

INSPECTION REPORT

DORCHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dorchester

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113860

Headteacher: Mr G C Redley

Reporting inspector: Mr T M Jardine
12890

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th June 2003

Inspection number: 249175

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Queen's Avenue
Dorchester
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Green

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12890	Mr T M Jardine	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19278	Mr R Allan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20629	Mr J Bryson	Team inspector	English	
31159	Mr C Simmonds	Team inspector	Science	
02756	Mr M Barron	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
18638	Mr C Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
32597	Mr J Marchant	Team inspector	Geography	
01085	Mr J Laver	Team inspector	History Educational inclusion including racial equality	
31332	Mr J Marshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23323	Dr J Harvey	Team inspector	Music	
18888	Ms J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Citizenship	

10807	Mr P Quest	Team inspector	Religious education	
12191	Mr C Moxley	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a 9 to 13 mixed, middle school with 605 pupils on roll, 321 boys and 284 girls. It is controlled by Dorset local education authority (LEA) and situated in Dorchester. The pupils' socio-economic circumstances vary widely and are about average overall. The great majority of pupils are white but 11 are from minority-ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well above average, their difficulties are mainly dyslexia, emotional and behavioural, moderate learning difficulties and in speech and communication. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is above average. The school has a special base for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. These pupils spend approximately half their time in the base and half in the main school where they are fully included. English is not the mother tongue of eight pupils but none is at an early stage of English language learning. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Dorchester Middle School is a good school that provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Pupils' achievements are good, and their attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. The quality of teaching and learning are good and leadership and management are very good. There are very good links with parents and the community and the school values all pupils and staff equally. The school has improved well since the last inspection. The school is aware of the improvements needed in the provision for personal and social education and citizenship and the provision for gifted and talented pupils and has plans to do so. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are very good
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good and relationships are excellent
- Teaching and learning are good
- Pupils achieve good standards and attainment is above average by the end of Year 8
- Links with parents and the community are very good
- The school creates an inclusive ethos that values all pupils and staff equally

What could be improved

- The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship
- The consistency of the provision for gifted and talented pupils is uneven

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in June 1997 has been good. The overall performance in English, mathematics and science in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 has risen at a rate in line with those nationally. However, results in mathematics have declined. On the other hand, standards in Years 7 and 8 have improved in all three subjects. Good progress has been made in addressing most of the key issues identified in the last report. In particular, standards in Years 7 and 8 have improved, the monitoring of teaching is now good and standards in music are now good. National Curriculum requirements are now met in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Good progress has been made in the use of assessment data to inform planning but there is still some inconsistency in marking and the use of National Curriculum levels. Likewise, the provision for gifted and talented pupils has improved in some subjects but not all. Other aspects of the school have also improved. The school buildings have been extensively refurbished and provide a very good environment in which to learn and the standard of teaching has improved. Given the very good leadership and management and the shared commitment to improvement by the staff and governors, the school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	C	C	E
Mathematics	D	D	E	E*
Science	C	C	C	D

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

Overall standards of attainment are above average by the end of Years 6 and 8. The standards reached in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 were below average overall in 2002. English and science were average and mathematics was well below average. Boys' and girls' results were similar. The test results for all three subjects together have been improving broadly in line with the national trend. The results in 2003 improved significantly, especially in mathematics, but no national comparisons are yet available. The school exceeded its targets for English and science in 2003 but just fell below them for mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, the results in 2002 were well below average overall: English was well below average, mathematics very low and science below average. The most significant shortfall in attainment was in mathematics. The reason for the much improved standard of attainment seen during the inspection is the high quality of leadership and management in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 by the newly appointed co-ordinators. The improvement in science is due to the attention given to the needs of higher attainers including gifted and talented pupils. The standards reached by pupils when they leave school at the end of Year 8 cannot be measured against all schools and similar schools nationally because they are not available until they take the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9.

Inspection evidence indicates that in English standards of work are above average at the end of Year 6 and well above average by the end of Year 8. Standards of work in mathematics are average by the end of Year 6 and above average by the end of Year 8 and, in science, standards are above average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Standards in other subjects are almost equally divided at the end of Years 6 and 8 between above national expectations or in line with them, apart from ICT where standards are well above average at the end of Year 8.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Achievement during Years 5 and 6 is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. In other subjects, achievement is very good in physical education and ICT, satisfactory in French, religious education and citizenship and good in the rest. Achievement during Years 7 and 8 is very good in English and good in mathematics and science. In other subjects, achievement varies from very good in physical education and ICT to satisfactory in design and technology, history, geography and citizenship.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils are keen to learn, join in lessons willingly and take part in extra-curricular activities
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils respond very well to teachers and behave responsibly when not closely supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils' sense of personal responsibility is very well developed. Relationships with teachers and each other are excellent. Links with the community foster pupils' awareness of their responsibility as citizens.

