

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH PETHERTON JUNIOR SCHOOL

South Petherton

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123720

Headteacher: Mrs Kate Rawson

Reporting inspector: Dr C Lee
21854

Dates of inspection: 9th – 10th June 2003

Inspection number: 248493

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hayes End South Petherton Somerset
Postcode:	TA13 5AG
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Roberts
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

South Petherton is a small, community junior school that serves the village of South Petherton and nearby hamlets. There are 117 pupils who are taught in four single-age classes. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. Pupils are from a broad range of backgrounds that is average overall. The percentage of pupils claiming a free school meal is well below average. All pupils are of white, United Kingdom heritage. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (15 per cent) is slightly below average. The special needs cover a range of learning, emotional, behavioural and physical difficulties. There are two pupils with statements of special educational need. On entry to Year 3, pupils' attainment is average overall. A major building project is underway to improve accommodation and facilities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an excellent school that provides its pupils with an education of the highest quality. From a starting point of average standards, pupils of all abilities make excellent progress and achieve high standards in both academic performance and personal development by the time they reach the end of Year 6. Pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, art and design, drama, design and technology and music is especially good, being well above average by the end of Year 6. The excellent behaviour, relationships and attitudes shown by pupils are their very positive response to the very high expectations that the school has of all aspects of pupils' development. One of the main reasons for these levels of pupils' attainment is the consistently very good teaching. The excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and other staff with specific responsibilities also play a central role in the school's success, as does the strong sense of teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff. Together they ensure that the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' standards are high, both in national tests and in work in lessons, and they are well above average in many subjects by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6. Standards in speaking, listening and writing are exceptional.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent, as a result of the school's carefully planned provision and thorough attention to all aspects of their development.
- Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school with teachers receiving excellent support from a skilled team of teaching assistants.
- The curriculum is innovative and stimulating, providing an excellent quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities.
- Leadership and management are excellent and all staff and governors share the headteacher's excellent vision of the educational direction of the school.

What could be improved

There are no significant issues that the school needs to address at this time.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1998 and although judged to be a school of many strengths it has continued to develop the quality of education that it provides to still higher levels. As a result, there has been good improvement since then. The main areas for development arising from the last inspection have been addressed successfully. The provision for information and communication technology shows good improvement. Appropriate measures have been taken to resolve previous concerns about safety and welfare arising from facilities and accommodation. The school has additionally sought to improve

other aspects of its work and this has, indeed, occurred in many areas. This inspection judges that nearly all the aspects judged good or very good at the last inspection are now very good or excellent. Most significantly, this is the case with pupils' standards. The quality of teaching remains high, as at the last inspection, although almost a complete change in the staffing has occurred. There is a set of guiding principles and operating systems that enable smooth integration of incoming pupils and staff. The school is in a very good position for the future because it is a reflective school with a strong commitment to continuing improvement and there is a sense of challenge that permeates all aspects of its work.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	C	A*	A
science	B	C	A	B

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

The overall trend in test results is rising in mathematics and science while English is being maintained at high levels that are well above national averages each year. Mathematics showed a significant improvement in 2002 and the test results placed the school in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Percentages of pupils reaching the higher-than-expected Level 5 were very high in mathematics and well above average in English and science. Pupils exceeded the targets that had been set for English and mathematics. The targets for 2003 are suitably challenging but the very positive attitudes of current Year 6 pupils, coupled with their continuing excellent progress, means that they are in line to exceed the targets. This is evident in the overall standard of pupils' work and especially the proportion that are achieving a Level 5 standard in their daily work. This proportion is greater than 50 per cent in English, mathematics and science and, overall, standards are well above average in these subjects. Particular strengths are the very high standards in speaking, listening and writing. When compared with the pupils' standards when they started in Year 3, which were average overall, their present standards represent excellent achievement.

