hazy idea about their lives and the work that they produced. They do not learn sufficiently from studying the techniques used by these artists, and the techniques are not incorporated well enough into their own paintings. The pupils study some aspects of Islamic art in Year 4. The use of information and communication technology is well developed and older pupils, in particular, have some experience of using the Internet to carry out research about the patterns used in Islamic art and then using some of these to design Eid cards. These opportunities for pupils to experience a range of styles of art make a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development.
129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teachers have sound subject knowledge and interesting learning activities are planned for pupils. Relationships in classrooms are very good and the lessons well prepared. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has qualifications that suit her well for this role. She checks standards in the subject and is compiling a portfolio of work, which will help her colleagues to be more confident about the National Curriculum levels for different pieces of work. However, she has not yet had opportunity to observe teaching. The school has adopted the national guidelines so that the National Curriculum requirements are covered. There are regular assessments of pupils' work and these help teachers to plan their lessons effectively and ensure that pupils make progress. Resources for the subject are good. There is a wide range of materials, including brushes of different sizes, several sorts of paints, pastels, charcoal sticks, and all are of appropriate quality.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

130. There was little teaching of design and technology during the period of the inspection. Taking into account the work seen in these lessons, the records available, and interviews with staff and pupils, the standards seen in Years 2 and 4 are in line with the expectations for these age groups. These standards are slightly lower than those seen at the last inspection, which were above expectations.
131. Pupils in Year 2 have made puppets this term. They use various methods of cutting and joining materials and the finish they achieve is appropriate for their age. In Year 4, pupils used batik techniques to decorate cushions that they had cut out and sewed from fabric. Older pupils have well developed design skills and approach their work in a thoughtful manner. They evaluate their work in a mature way and understand the need for accurate measurement. However, they have not had sufficient experience of working with a range of tools and materials. This means that their making skills are less well advanced. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and talk about it in positive terms.
132. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers plan lessons well, have good relationships with the pupils, but do not develop all areas of the subject sufficiently. The co-ordinator for design and technology is also responsible for art. She is enthusiastic about developing design and technology in the school. Her leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school uses the nationally available scheme of work, and has adapted it as necessary. However, some fine-tuning of this is needed, so that the projects chosen help pupils to acquire a broader range of skills. The monitoring of pupils' progress is mainly informal and follows the guidance given in the scheme of work. The resources for the subject are satisfactory. All year bases have a range of tools, such as saws and bench hooks, and an appropriate range of materials. In addition to these, there is a range of components and other items kept in the resources area that is accessible to all staff. The assembling of a photographic record of the work of pupils is now established and this will be a valuable resource. Some of this is being done with a digital camera, and photographs are put in the design and technology portfolio. The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in this subject is being developed satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 4 have used the Internet and books in the library successfully to research a project about Roman furniture.

GEOGRAPHY

133. Standards in geography are above expectations by the end of Year 2, and well above expectations at the end of Year 4. All pupils, including gifted pupils and those with special educational needs, make at least good progress, because the learning activities are carefully matched to the specific needs of pupils of different abilities. Standards have been improved since the last inspection, when standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 were judged to be satisfactory.
134. In Year 2, pupils understand the difference between coastal locations and the countryside. They know that maps and atlases provide information about different parts of the country and they enjoy locating different countries using a globe. They learn about the times when most plants and flowers start to grow. They learn about people who help others. They walk around their locality and study the surrounding area and start to learn about their own community in relation to others, including the nearby town of Poole and the Caribbean island of St Lucia. By Year 2, pupils start to use appropriate geographical vocabulary with confidence.
135. By Year 4, pupils are able to label the names of various countries throughout the world and those that make up the United Kingdom. Pupils carefully record their study of different localities, including a study of the contrast between hot and cold countries. They confidently locate the main rivers of India and the different regions of that country. Pupils are able to identify features on an Ordnance Survey map and understand geographical vocabulary, such as physical and human geography.
136. Pupils make very good progress in developing their geographical skills. Mathematical and information and communication technology skills are used effectively. Pupils respond well, showing interest in the subject and they sustain concentration and work well both independently and co-operatively. They are keen to contribute to discussions and develop speaking and listening skills to good effect in oral work.
137. The quality of teaching is very good and benefits from the knowledge and enthusiasm of the co-ordinators and the very good leadership and management that they provide. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. The enthusiastic approach of teachers has made a good impact on pupils' learning. The use of challenging questioning and productive pace ensures that pupils gain knowledge and develop their geographical skills. The pupils work in groups and this promotes their personal development well. Pupils are enthusiastic and concentrate fully on the tasks set.
138. The very good policy and scheme of work was updated in 2000 to reflect the changes to the curriculum introduced at that time. The scheme of work ensures that the pupils receive a balanced programme of study. Resources are good in range and quality and include a wide variety of atlases and globes, which are used well to support the teaching. A particular strength is the way in which the environment is used to promote pupils learning, for example, when they carry out a river study of the Piddle Valley area.