Attendance	Satisfactory.
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There were no permanent exclusions and very few fixed-term exclusions in the last academic year. Pupils are keen to accept responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 – 8
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 5 and 6 the quality of teaching and learning of English and science is good and mathematics is satisfactory. In Years 7 and 8, the quality of teaching and learning of English is very good because pupils understand what they are doing and how to improve their work. Teaching and learning in mathematics and science are good. The quality of teaching and learning in other subjects is almost equally divided between good and satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are well taught.

The school meets the needs of all pupils well by limited use of setting based on prior attainment, matching the tasks set to the needs of the pupils and providing support for pupils with special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good; broad, balanced and relevant, meets needs of almost all pupils. All pupils have equal access.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; the school provides a caring environment in which pupils with a wide range of special needs are well looked after. The arrangements for educating statemented pupils are very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good; pupils are suitably identified and satisfactorily assessed. Their progress is tracked and they are supported by a specialist teacher from the LEA. Pupils in the speech and language base are well taught and achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good; spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good and social development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good; procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning are satisfactory.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Extra-curricular provision is very good and strongly supported. Needs of gifted and talented pupils are unevenly met. Although the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is satisfactory there is room for improvement in planning the curriculum and in the teaching arrangements. PSHE overemphasises health education at the expense of other aspects. There are very good links with the community and very effective links with partner institutions. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. All legal requirements are met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; a consensual style encourages the involvement of all staff. Most curriculum areas are well led and managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; they know the school well, help give it direction and monitor and evaluate its performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; there is extensive use of external consultants and internal systems. Teaching and learning are extensively monitored by the senior management team and most curriculum co-ordinators.
The strategic use of resources	Good; educational priorities are reflected in the budgeting process.

There is an emphasis on building a strong team of staff and supporting them through continuing professional development. Data is well used to predict potential, focus effort and support improvement. The match of staffing, accommodation and learning resources to the needs of the curriculum are good. The principles of best value are well applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best • The teaching is good • Pupils make good progress • Pupils like school • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework given • The extent to which the school works closely with parents • Information received about pupils' progress

Parents are very satisfied with the school: over two thirds of parents returned the survey and eight of the twelve positive statements received an approval rating of over 90 per cent. The inspection findings confirm parents' positive views. The inspectors consider that the amount of homework that pupils receive is satisfactory but the quality is variable. Some homework involves completing tasks started in lessons and does not always extend the work carried out in the classroom. Pupils' annual progress reports are satisfactory but the knowledge and understanding gained by pupils and how they can improve their work are often unclear. The school does work closely with parents; it responds to individual needs and carries out surveys to discover their views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of the National Curriculum tests in Year 4 and standardised tests suggest that pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average in spite of the presence of a well above average proportion of pupils with SEN and a below average proportion of higher attainers. Pupils make good progress during their time at school and reach above average standards overall at the end of Years 6 and 8. Current standards at the end of Year 6 have improved markedly compared with the results of the National Curriculum tests taken in 2002. In English and mathematics, the improvement is due to much better leadership and management which has raised the standard of pupils' writing and helped pupils' understanding of mathematics. In science, the improvement is due to the attention given to the needs of higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils. In addition, the school has strengthened staffing, provided professional development and sought outside help. There is no national benchmark for standards at the end of Year 8 but the results of former pupils in the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 9 in the upper school suggest that they were above average at the end of Year 8.
2. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils in 2002, the results were average for English and science but well below average for mathematics. Compared to similar schools the results were well below average for English, very low for mathematics and below average for science. There are legitimate doubts about the validity of the comparisons with similar schools. Other indices of deprivation, produced by the LEA, suggest that the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is considerably higher, which would give rise to a more favourable comparison. Likewise, comparisons with similar schools, based on pupils' prior attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 2, are also well below average but if the attainment of pupils in the tests had been very slightly lower the comparison would have been above average. The most significant shortfall has been in mathematics, for example pupils were less than half a term behind the average pupil in English and science but two terms behind in mathematics. Pupils' overall performance has improved in line with those nationally. In 2002, girls and boys results were similar in mathematics but girls did better in English and boys did better in science. The test results in 2003 improved significantly, especially for mathematics, but no national comparisons are yet available. The results support the inspection findings on much improved standards in Year 6.
3. Current standards are much better. At the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. At the end of Year 8, standards are well above average in English, and above average in mathematics and science. Achievement during Years 5 and 6 is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Achievement during Years 7 and 8 is very good in English and good in mathematics and science. Standards of literacy are above national expectations throughout the school and those of numeracy are above by the end of Year 8.
4. Standards in other subjects are almost equally divided between above average or average by the end of Years 6 and 8. Achievement during Years 5 and 6 is very good in physical education and ICT, satisfactory in French, religious education and citizenship and good in the other subjects. Achievement during Years 7 and 8 is very good in physical education and ICT, satisfactory in history, geography, citizenship and design and technology and good in the other subjects.