By the end of Year 6, inspection evidence indicates that standards are well above national expectations in art and design, design and technology, drama and music, and above expectations in information and communication technology and physical education. Standards exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. The high level of achievement is evident in all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs who, as a result of the excellent support that they receive, often achieve the same high standards as their peers in many of these subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	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.
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Aspect	Comment
Personal development and relationships	Excellent overall and most especially in the extent to which pupils show initiative and accept personal responsibility, and in the high quality of the relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults
Attendance	Very good. Levels of attendance are well above average and unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	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. Throughout the school, one of the greatest strengths in teaching is the thoroughness of planning. This is firmly based on the ongoing assessment of what pupils are learning and thorough evaluation of pupils' learning in each lesson. 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 support teaching. A very significant factor that impacts very positively on teaching and learning is the total involvement of teaching assistants in planning and the high quality of their support and guidance for the pupils with whom they work. Throughout the school, English is taught very well and the basic skills of literacy are applied and consolidated very successfully across the whole curriculum. The teaching of drama and writing are excellent. The teaching of basic numeracy skills and mathematics as a whole is also very good although one unsatisfactory lesson occurred where pupils' gains in learning were not sufficient. However, the planning of opportunities for pupils to use numeracy skills in other subjects could be developed further. Teachers and teaching assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils make excellent progress in learning and their own high levels of interest and concentration help this. They work hard to achieve the specific, individual targets that are set for them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The excellent curriculum is an exciting, innovative range of learning opportunities that exceeds statutory requirements. Provision for the creative arts is a particular strength.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is excellent. There is early identification, 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' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development permeates all aspects of school life. Provision for pupils' cultural development is wide-ranging and introduces pupils very well to many aspects of their own and other cultures.

Aspect	Comment
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 very good attention to all aspects of pupils' welfare, including the procedures for child protection. Good procedures for promoting racial equality have a good impact on pupils' understanding and attitudes.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides an excellent educational direction for the school. She is supported very well by all staff with leadership responsibilities and the school's outstanding success is built on the high quality of teamwork that is present among both staff and pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its duties very well. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need developing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent monitoring and evaluation of teaching and of pupils' standards enable the school to identify priorities, set itself targets and pursue very effective courses of action for future improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent use is made of all physical and human resources. Finance is managed and administered very efficiently and prudent financial planning has prepared very successfully for future priorities in expenditure.

The school's application of the principles of best value is excellent, 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 • Behaviour is good • Teaching is good • Expectations are high • The school reacts well to any problems or concerns that parents might have • The school is well led and managed • Children are helped to become mature and responsible • There is an interesting range of activities outside lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school working more closely with parents • The provision of homework

Inspectors agree with all that pleases parents. The concerns of a small minority of parents are not substantiated, for the school does everything it can to work closely with parents, including liaison about

homework, the provision for which is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' standards are high, both in national tests and in work in lessons, and they are well above average in many subjects by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6. Standards in speaking, listening and writing are exceptional.

1. Pupils enter the school with average attainment overall in reading, writing, mathematics and science. When they leave the school, they attain standards that are at least well above average in many subjects. This represents excellent achievement during their time at the school.
2. Pupils' standards by the end of Year 6 have risen steadily since the time of the last inspection and this is seen in the trend in the school's results in the annual National Curriculum tests. In English, results have been consistently well above the national average and there has been a gradual rise in the percentage of pupils achieving the higher-than-expected Level 5 in reading and writing. By 2002, these percentages were well above average when compared with all schools nationally and also when compared with schools similar to South Petherton in terms of the percentage of pupils claiming free school meals. The same picture of rising standards is evident in science while, in mathematics, the progress has been even greater. In 2002, the school's test results in mathematics were very high, placing the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. A final comparison confirms the success with which the school has raised standards. This is the performance of the pupils in 2002 in comparison with the results that they achieved four years earlier in the national tests taken at the end of Year 2 in the infant school. When compared with all other schools where pupils had similar prior attainment in terms of Year 2 results, the 2002 results in Year 6 were very high (that is in the top five per cent of schools) in English, mathematics and science.
3. Current Year 6 pupils are continuing the upward trend in standards. They, like their predecessors, had average levels of attainment when they started at the school. Their standards now reflect their excellent progress over time. In English, standards are well above average overall and pupils have particular strengths in writing, speaking and listening. Approximately 60 per cent of the pupils write at a Level 5 standard and this high quality of writing is consistently evident in the many forms of writing that they produce. Excellent teaching of writing has developed pupils' confidence and skills very successfully. They approach different writing tasks with an excellent understanding of the need to think about whom is to read their work. In addition to this knowledge of the structure of different types of writing, pupils use an extensive vocabulary very successfully to aid their communication. This is one of the products of the attention and time allocated to developing the skills of reading, speaking and listening. Reading fiction and performing in drama are often the starting points for writing. This means that pupils are stimulated by a wealth of ideas and experiences from which they can select what, to them, is the best vocabulary for what they want to communicate in writing. Playscripts, poetry, song lyrics, persuasive letters, extended stories and factual writing are just some of the many uses to which pupils apply their skills in writing. Work is drafted and re-drafted in order to refine and improve, with the presentation of the final version being at a very high standard, whether hand-written in a confident, very neat script or wordprocessed on the computer with appropriate selection of font, layout and embellishment such as colour, border or illustration.
4. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening, like reading and writing, are developed over time by a carefully structured whole-school approach. Drama features prominently in the