HISTORY

139. Pupils in Year 2 reach standards above expectations for their age and, at the end of Year 4, they are well above expectations. All pupils make at least good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 were judged to be satisfactory.
140. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn to recognise primary sources of historical knowledge and how to interpret the evidence they provide. They begin to understand that there are different ways to find out about the past, and use books and artefacts to find out more about the event or custom they are studying.
141. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of some aspects of the past and knowledge of the life and customs of long ago. Pupils understand the difference between the past and the present, for example, they have compared events of the Great Fire of London with fire fighting today. They also know that life was very different long ago and, for instance, have an appropriate understanding of how difficult it was to travel long distances in the past before modern forms of travel were invented. They also have a sound knowledge of famous people in the past, such as Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes. They are constantly developing skills and the older pupils

can distinguish between the recent and the distant past and are able to sequence and put items and events in chronological order.

142. In Years 3 and 4, pupils' books contain some very good original writing linked to their study of life in Ancient Egypt. Their extended writing and use of a wide vocabulary shows very good knowledge, understanding and imagination. Their work is often well illustrated. Pupils' written work makes a significant contribution to their literacy progress. Pupils undertake independent research well, using books or information and communication technology. By Year 4, pupils know that the Romans came from Italy. They understand that they were responsible for creating many straight roads and talk about the features, such as the baths that the Romans made, and the gods and goddesses that they worshipped.
143. Pupils are interested in history. In discussion, they eagerly contribute information that they have discovered. Older pupils talk knowledgeably about past times and offer opinions and ideas about the differences between then and now. In discussion, they showed good recall of information. Pupils maintain concentration and their behaviour is very good.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are designed and planned to interest pupils and provide them with stimulating activities. The teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are clear about what they want their pupils to learn. The tasks they provide are carefully thought out and are suitable for the range of abilities in the class, enabling all groups of pupils to make the same good progress. Teachers use artefacts well to stimulate enthusiasm in the subject. Teachers' careful planning links the history curriculum well with other subjects, such as art and design and music. The enthusiasm that the teachers show and their skill in asking questions have a positive impact on the pupils' desire to learn and the quality of the work which they produce.
145. The very good policy document and scheme of work were revised in 2000 to reflect the changes to the National Curriculum and good use is being made of national guidelines, which ensure that the pupils gain a balanced programme of study. Literacy skills are used well in history, and class books contain many good quality examples of writing on topics, such as persuasive writing on the proposed closure of Roman Baths when pupils' word-processing skills were also used well. The subject is well resourced with boxes of resources for each topic area and benefits from a good range of visitors and events, including a mummification day linked to the work on ancient Egypt, and visits to places, such as the Roman Baths in Bath. The co-ordination of the subject is linked with that of geography and the joint co-ordinators, through their enthusiasm, commitment and thorough action planning, provide very good leadership and management.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. There has been good improvement since the last inspection when standards by the end of Years 2 and 4 were in line with expectations. By the end of Year 2, standards are now above expectations and at the end of Year 4 they are well above expectations. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good, because pupils are learning skills in a step-by-step progression and have many opportunities to apply and develop these skills in learning opportunities across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs show this level of achievement, because of the varied strategies used by teachers to provide appropriate support for learning new skills.
147. Pupils in Year 2 understand that a variety of information can be entered and stored on a computer. Pupils' basic skills are developing well in computer-based learning activities. Skills are then consolidated very well when information and communication technology is used to extend learning in other subjects. Such learning opportunities are extensive in literacy, art and design, geography and history, but less so in numeracy. In literacy, for example, pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding of the features of different programs that enable them to delete and insert punctuation in order to make sense of text. They write instructions, poems, character studies, letters and reports, and experiment successfully with different formats in order to edit work. Much visually attractive work has been produced by using graphics programs to create pictures of the famous people they learn about in history. In art and design they create very good pictures in the