5. The small number of pupils from minority-ethnic groups reach similar standards to the rest. Their attainment and progress are not formally analysed but they are monitored individually and no pattern of differing achievement emerges. They are well integrated into the life of the school.
6. Pupils with special educational needs progress well in all years as a result of well-planned provision and thoughtful teaching. The structured programme used by the teachers in the Speech and Language Base helps pupils with such learning difficulties to achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. The attitudes of pupils towards school are very good. They demonstrate a good work ethic and determination to succeed. They take a pride in their school and willingly take part in the many out of school activities, such as the recent school production of the Jungle Book, with great enthusiasm. The school successfully aims to raise pupils' aspirations and prepares them well to make informed choices for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic families are fully integrated into the school community.
8. Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent. Staff respect and value pupils and help them to achieve their potential. Pupils respond positively to this and develop during their time in school into confident and articulate young people. They are happy to approach members of staff if experiencing difficulties with their work or if they have personal problems. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work to further develop pupils' social skills and they willingly share and support each other in their learning. Pupils listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of their peer group if that may differ from their own.
9. The standard of behaviour within the school is very good. Behaviour in lessons was rarely less than satisfactory, sometimes very good and, on occasions, excellent. Outside of lessons there is a sense of purpose and order. Pupils eat their lunch in classrooms with minimal supervision. The school accepts a few pupils from other schools who are being given a fresh start often because of behavioural difficulties. The majority of these have responded positively to the opportunities this school provides and their behaviour has improved. The high quality behaviour management skills of all staff contribute significantly to this. Four pupils were excluded for a fixed term last year. No pupils were permanently excluded. Pupils are only excluded after all other avenues of support have been tried. Bullying is not an issue, pupils state that when incidents occur staff always deal effectively with them.
10. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is very good. Pupils organise themselves with minimal supervision during break and lunchtimes. The school council is active and provides a forum for pupils to express their views. Pupils are encouraged to think of those in need. For example, Harvest baskets were given to the Salvation Army in the autumn term. Their awareness of their responsibilities as citizens is fostered through close links with the town. Pupils took the responsibility to prepare the prayers they read at the local church on Education Sunday. Pupils often perform at civic events in Dorchester. They performed a drumming and dance workshop for local councillors, choirs and instrumental groups perform in the town centre and last year the senior choir sang carols to raise funds for Save the Children. The residential visits contribute significantly to pupils' personal and social development. This is an inclusive school and visits are organised so that all pupils can take part. The development of independent study and research skills is not systematically encouraged in all subjects as pupils progress through the school.

11. The attendance of pupils is satisfactory. Attendance levels were broadly in line with the national average during the last academic year. Unauthorised absence was below the national average. Pupils are punctual arriving at school. The school meets the requirements for the registration of pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Twenty-seven per cent of lessons seen were at least very good compared with 12 per cent at the last inspection and the percentage of less than satisfactory lessons was five compared to eight at the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning are good in all years of the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the different subjects is mainly good but English is very good and design and technology, history, geography and citizenship are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is the same in Years 5 and 6 as in Years 7 and 8 in most subjects, but in mathematics French and religious education it is better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6 and in geography it is better in Years 5 and 6 than 7 and 8.
13. All aspects of teaching and learning are good apart from teachers' planning which is very good and the use of homework, which is satisfactory. The learning of pupils is helped by their very positive attitudes, very good behaviour, co-operative nature and willingness to listen. Excellent relationships between pupils lead to productive group work.
14. The good teaching contains many strengths that help pupils learn and make progress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is generally good. In English very high subject expertise is used to show pupils what to do to improve, which encourages pupils to work hard. Expert knowledge helps ICT teachers to give clear instructions to pupils so that they can solve demanding problems. Skilled teachers of art help pupils produce high quality still life paintings. Basic language skills are well taught in mathematics, music and physical education. In mathematics, the consistent emphasis on essential language skills helps pupils clarify their understanding of terms that are frequently misunderstood. Planning is very good overall. In English, the confidence and self-esteem of lower attaining pupils has been raised by well-structured lessons that are thoroughly taught. Geography lessons are always well planned and structured. In music, teachers' planning is very good and plans are modified in the light of pupils' response. In science, art and design, music and citizenship learning is well focused due to sharing clear learning objectives with the pupils at the start of a lesson and reviewing them at the end. High expectations of attainment and behaviour are the norm. Effective teaching methods are widely used. Good learning ensues in history and citizenship when pupils take part in practical activities that capture their interest. The widespread good management of pupils helps them to learn by maintaining their concentration and minimising disruption. Time, resources and support staff are usually used well. In mathematics, the efficient use of time enables the teacher to pay attention to those who need individual attention.
15. Some of the teaching contains weaknesses which reduce pupils' attainment and progress. Gifted and talented pupils are insufficiently challenged in some subjects such as English, geography and history. Some lesson plans do not take enough account of the range of ability in the class or pupils' prior attainment with the result that learning is held back. Too much teacher input and not enough pupil activity was a feature of a few lessons that gave rise to lack of concentration by pupils and reduced progress. Some mathematics and science lessons did not make good use of the end of lessons to review the learning objectives and check the learning of all pupils. ICT is insufficiently used for teaching and learning in mathematics, science and art and design. Independent learning is underdeveloped in English and design and technology.