curriculum as a learning opportunity that develops pupils' confidence and competence when using language, movement and gesture to communicate ideas and emotions. Skilled teaching makes learning fun and from this enjoyment, pupils develop very successfully their ability at performing improvisation and also at producing scripted sequences. Through listening to others and considering the language that they use, pupils' own vocabularies are extended very successfully. Such confidence at speaking as well as respect for the ideas of others is a significant feature of class lessons across the whole curriculum. In all classes, pupils are totally involved in class discussions because such frequent use is made of pupils talking in pairs. This reflects teachers' good understanding of the need for pupils to practise discussing with one other person before they discuss with two others, and of discussing in threes before fours, and so on. Pupils are therefore constantly practising speaking and listening and occasions when the whole class has to listen to one pupil are limited to only the essential occasions when such traditional whole-class discussions are useful. From these opportunities, pupils learn to speak with confidence and clarity. They reflect on what they have heard and ask questions in order to clarify their understanding. A question from a Year 3 pupil in a lesson where forms of prefixes were being explored indicated the high quality of listening and reflection on what was being said:

"Is the 'pre' part of the word 'prefix' a prefix?"

5. Such innovative aspects of the school's approach to the teaching of English, and writing in particular, are a major reason for pupils' high standards. Mathematics and science are taught more in line with recommendations of guidelines such as the National Numeracy Strategy and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's long-term plan for science. In both these subjects, Year 6 pupils' standards are also well above average and over half the class are achieving Level 5 in their latest work in both subjects. Very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics enables pupils to apply their knowledge and skills very well to problem-solving tasks. They think logically, explain working methods and answers fully and clearly and show an obvious enjoyment of completing a challenge successfully. They work confidently and accurately with numbers and delight in the speed with which they can carry out mental calculations. Written work shows a very good understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. As was seen during the inspection, they are rapidly learning to construct and use simple algebraic formulae. Levels of scientific knowledge and understanding are also well above average overall. The particular strengths in pupils' work are, firstly, the breadth of their knowledge and, secondly, their understanding of the principles of scientific enquiry. The latter indicates the success with which the science co-ordinator's monitoring and evaluation of this aspect of the subject has led to improvement in scientific investigation throughout the school. By Year 6, pupils identify the factors that constitute a fair test. They explain both their hypotheses and conclusions with very good use of the correct terminology. They record results accurately and appropriately insofar as they select suitable forms of recording, knowing when a line graph is right for some results while a pie chart or block graph is better for other data.
6. Scrutiny of pupils' work in other subjects shows that, by Year 6, pupils' standards are consistently above average overall. Two subjects stand out as areas of excellence and these are music and art and design. In both, pupils combine high levels of creativity, well-developed techniques and skills and mature appreciation of the work of established artists and composers. Year 6 pupils, heard singing live and on a recording of a school production, performed excellently. The whole school achieved similar excellence when singing in assembly – a movingly spiritual experience for all who were present. Year 4 pupils demonstrated their particular expertise when developing a jazz