style of Van Gogh. Pupils control the 'mouse' well, as they select the tools they wish to use. Such skills are developed well from an early age. This is evident in pupils' good ability to enter instructions that control the movement of a screen turtle. In Year 1 this work successfully develops pupils' use of directional vocabulary and, in the case of higher-attaining pupils, an understanding of right angles. In Year 2, pupils build on this knowledge by entering the instructions that will select the shortest route for the turtle to move between specific locations on the screen. Additionally, they develop the complexity of instruction and control when working with programmable floor robots. By Year 2, pupils have satisfactory awareness of the uses of information and communication technology in the world at large. Information sources, such as CD-ROMs, are used efficiently to access information for topic work and this demonstrates pupils' developing knowledge and use of common features of these sources, for example, through their understanding of menus, indices and home pages.

148. By Year 4, pupils' skills at computing and use of hardware, such as a digital camera and a scanner, are very well developed. Pupils are very competent at using the technology as a tool to develop their learning. They access Internet web sites confidently and express knowledgeable opinions about the respective merits of different search facilities. There is an excellent variety in their computer-based work. In literacy, for example, they achieve conciseness in their presentation of 'arguments' by correct use of bullet points. Pupils edit text very competently and this is achieved by their use of cut, paste and spell checking, while the appearance of text is creatively altered through experimenting with font, colour and size. Pupils work successfully with sensors, for instance, when they measure temperature in science investigations.
149. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good. Teachers have very good levels of subject knowledge, lesson planning is very thorough, and teachers identify exactly what pupils will learn in each lesson. This learning intention is explained at the start of lessons and revisited when lessons are concluded. This provides pupils with good knowledge of the extent of their own learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with special educational needs. These staff provide very good support, through a combination of their good understanding of pupils' individual needs and good subject expertise. This enables these pupils to make the same very good progress in learning as their classmates. Many of the whole-school strengths in teaching were exemplified in an excellently taught lesson in Year 4. The lesson included meticulous planning of three different tasks for pupils at different stages of learning, about working with visual images. This led to a creation of designs that combined pupils' own symmetrical patterns, with images of Islamic art downloaded from the Internet. Each group of pupils benefited from the teacher's excellent initial guidance. Pupils worked in pairs and showed high levels of co-operation, and this, plus the use of well-prepared worksheets, and high levels of enthusiasm for their work, resulted in pupils making excellent progress. The teacher and teaching assistant's ongoing support, which varied between appropriately challenging questioning, demonstration, and allowing pupils sufficient time for experimentation before completing a task, had very good impact on learning. Pupils showed the speed with which they acquire new learning, in this case on the re-sizing of images. This very successful lesson concluded with pairs of pupils discussing definitions of a range of computer terms that they had met in their work, an activity that further illustrated the pupils' total involvement in what they were learning.
150. The subject contributes very well to pupils' personal development. Social skills are positively influenced by the teachers' high expectations of co-operative work by pupils. Strategies, such as pairing of pupils of different ability levels, enable all pupils to be fully included and involved in learning activities. Pupils work very well in such situations, showing respect for each other's views, ideas and abilities. Material that pupils work with in subjects such as art and design, geography, and history, extends pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding very effectively.
151. The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management and has achieved much in the short time that she has had this responsibility. This is due to her very effective monitoring of pupils' standards and teachers' planning that is providing a clear picture of the next priorities and the action necessary for subject development. This development is also assisted by the excellent support and interest of the link governor. Beyond the high-quality teaching and subject co-ordination, a major strength is the quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils. These are firmly based on the primary need for basic skills to be developed in computing and other forms of