16. There is good teaching of pupils with special educational needs, and good support by the teaching assistants. In science, good planning meets their needs; in physical education they are given tasks that are well suited to their capabilities, and in English they were seen making excellent achievement when studying 'Macbeth', as a result of superb planning and teaching.
17. Pupils in the special unit, known as the Speech and Language Base, are taught well through a structured programme to enhance their speech, language and communication abilities. They were seen achieving very well in developing the social skills of eye contact and taking an interest in others; they did this enthusiastically through a series of games.
18. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers. They are well supported when they need it by the local education authority's specialist teacher.

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

19. The overall range and quality of learning opportunities are very good. Deficiencies reported at the time of the last inspection in respect of physical education and ICT have been remedied, and the provision for ICT is now a strength of the curriculum. All statutory requirements are fulfilled; the curriculum offered is rich and meets the needs of almost all pupils. Particular strengths are to be found in extra-curricular activities, links with the community and with partner institutions and in the monitoring of the provision. PSHE and citizenship meet statutory requirements but the schemes of work are not sufficiently developed in respect of teaching strategies and resources. Gifted and talented pupils are not as well served as they might be, an issue which has been recognised by the school and which is included in the development plan.
20. Throughout the school, statutory requirements are met and the proportion of time allocated to each subject is in accordance with national norms. The grouping of pupils according to prior attainment, where appropriate, ensures that pupils work at a pace and level of challenge which matches their abilities. There is, however, room for improvement in the provision for higher-attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented.
21. The curriculum in individual subjects is generally rich, and many schemes of work have been rewritten. In English, the National Literacy Strategy is well embedded and the curriculum makes good use of literature from other cultures: in ICT, applications to robotics are a strength; the music curriculum is progressively more challenging and makes useful links to other subjects, for instance, Tudor music relating to history in Year 5 and the waltz in Victorian times; the French curriculum is common to all three middle schools in the Pyramid. In science, transition projects in conjunction with the upper school help to ensure that curriculum continuity is maintained. Most subjects made good use of ICT but few schemes of work make explicit the subject's contribution to the personal development of the pupils.
22. The curriculum is monitored and reviewed subject by subject on a yearly basis. Pupils' written work is sampled, pupils are interviewed and teaching and learning are observed. The results of these reviews are discussed by the staff and lead to modifications and specific in-service training. An identified weakness in writing led to a whole school initiative and the science curriculum was enriched to increase the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in the National Curriculum assessments at age eleven.

23. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs; the provision for those with statements is very good. There is very good and unobtrusive support for pupils in wheelchairs and others with physical difficulties, learning difficulties or sensory impairments. Dyslexic pupils are appropriately taught. Computers are used well for pupils to learn touch-typing and spelling.
24. The provision for pupils in the Speech and Language Base is very good. They are judiciously withdrawn for small-group teaching in the base for literacy, numeracy, social skills, French and religious education, and well integrated into main classes for other subjects.
25. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The recent installation of a lift ensures that pupils in wheelchairs can now reach the music room. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and broad strategies for teaching them are circulated to staff in a policy, but these are not followed up. There are good enrichment courses for them at the upper school in mathematics and science. There are also good opportunities to play team sports and pupils have swum at county level. However, the progress and achievements of gifted and talented pupils are insufficiently well monitored. The school recognises that more needs to be done to improve this provision. A teacher is responsible for 'looked-after' children, ensuring that they have uniforms, have breakfast and that their participation in school activities is subsidised where necessary. Governors take a keen interest in this part of the school's work and all subjects report each year on issues related to equal opportunities.
26. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, sporting, musical and interest clubs. More than 60 per cent of pupils take part in one or more activities. Sporting activities consist mainly of athletics and team games which are open to both boys and girls. The school enjoys success in fixtures with other schools and in local competitions. Links have been set up with local clubs for most sports in order to encourage those with talent, and the rugby and gymnastics clubs provide coaching at the school. The school runs a range of musical activities including choirs, orchestras and various ensembles. The annual music/drama production is well supported. Artistic and creative pursuits are further encouraged by the annual activities week. Additionally, there are clubs for art, drama, science, mathematics, chess, ICT and dance.
27. The provision for PSHE and for citizenship meets statutory requirements. Citizenship is taught as part of the PSHE course and through other subjects not all of which have identified it as such. The PSHE scheme of work includes all elements but health education receives a disproportionate amount of attention. The planning of the curriculum lacks detail, for example more guidance should be provided about teaching strategies and the use of resources. The teaching is currently not well organised, some groups are taught by the form tutor, others are taught by staff that have no other contact with them. As a result, pupils' experience is unacceptably variable. The absence, through ill-health, of the co-ordinator for PSHE and citizenship is holding up development of the subject.
28. Links with the community are very good. During the building programme, local residents were kept informed as to progress and to warn them of likely disruption. The community uses the facilities of the school and is invited to Saturday open-mornings. The school takes part in local educational events, for example, pupils led the prayers in the local church on Education Sunday. Music groups perform in the town and in local residential homes. The school sends invitations to events to all the houses in the neighbourhood. Pupils support local charities and Year 7 pupils raised the money to buy a Wendy House for a nearby special school. The school participates in local action groups and campaigns, for instance, to discourage the sale of items to under-age

pupils. Overall, the school has a very good reputation in the community and recently received a letter from the police congratulating the pupils on their exemplary behaviour.

29. Links with partner institutions are excellent and the pyramid of first schools, middle schools and upper school of which Dorchester Middle School is a part is very effective. The preparation for transfer between the first schools and the middle school and between the middle school and the upper school are very thorough, including the transfer of records and information, visits by teachers and induction visits by the pupils. Video links with the upper school enable pupils who have just left to give their impressions of the upper school to the year group that will follow them. Curriculum links are very strong, particularly in English, mathematics and science. In science, pupils start transition projects to be completed in the upper school in order to encourage progression and continuity. Middle schools have established common schemes of work, in French for example, in order that all pupils will have had a common experience when they transfer to the upper school.
30. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. High quality provision has been maintained since the last inspection. There are daily acts of worship. Staff provide good role models. Cultural provision has improved since the last inspection, there is cultural input in all subjects and in many, though not yet in all, pupils are also taught about living and working in a multi-ethnic society.
31. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The worth of all individuals is strongly reinforced through the school's ethos that all children are valued and achievement is recognised. Shared values and positive attitudes are promoted. In many subjects pupils have opportunities for reflection, for example in religious education and science they are encouraged to think about the diversity found in the natural world and the wonderful variety of environments in which different plants can grow. In physical education, pupils are encouraged to take pride in their achievements and to cheer on others. However, in ICT, though there is mention of spiritual development in departmental policy, it does not appear overtly in lesson planning.
32. The school is sensitive to the faiths of individuals, providing opportunities for them to worship God together as well as exploring their own beliefs. The school has no hall large enough to accommodate whole-school worship, but there are daily acts of collective worship in a mixture of tutor group, year group and double year group assemblies. The policy for collective worship is up to date. Some assembly themes are seasonal, such as autumn, Diwali and Easter, others cover a wide range of human endeavours and concepts such as sporting achievements, care, courage, wonders of the world, challenge, forgiveness and friendship. Classroom assemblies vary in quality, though all are linked to the weekly assembly themes. Larger assemblies held in the gym and drama hall are very good. Pupils respond well to questions in assembly, listening with concentration. They sing spiritual songs with gusto - as do staff. Many teachers are willing to lead collective worship, providing very good role models. Prayers are thoughtful, and pupils are invited to say (or think silently) 'Amen' if they agree with the prayer said. Most do. Collective worship has been enhanced by a wide range of visiting speakers from Christian and other faith groups and from charitable organisations. It is also enhanced by music played before and after worship, often by pupils themselves.
33. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good and parents' views on pupils' behaviour are very positive. The school's rules and expectations are made clear in its publications, and sometimes sung in assembly. They are further reinforced in lessons. In science, pupils are encouraged to respect the views of others. In history and religious education lessons, pupils consider moral topics such as the values that underpin society. In physical education, they are encouraged to understand the rules of

fair play and to demonstrate appropriate sporting behaviour. In music, pupils are expected to respect each other's work, and to take turns in listening and applauding, again reinforcing the concept of fair play. Drama lessons explore awareness of greed. The ICT curriculum examines issues such as integrity, accuracy and moral use of the Internet, including filtering.

34. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent, leading to excellent relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff. Over 90 per cent of parents believe the school is helping pupils to become responsible. By the time pupils reach Year 8, they are mature and dependable, with responsible attitudes promoted by the buddy system which encourages them to support Year 5 pupils. Personal and social education and citizenship lessons reinforce the buddy programme. Strong social values are promoted, especially in drama and music when pupils perform together. Pair work and group work is incorporated into lessons in many subjects, including science, English, mathematics, music, religious education and physical education. In religious education, pupils explore both social and moral attitudes to the environment. In ICT, pupils handle data relating to social aspects of life, including holidays and road accidents. Pupils are encouraged to use e-mail to contact each other and other schools. They use video conferencing with the upper school as an extension of the buddy system. Through afternoon and lunchtime clubs pupils mix with churchgoers, parents, governors and other teachers.
35. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. All subject co-ordinators are expected to plan lessons which offer as many opportunities as possible for cultural development. Schemes of work provide cultural input, though some, such as modern languages, do not refer to French culture outside Europe. In art and design, pupils explore Celtic and Australian aboriginal art, as well as the work of European artists such as Munch and Van Gogh. In history and geography, pupils' lessons are supported by lively classroom displays on India and St Lucia, further supported in ICT through the design of a brochure for life in St Lucia. Pupils study the history of black people's America and the influence of the Romans through the roots of many English words originally drawn from Latin. Every year group makes at least one visit to a site of cultural interest, such as the Shire Court and the Tutankhamun exhibition. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development through the study of all major religions, though more could be done to bring colour and vitality to the coverage of religious festivals and traditions such as the Hajj. In physical education, the study of dance is pursued through themes like street dance and Egypt, and dance music is also explored by the samba band recently launched as an extra-curricular activity. The annual activities week enables pupils to explore many theme-based cultural activities in a wider context, such as the technology, clothes, art and dance of the Tudor court. Pupils are offered a residential visit to France

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. This is a caring school where the personal and academic needs of individuals are identified and appropriate support given. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils make a significant contribution towards the quality of support pupils receive.
37. The educational and personal support and guidance pupils receive is very good. Care is given to the transition of pupils from first to middle school. The excellent relationships that tutors establish with their group contribute to their ability to monitor the personal development of pupils. Year leaders have regular discussions with senior management about the progress of their year group and effective strategies are put in place to support and encourage any who are experiencing difficulties. From this year a member of staff has responsibility for monitoring and identifying any pupil who is underachieving academically in Years 7 and 8. These pupils are given additional support to help them achieve their potential. Pupils with a wide range of SEN are well supported. There is

good provision for maintaining statements and meeting targets for pupils in the speech and language base. All pupils are well known by all staff and both personal and social problems are quickly identified. The headteacher tracks classes to check on pupils' educational experience and regularly interviews pupils to get their views on the school. Close links with the upper school ensure that pupils are well prepared for their move into the next stage of education. Enrichment groups in mathematics and science are in place for more able Year 8 pupils who work regularly at the upper school.

38. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Registers are checked for absentees and phone calls are made to those homes that have not notified the school of absence. Pupils identified as potential truants are monitored rigorously and parents contacted if they fail to attend. There are effective systems in place to support pupils on long-term absence and to reintegrate pupils back into school.
39. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Pupils clearly understand what constitutes good behaviour and they respond well. The rewards system is used effectively to promote good behaviour. Pastoral staff monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour and sanctions imposed, such as the removal of golden time, are effective and the majority of pupils respond to these. The school has been successful in reintegrating back into mainstream education several pupils who were in danger of being excluded from other schools, and given them a fresh start. The non-confrontational approach of behaviour management by staff has enabled pupils to confront their unacceptable behaviour and understand the effect it has on others. There are good links with the Dorchester Area Schools' Partnership's behaviour support service, which the school uses wisely.
40. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. There are clear guidelines for staff on handling bullying or racist incidents in their handbook. As part of the personal guidance programme oppressive behaviour is discussed and what actions pupils need to take if it occurs.
41. Child protection procedures and those for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. The nominated person for child protection is fully trained and he ensures that staff receive regular awareness training. Appropriate arrangements are in place to meet the requirements for 'looked after' children and close links with the relevant agencies have been established. Health and safety procedures are very good and the governing body is involved in monitoring standards on a regular basis. The school cares well for pupils who have medical or physical needs. Physiotherapy is provided for some in a way that minimises the disruption to their academic studies. First aid arrangements are very good.
42. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection are now satisfactory. Good use is made of assessment data to inform planning. The results of external examinations are systematically analysed and discussed with subject leaders. National Curriculum test results from first schools and data from the school's own assessment procedures are used to build up a profile of pupils' attainment when they enter the school. Currently data is held for core subjects only but is already being extended to cover all foundation subjects. This forms a baseline for tracking pupils' progress over their time in school. Predicted grades for external examinations enable teachers to set subject-related targets for pupils. Teachers are beginning to gain confidence in accessing and using this data. The marking policy was rigorously reviewed recently. Senior staff monitor the quality of marking. There are some areas for development: procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory in religious education and history and inconsistent in geography. Greater use should be made of National Curriculum levels in ICT, French and music to help pupils know what they can do and how they can improve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are very good. Although only 26 parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection, over two thirds completed the questionnaire on parent's views of the school. This is very high compared with other schools nationally.
44. The parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting felt their children liked coming to school, were making good progress and the school had high expectations. They feel that teaching is good. The concerns they expressed were about the amount of homework pupils received, the information parents received about their children's progress and the ability of the school to work closely with them. The amount of homework that pupils receive is satisfactory but the quality varies at times. Some work set is completing tasks started in lessons and does not always extend the work carried out in the classroom. The school does work closely with parents; it responds to individual needs and carries out surveys to discover their views.
45. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about the progress of their children, is good. The frequent newsletters are of high quality and ensure that parents are kept informed of the successes and life of the school. They also contain advance notice of school events such as parents' evenings and also what pupils will be studying in subject areas. The school website has useful information for parents, such as the homework timetable, and is regularly updated. Annual progress reports are satisfactory; they give information about how pupils are achieving against National Curriculum norms, but not the levels pupils have reached. They do not ensure that parents are clear about the knowledge and understanding of subjects gained by pupils. Targets set for pupils are often pastoral in nature and do not always help parents and pupils identify clearly how work can be improved to raise standards. There are meetings for parents three times a year that provide opportunities to discuss progress with both tutors and subject staff.
46. Parents are well informed about the provision for special educational needs in the school through the special educational needs policy and the prospectus. They are fully involved in the annual review of statements.
47. The school works hard to involve parents in the education of their children. Parents are contacted when problems arise and are encouraged to work in partnership with the school to resolve them. Parent governors are proactive in identifying areas where they can involve more parents in the education of their children. The parent teacher association is active and makes a significant contribution, not only by providing additional funds for the school, but also as a consultative body about future developments. Their views are taken seriously by the school who also undertake their own parental survey bi-annually.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher is very good. Their consensual style has made sure that everyone in the school feels valued, which has encouraged them to play an active part in helping to improve the school. One of the key aims is to build a strong team of staff by making the right appointments, supporting existing staff and providing continuing professional development. The recent improvements in pupils' performance in mathematics and English are due to this approach. The management of the headteacher and senior management team is also very good. An extensive system of monitoring, review and evaluation is in place, strategic thinking and planning emphasises improving pupils'

achievement and professional development is tied to the school improvement plan. The degree to which the school has improved, the high standard of pupils' behaviour, the quality and range of learning opportunities, the level of support for pupils and the degree of parental satisfaction with the school are testimony to the quality of leadership and management of the school.

49. The standard of leadership and management of the curriculum areas is good overall; about half are very good and half are satisfactory. Pupils' performance in English and mathematics, science, art and design, ICT, physical education and music has improved since the last inspection due to the very good leadership and management of these curriculum areas. Leadership and management of history, geography and religious education are satisfactory but suffers because the head of the curriculum area does not have enough non-contact time to thoroughly monitor and evaluate teaching and, assessment. The quality of leadership and management of citizenship and personal and social education has been affected by the long-term absence of the curriculum co-ordinator who has been unable to monitor the quality of teaching or support the teachers.
50. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. Teachers and teaching assistants are qualified and experienced. The school has fully met the requirements of recent changes in legislation concerning special educational needs. There has been good progress in addressing the key issue concerning individual education plans. These now have detailed targets, which are set by the appropriate subject teachers and reviewed regularly. All pupils' progress is recorded and tracked well, but the school is not yet analysing it sufficiently to find out how different groups of pupils are achieving, which would help inform future planning. A Speech and Language Base has been established and developed into a very good resource since the last inspection. It is very well led and managed. The teacher in charge and the speech and language therapist liaise extremely well, using their knowledge and expertise effectively.
51. The governors carry out their responsibilities well. The chair of governors knows the difference between governance and management and makes sure governors do not confuse the two. Corporate control is exercised through meetings of the full governing body supported by a series of sub-committees. Governors talk confidently about the strengths and weaknesses of the school which they know about through information provided by the school and through school visits to curriculum areas and aspects. They help create, monitor and implement the school improvement plan. Policies, finance, staffing, exclusions and test results are all regularly monitored and reviewed. They support the school strongly but hold it to account, for example they have required information for parents to be presented in accessible language, have queried the regularity of marking and have taken a keen interest in the efforts to improve standards in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Their oversight of special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. All legal requirements are met.
52. The short-term view of development, criticised in the last inspection report has been addressed by the school improvement plan that now addresses the next two years. Each curriculum area has a policy, a development plan and an annual review but the quality of planning and review varies.
53. The school monitors and evaluates its performance and takes remedial action very well, a clear improvement since the last inspection. Such an approach has given rise to the improvement in standards. Extensive use has been made of external consultants to review English, mathematics, science and ICT. All staff are involved in monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the school as indicated in their job descriptions. The senior management team monitor teaching as part of their performance