composition in a lesson, with the whole class playing a range of tuned instruments with great confidence and a well-developed technical ability. Pupils' art-making shows that, by Year 6, they have an excellent understanding of the processes, for example mixing colour to achieve shade and hue, technical expertise in pencil drawing to control line and shading and experimenting boldly with shape in three-dimensional work. A Year 6 project on 'Trees' shows pupils' well-developed observational skills and fine representation of line and shape. Year 5 pupils' willow structures, although the product of a design and technology project, are a permanent display outside the school and offer dramatic evidence of the high quality of artistic expression that the school's pupils achieve.

Pupils' personal development is excellent, as a result of the school's carefully planned provision and thorough attention to all aspects of their development.

7. The school's very strong commitment to ensuring that all aspects of pupils' development are catered for leads to excellent provision for their personal development. This excellence is seen particularly in the attention paid to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. An important aspect of this provision is the care that goes into its planning. This takes the form of identification of the potential of learning opportunities across the curriculum for achieving specific outcomes in terms of the spiritual and other aspects of personal development. Within each class, teachers and teaching assistants work in harmony towards ensuring that the personal development objectives are achieved. In the broader, whole-school context, the records kept of individual pupils are shared and discussed so that all teachers and teaching assistants have extensive knowledge of each pupil in the school.
8. Pupils benefit from the consistency in the high expectations of them in terms of the attitudes, values and behaviour that they should be striving to achieve. Adults serve as excellent role models in many ways but no more so than in the quality of their teamwork. This sets a benchmark for the qualities of co-operation and collaboration that pupils should work towards. Pupils are helped by the many opportunities planned for them to develop skills of co-operation, and work in pairs or small groups is a very common feature of organisation within most lessons. These experiences contribute to the excellence of the relationships between pupils within each class and between pupils of different ages. The latter are developed in formal situations such as the collective decision-making in the school council and the care shown by older pupils towards younger ones at lunch and playtimes. A 'Buddy' system operates whereby older pupils act as a friend and guide to Year 3 pupils in a way that greatly aids the transition of younger pupils into the school. A very constructive proposal from the school council is that Year 6 pupils should accompany their Year 3 'Buddies' on a school trip. Nominated pupils act as 'Playground Listeners', making themselves available for any pupil wishing just to have someone to talk to. The pupils themselves invariably resolve minor disputes or worries. There is deep respect for the views of others. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and they show appreciation of others' achievements. This contributes to the love of learning and the very positive attitudes that pupils display in lessons. Behaviour generally is very good and this is evident in lessons, assemblies and recreation periods. The consistency with which all staff implement the very constructive behaviour policy is a significant influence on the very good behavioural standards that pupils maintain.
9. Pupils are quick to show initiative, whether it is incidentally when they anticipate ways in which they can help teachers and other pupils or when they perform a variety of responsibilities that they have in lessons, classrooms or around the school. Within the groups established in a Year 5 history lesson, each group member carried out very

effectively a responsibility for organising resources, reporting back on group performance or ensuring that the group kept to time schedules. Arising from a geography topic, Year 6 pupils reported to the clerk of the Parish Council the results from their survey of local attitudes to re-cycling materials, making a strong case for the Council to respond to a community need.

10. Provision for pupils' personal and social development includes thorough planning of lessons where they can discuss issues that affect them all, such as how others should be treated, the rules and attitudes that help the group to support its members and make working and playing together a pleasurable experience. Sessions known as 'circle time' encourage pupils to express their opinions while learning to listen courteously to others. Additionally, pupils are introduced to the beliefs, traditions and customs of cultures other than their own. Thus, despite their immediate community being virtually a single ethnic group, pupils gain good awareness of other cultures as well as a very good knowledge and understanding of their own cultural traditions. Art and music are major contributors to this cultural education. An example of what, to pupils, is just a normal aspect of life at the school but which in fact is a very special spiritual experience is the role of singing in assemblies. The song is started by the first class to arrive at the hall and, as other classes approach the hall they hear what is being sung and join in as they enter. During the inspection, the haunting melody in canon form, coupled with the sensory impact of a burning candle and an incense stick, created an intense spiritual effect that epitomised the school's impact on pupils' and adults' personal development.

Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school with teachers receiving excellent support from a skilled team of teaching assistants.

11. The number of lessons observed during this inspection constitutes a small sample. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching and learning in these lessons was very good overall and the evidence from past and future planning confirms the very good practices and procedures that are consistent features of teaching. One of the most significant aspects of teaching is the very high quality of planning. Much of the planning for blocks of time, most usually half a term, is produced by subject leaders. This presents an overview of content in a series of lessons for each topic and identifies essential features such as the range of learning to be achieved by pupils, the key vocabulary that they should learn and how pupils' learning is to be assessed. Additionally, the ways in which learning activities will contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are clearly identified. There are appropriate references to the possible uses of information and communication technology, to any literacy focus that should be present and to the targets that pupils are working towards. Subjects seen to be benefiting particularly well from subject leader influence are English, mathematics, science, art and design and music. In each of these, teaching and learning are consistently very good and occasionally excellent.
12. Teachers have the responsibility for modifying each individual lesson plan in the light of pupils' progress in each lesson. Assessment of each pupil's response to the work identifies those who exceed targets and those falling below. This constant monitoring of progress enables teachers to plan different learning activities so that they are always refining how best they can meet the needs of groups of pupils of different abilities. This matching of task to ability is achieved very successfully across the curriculum. Pupils of different abilities are thus enabled to make maximum gains in learning because the work planned for them has just the right amount of challenge. Whether a pupil has a specific educational need due to a learning difficulty, or is a higher attaining pupil who needs to be moved on quickly, each one is clear about their target and how a learning activity will help them to achieve that target. Over time, because of the consistency of

this high quality planning across the school, there is the cumulative effect of pupils making excellent progress in their learning.

13. The maintenance of a consistently very good quality in the teaching is aided by factors such as the excellent monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in each subject by the subject leaders. Being a small school, communication between teachers is constant and always supportive. There is a formal schedule of meetings that includes weekly meetings of all staff, of subject leaders and, most crucially, of each class teacher with teaching assistants who work in his or her class. The role played by teaching assistants is vital to the success of the school and to the collective approach to raising pupils' standards.
14. As a team, the teaching assistants have their own very good team leaders and a separate schedule of meetings for administrative or training purposes. However, the meeting with the class teacher that starts each week is a significant influence on the quality of pupils' learning. The meeting focuses on the learning activities planned for different groups of pupils, the learning that should be achieved and the respective roles of class teacher and teaching assistant. The school has invested heavily in its teaching assistants who, although skilled in many ways, have received excellent training to develop those skills still further and to extend their knowledge and understanding of the school's aims for all aspects of pupils' development and how those aims are to be achieved. Teaching assistants are very effective in their interaction with pupils, knowing pupils' needs very well and knowing when they need guidance or time to experiment or to be challenged still further. Their notes and observations provide important information that helps teachers' assessments of pupils' progress and future needs. In some circumstances, such as providing individual support to pupils with special educational needs, the notes on pupils' responses are insightful and perceptive in a way that confirms the excellent knowledge that teaching assistants have of the pupils with whom they work. In more general terms, teachers and teaching assistants are consistent in their implementation of plans to develop pupils' literacy skills in other subjects, recognising opportunities for pupils to focus on the quality of their speaking, listening and writing. Opportunities for the use of information and communication technology as a tool to help pupils' learning across the curriculum are identified in planning, although this is recognised as needing further development. Pupils' computing skills at present are greatly aided by the good subject expertise and consistently good teaching of one of the senior teaching assistants.

The curriculum is innovative and stimulating, providing an excellent quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities.