technology, and then on these skills being applied to learning activities in other subjects. To ensure continuity in pupils' learning, the information from regular assessment is used well to plan the next stage in their learning. Teachers in each year group maintain a comprehensive file of evidence of pupils' work, which not only assists the co-ordinator's monitoring, but also informs teachers in the following year of the pupils' standards and specific needs. Resources are good and limitations in software for mathematics in Years 1 and 2, and for literacy in the reception year are being rectified.

MUSIC

152. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were similar to those found in other schools at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils made satisfactory progress overall and many experienced a good range of instrumental opportunities. The co-ordinator had considerable expertise and music made a good contribution towards pupils' cultural development.
153. The school has experienced staffing difficulties since that time, and music provision has suffered as a consequence of the long-term absence of the co-ordinator. The pace of progress has been slow and some aspects of provision are not as strong as in the past.
154. Despite these problems, class teachers have kept the subject alive by maintaining strong links with other subjects and using music for listening as part of the school's personal development programme. Class lessons have continued to give pupils a worthwhile experience, because teaching is well organised and class management is very good. The scheme of work also ensures balanced coverage. Pupils still have the opportunity to perform in concerts and assemblies. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils currently in Years 2 and 4 make satisfactory progress and achieve the standards expected for their age. However, that is only part of the picture. Many pupils are capable of achieving much more, and the school does not provide well for its most able pupils. The class teachers who lack confidence with the subject tend to teach the parts of the music curriculum with which they are most secure. Consequently, standards in performing and composing are better than those in other aspects, such as listening and appraising. Pupils do not develop skills in any systematic way, and teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of the standards pupils can and should achieve.
155. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of high and low sounds. They know a small range of songs. During a discussion, pupils in Year 2 recalled, with great enthusiasm, the song, 'I am a Little Boy from Trinidad'. In mid-conversation they broke into spontaneous song. Pupils know the names of familiar and more unusual instruments. Pupils display good knowledge when music is linked to other subjects. In one lesson about the Great Fire of London, pupils sang 'London's Burning', tunefully, and remembered the date well because they had chanted '1666', as a rhythm, in some of their composition work. Music is used effectively at the beginning and end of assembly and sometimes in lessons to convey feelings. However, pupils find difficulty in recalling the titles of all but the most recent listening music. By contrast, they have good recall of their part in the recent Christmas concert and express their enjoyment of the school steel pan band.
156. By Year 4, pupils make satisfactory progress and have experience of a much wider range of music from different cultures. A good example of this was found in a lesson in Year 4 on Indian music. Pupils had a good understanding of the structure of the music because the teacher gave a clear, simple explanation. They used the correct terminology well, as they explained their work on 'talas' and 'ragas'. Pupils made effective use of poems they had written in literacy lessons to form the basis of their compositions. In discussion, pupils displayed a very mature approach towards music and described their current lessons as 'very exciting'. Like younger pupils, they had good recall of performances and concerts because they enjoyed taking part. They remembered how they used music as a stimulus for their art lesson and how it linked well with their work on topics such as Romans, Celts and Egyptians.
157. Singing is not a strong feature of provision and pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop skills systematically. Although there are some good individual examples of information and communication technology being used well to aid pupils' progress, computers do not form an important part of the music curriculum, and do not make a strong contribution towards learning.