15. All statutory requirements relating to the curriculum are met fully. Beyond these, French is taught to pupils in Years 5 and 6. The overall quality of learning opportunities is greatly enhanced by the prominence given to first-hand experience as a stimulus for pupils' learning. This is achieved in many ways but the impact of educational visits and visitors with specialist expertise is particularly significant. This range of extra-curricular experiences for pupils is exceptional and all areas of the curriculum are strengthened by the planning of these opportunities.
16. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are implemented in ways that have an excellent effect on the raising of standards. The school's approach is a carefully-planned match of the best features of these strategies' principles to pupils' needs rather than implementing the strategies in full regardless of their relevance to how pupils learn best. This is particularly the case for literacy, where the outline structure of the strategy is modified so that pupils' learning follows a logical progression that

acknowledges the learning styles of pupils of different abilities. There is, nevertheless, a fundamental continuity of starting from the spoken word, in drama and discussion, through the strategies for developing reading skills and reading comprehension, to learning how to write. This approach builds pupils' confidence and competence in a very positive way, with pupils constantly able to report 'I can' in the self-assessment that they carry out at the end of nearly every lesson. This is primarily because each learning activity builds on the preceding one.

17. Across the curriculum, a practical, first-hand experience makes learning interesting and relevant. Educational visits are frequent and are the basis of all the topics studied in history and geography. Excellent use is made of many local sites and facilities associated with different periods in British history, for example historic houses and local museums. The Somerset Levels are used very well as a source for river studies. Pupils' learning in the creative arts, for which the school rightly has an excellent reputation, is developed very successfully by visits, for example to classical and folk concerts, but in a very significant way by artists who visit the school. Frequent use is made of musicians, actors, dancers, sculptors and artists who work occasionally with a single class but more usually by running workshops with each class. This enables the school to have days totally devoted to work in one area. The ambitious and very high quality school productions, so admired by parents and the community, are the result of work where the whole school works on a common musical and drama theme. During such workshops, pupils and teachers are often learning together and, indeed, a definite purpose of visits by some artists is to achieve a cost-effective source of in-service training for staff. While the focus of pupils' learning is very often primarily about the process of art making, very frequently the finished products are of the highest quality. The recent achievement of the Artsmark Gold award is a further confirmation of the high quality of provision for this aspect of the curriculum.
18. Pupils of all abilities make significant gains in learning from the experiences of visits and visitors. Across the curriculum as a whole, learning activities are routinely planned so that there is a good match of task to ability. Pupils with special educational needs have excellent individual education plans with precise, short-term targets designed to help any learning difficulties to be overcome. The excellence of provision enables these pupils to build on their successes to a point where, by Year 6, most are achieving levels expected of their age. The attention paid to pupils with special educational needs is matched by the procedures for identifying pupils with specific gifts or talents and making sure that their particular needs are met just as successfully. For some, a special information and communication technology session is held at lunchtimes. For others, the provision is extra classes with visiting dance specialists or additional tuition in art or music. Extension teaching in literacy complements the constant preparation of additional challenge for the most able pupils in literacy. These aspects of provision are evidence of excellence in the thoroughness of procedures for identification and the effectiveness of the provision for these pupils, who currently constitute just over 30 per cent of the school population. In such ways, the school ensures that its commitment to equality of opportunity is rigorously adhered to in practice.
19. Beyond the extensive range of extra-curricular learning opportunities referred to, a very good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs is organised by teachers and teaching assistants. The range is exceptional for a small school, covering many sports, dance, art and crafts.

Leadership and management are excellent and all staff and governors share the headteacher's excellent vision of the educational direction of the school.

20. The headteacher's inspirational leadership was recognised by the previous inspection and it continues to be so. This excellence is founded on her high expectations of everyone and everything in the school, combined with a confidence in the ability of the different teams of staff to meet those expectations. Staff are organised into three teams with designated leaders. These are teachers, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff and each team is strengthened by the high quality of its leadership and the effectiveness with which they perform as a team. Additionally, teaching staff have delegated responsibilities for leadership of subjects or whole-school issues such as special educational needs.
21. The organisation of staff and the delegation of responsibilities results in very efficient management that is strengthened by the individual and collective excellence in leadership of all staff involved. This contributes to the high quality of the continuous process of self-evaluation that permeates all aspects of the school's work. As subject leaders, teachers have clearly-defined responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, the curriculum and pupils' standards in their subjects. The guidelines for these aspects of monitoring are detailed and all are geared towards raising standards. The headteacher, in turn, monitors the effectiveness with which subject monitoring is carried out. Priorities for a year arise from review of this monitoring. This year's school improvement plan identified a need to focus on subject leadership in information and communication technology, history and geography. From subject-specific monitoring, the new science leader recognised the need for breadth of observations to acquaint her rapidly with the subject across the school. From this emerged a need to focus on teaching and learning of practical science investigations. By working alongside colleagues as well as observing them, she was able to identify priorities for teachers and pupils and provide very constructive feedback that has led to noticeable improvement in this aspect of the subject. Other subject leadership, for example that of English by the headteacher, incorporates the teaching of a class in order that the teacher can observe both teaching strategies and pupils' responses. The headteacher does, indeed, lead by example through teaching that is frequently excellent and teachers benefit considerably from the opportunity to observe best practice. Pupils' standards are constantly monitored, by class teachers through ongoing assessment, by subject leaders through regular scrutiny of work throughout the school, and by rigorous analysis of data arising from pupils' performance in formal testing. This identifies both the strengths and the areas for development in each subject and the latter are approached with specific targets for both teachers and pupils.
22. The headteacher ensures a sense of purpose and consistency in practice through the impressive quality of all documentation concerned with policies and procedures in respect of every aspect of school life. The detail and guidance in such documents provides clarity of expectations and rigour in implementation. It also ensures continuity in a school where there is regular change in teaching staff. The demanding, rewarding experience of teaching in a successful school accelerates teachers' skill development and potential for promotion and it is therefore vital that incoming staff are quickly familiarised with the school's ethos and working methods. Documentation such as policies and curriculum guidelines is an important contribution to overall continuity in the school's working methods and pupils' learning. The governing body plays its own important role in ensuring that school development and improvement are continuous. It does so very effectively through its own evaluation of progress with priorities in the school development plan and through excellent application of principles of best value, such as consultation (of parents and pupils), comparison (of pupil performance in

national tests), challenge (of staff and itself) and competition (ensuring cost-effectiveness). Through prudent financial planning, governors have successfully prepared the school for the future financial implications of falling rolls and, most importantly, of the major building work that is underway.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

23. As a very successful school, there are no significant areas of its work that need urgent attention. The new facilities that building work will provide, particularly through the replacement of two 'temporary' classrooms and the creation of a computer suite, are the priorities in the next stage of school improvement. The school will be fully occupied with exploring the best use of the new accommodation for several years and this is judged, by this inspection, to be the priority in school improvement.
24. The school is currently focusing on further improvement to its already excellent curriculum. This is occurring through identification of ways in which pupils' skills in literacy and information and communication technology can be further developed through their use in other subjects. This is already very successful in the case of literacy but more work can be done relating to information and communication technology. In addition, the cross-curricular application of pupils' numeracy skills is currently happening to a degree in practice but is not explicitly focused on in planning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. A minor issue for the headteacher, staff and governors to address in order to improve pupils' standards and the quality of education is:
 - (1) Continue current initiatives in curriculum development that are identifying learning opportunities across the curriculum for the application and improvement of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Once identified, these opportunities can be integrated into future planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	5	2	1	0	0
Percentage	6	47	29	12	6	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 five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	117
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18

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	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	10	16	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	10
	Girls	13	13	15
	Total	21	22	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (85)	85 (74)	96 (88)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	9
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	21	21	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (85)	81 (82)	88 (88)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	117	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	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	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	29

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	163

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002 - 2003
	£
Total income	321,123
Total expenditure	309,747
Expenditure per pupil	2,625
Balance brought forward from previous year	75,261
Balance carried forward to next year	86,637

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	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	117
Number of questionnaires returned	71

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	30	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	34	3	3	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	54	0	3	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	48	11	4	1
The teaching is good.	65	28	1	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	42	6	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	32	3	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	17	3	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	44	42	10	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	52	41	4	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	34	7	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	35	3	1	3