158. In the small number of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was equally balanced between satisfactory and good in Years 1 to 4. In these lessons, progress was at least satisfactory. In a good lesson on pitch in Year 1, pupils enjoyed creating their own 'high and low' compositions, as they selected instruments and worked in pairs with a good level of co-operation. Most succeeded because the lesson moved at a brisk pace and the teacher made very effective use of a short time slot. In an equally good lesson on using the pentatonic scale in Year 3, pupils developed a secure knowledge because the teacher guided them carefully through each stage of understanding. Pupils were highly motivated by the task, because it was linked well to their Egyptian topic. The work was challenging, ambitious and, ultimately, very successful. Most teachers within the school are very skilled practitioners in other subjects. Some are aware of their insecurity with music and know that they are not able to give the same high quality input to this subject. Consequently, some teachers struggle to provide pupils with a sustained level of work that matches their ability and this adversely affects the progress of the higher-attaining pupils, in particular, because they receive little to challenge them.
159. The school is fortunate to have its own separate music studio and an interesting range of good quality musical instruments. Multi-cultural instruments feature strongly. The school organises a highly successful and enjoyable 'Creative Fortnight' to widen pupils' knowledge. Events give pupils good insight into music of other countries, and allow pupils to have experience of instruments, such as rain sticks, boomwackers and African drums.
160. The absence of the co-ordinator is, however, causing a weakness in provision. Music is not a high-profile subject. Provision is not monitored and areas for development have not been identified. Assessment procedures are not yet firmly established. Consequently, no one has a clear overview of whether the standards pupils achieve are high enough.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

161. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in pupils' standards and the quality of teaching and learning. By end of Years 2 and 4, pupils exceed expectations for these age groups, whereas, they matched expectations at the last inspection. At that time, co-operative learning was not well developed. This has now improved, as was evident in group work in dance, and this is enabling the subject to make a better contribution to pupils' personal development.
162. Pupils in Year 2 achieve good standards in dance, where they show creativity, perform a wide range of movements confidently and select from their movement 'vocabulary' actions that interpret ideas and moods well. This was evident when pupils danced individually, in pairs and, later, in groups, as they developed sequences of movement to interpret a theme of the Fire of London. Their imaginative response to this challenging task was particularly well structured in partner work where pupils drew successfully on their past learning of actions of rising, sinking and balance to create flowing sequences of appropriate movements. The pupils' ability to achieve a smooth flow of one movement to the next is developed systematically in dance and gymnastics. The early stages of this were seen in a gymnastics lesson in Year 1. The pupils linked two or more actions of travelling on different body parts, while working on low- and medium-level apparatus. Pupils showed first the ability to go through, mentally, how they were going to move, before actually performing. This enabled movement to be uninterrupted by pupils having to think about what to do next and a smooth transition was achieved. In both Years 1 and 2, pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. Pupils in Year 2 refer to the effects of warming up on the heart, lungs and muscles.
163. By Year 4, pupils perform well in gymnastics. They also have a well-developed approach to planning and evaluating their work. When asked to comment on one another's performance, pupils are quick to identify what is good about the performance, as well as suggesting ways in which it might be improved. When working on the theme of 'balance', pupils in Year 4 showed control and poise. They changed points of balance, timing the change well and maintaining good control when, for example, they changed from a low balance to one where the body was stretched high. These sequences had an element of creativity, and this was also very powerfully evident in a dance lesson in Year 3, where the pupils interpreted aspects of their class history topic on Ancient Egypt. Pupils showed a good ability to work collaboratively and to choreograph complex group dance sequences.

164. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good. Particular strengths in teaching are the thoroughness of planning, the good balance in all lessons of opportunities for pupils to plan, perform and evaluate, and teachers' high expectations of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attention. There are no pupils with special educational needs, specific to learning in physical education, and, consequently, all pupils are achieving the same very good rates of progress. The few pupils with special needs, relating generally to behavioural difficulties, are helped to achieve the same rate of progress as their classmates by the teachers' very good management of pupils' behaviour. Teachers' very good planning gives each lesson a clear structure and their clear explanations, of what pupils are to learn, give pupils a strong sense of purpose for their activity. Lessons generally have a high degree of activity and effective use is made of pupils' demonstrating a good performance. Just occasionally, the timing is not quite right when teachers start lessons with a warm up, but follow this with, sometimes, lengthy descriptions of the tasks to be carried out. When this occurs, pupils' inactivity cancels out the purpose of warming up.
165. The subject co-ordinator is a senior manager who has taken on the responsibility following the departure of the previous co-ordinator. She leads the subject very well, while also being the English co-ordinator. She has a high level of subject expertise, especially in dance. She has updated the school's policy and is a good source of constructive advice and professional development for colleagues. In the time available, the co-ordinator monitors standards and the quality of teaching effectively. Resources are good, although arrangements for storage of games equipment are inadequate. Long-term planning shows that there is a good breadth and balance to the learning opportunities provided in the course of a year, although the pupils currently in Year 1 have less physical education, by having only one lesson per week when all other years have two. There are good opportunities for pupils to gain additional experience at lunchtimes, when games equipment is available for pupils' use and non-teaching staff organise a good range of activities. Extra-curricular sport is provided in football, gymnastics, dance, tennis, rounders, basketball, tag rugby and quick cricket, and pupils have opportunities to compete against other schools in football, netball and swimming.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

166. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and this is most notable in the higher quality of teaching and learning that is having good impact on pupils' standards. Standards were formerly in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus, but are now above these expectations by the end of Year 2, and well above expectations at the end of Year 4.
167. Pupils' standards reflect the good balance of learning about religion, and learning from religion. This enables pupils not only to develop good levels of knowledge, but also to apply it to everyday life. There is excellent integration of what pupils learn in religious education with their learning in personal, social and health education and in philosophy which, in turn, are seen as part of the broad provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Christianity is a common theme in each year group's work and this is supplemented with study of another of the world's religions each year. Thus, by Year 2, pupils' good knowledge of people, places, customs and festivals is evident in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. The learning activities encourage the pupils to be reflective. Thus, learning about Jesus stimulates pupils' writing about people who are special to them. This writing is perceptive, thoughtful and clear in its explanation of why people are important. Pupils explore particular themes in detail, and used learning acquired in one lesson, very successfully, in another. For example, having learned how the Hindu story of Rama and Sita is one of good triumphing over evil, pupils very purposefully identify the qualities of good and evil in the Christian story of David and Goliath. Pupils' own prayers reflect their recognition of the personal qualities that are desirable.
168. The ability to reflect on the relevance of what is being learned starts to develop in pupils in Years 1 and 2, and it is the maturity of such reflection that is evident in pupils in Year 4 that particularly marks their work as being of such a high standard. An in-depth study of special people in Islam and Christianity develops pupils' understanding of personal qualities that results in very well written descriptions of the qualities of mediators, a role that some of them have in the school at play-times. Higher-attaining pupils have written very detailed explanations of the importance of the Qur'an to

Muslims. Pupils of all abilities present their work well and make good use of illustration to enrich its quality. There is no evidence of pupils using the library for independent research. In conversation, pupils in Year 4 reported that they do so occasionally. However, the many opportunities that pupils have to apply their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills mean that the subject is making a very good contribution to the development of literacy skills.

169. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was broadly satisfactory. Very thorough planning, good use of resources and clear learning intentions are consistently evident. Stimulating, imaginative learning activities have good impact on pupils' learning. These were evident in a very good lesson with pupils in Year 4 that explored the events in the festival of Eid and their meaning. Different groups of pupils carried out Internet research, studied fact sheets, took part in role play, and these activities broadened pupils' knowledge and understanding, very successfully, and encouraged empathy with followers of the Islamic faith. Throughout the school, pupils' learning is stimulated further through the teachers' very good classroom displays.
170. Since the departure of the former subject co-ordinator, the headteacher has held a watching brief on the subject. There is appropriate monitoring of standards and teaching, as part of the headteacher's general programme of monitoring and evaluation. However, it is recognised that a delegated co-ordinator is needed and the school has firm plans for this appointment. The school has good resources, including a wide range of artefacts and a good number of Bibles, and other texts, to support pupils' learning.