management duties using a set of clear criteria. Weaknesses in performance are successfully addressed through professional development. There is some peer evaluation in an attempt to spread good practice. The school uses data well to predict potential, focus effort and support improvement. Detailed analyses of the school's performance compared to national standards, similar schools and value added are carried out and made available to staff. At present most of the data analysis is carried out by the assistant headteacher but curriculum co-ordinators are undergoing training to improve their ability to manage data. Considerable efforts are made to find out how pupils view the school, for example the headteacher interviews pupils and tracks groups of them for a day and reports back on his experience to teachers and to pupils.

54. The school is very well placed to improve and has the capacity to succeed. The headteacher has high expectations of staff and has a clear strategic view of the school which he has communicated to all staff. The close correlation between the school self-evaluation and the outcomes of the inspection shows that the strengths and weaknesses of the school have been correctly identified and that the school improvement plan provides a sound basis for action.
55. The school's aims and values are appropriate and comprehensive. The overall aim, published in the school improvement plan, is to enable pupils to realise their potential by providing opportunities for self-development and self-fulfillment in partnership with their parents. Reference is also made to valuing all pupils equally. The good standards achieved by pupils and the good quality of education provided, together with the way pupils with special educational needs are treated, all suggest that the aims and values of the school are being very well implemented.
56. The school has good provision for staffing. In many subject areas, the teachers are well qualified and experienced, for example in English, modern foreign languages, art and design and music, which also benefits from having a music support teacher. The quality of staffing has a positive effect upon standards and pupil achievement. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, with well-qualified staff in both mainstream classes and in the special unit. However, in some subject areas, notably geography, history and religious education, many teachers are not specialists and have little experience of teaching these subjects. This sometimes has a negative effect upon standards, particularly in large mixed-ability classes where higher attaining pupils do not always receive sufficiently challenging work to fulfil their potential. The absence of a stable team of teachers trained to teach personal, social and health education and citizenship has adversely affected standards in these subjects. The standard of teaching and learning is best in those curriculum areas which provide extensive support and guidance for their teaching teams such as English, mathematics in Years 5 and 6 and physical education.
57. Teachers have good opportunities for professional development in their specialist subject area and in helping them to address whole school issues such as literacy and the use of ICT. Teaching assistants take the opportunity for professional development, for example by gaining specialist qualifications. Administrative and ancillary staff are trained in appropriate areas such as health and safety.
58. The school has an effective performance management strategy in place to contribute to the professional development of staff. There is very good support for newly qualified teachers and for all staff new to the school, enabling them to quickly become valued and confident practitioners.
59. The accommodation is very good; it allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school has been recently refurbished and extended and the buildings are in very good condition. The strengths include classrooms of a good size, excellent displays in

classrooms and public areas and access to all of the accommodation by wheelchair users. There are some areas for development: the science laboratories have not yet been fully refurbished and are only satisfactory; pupils' changing areas are too small to accommodate larger groups and there is nowhere the whole school can meet.

60. The standard of learning resources including books, equipment and materials is good; they are well matched to the curriculum and range of pupils. One exception is the lack of practical aids to help pupils understand mathematics. Otherwise, resources are sufficient, accessible and in good condition. There is good access to resources for ICT but not all subjects make enough use of them. Special equipment is available to help disabled pupils access the curriculum.
61. The well-organised library has a warm, welcoming atmosphere and very good accommodation. Good display and labelling mean that pupils can very easily find the books that they require. Pupils appreciate the high level of access during lessons and at other times and make good use of the library. All pupils are taught how to use the library through well-planned library lessons. Computers are readily available for Internet research and library administration. The library is managed very well. The stock of books is above the national expectation. Collections of books to support project work in all subjects are being built up and are well used. A section of the book stock meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs well.
62. The strategic use of resources is good. The school uses financial and other resources very carefully. Financial planning is comprehensive and well costed and the school had a budget surplus in the last financial year. However, generally the objectives in the school improvement plan are insufficiently linked to clear criteria for pupils' performance or the quality of provision. Routines for monitoring expenditure are secure but checks that specific income, such as that for special educational needs, are only made in broad terms. The governing body monitors the schools finances scrupulously, taking robust steps to check that they provide value for money in key contracts but they do not routinely compare their expenditure pattern with similar schools. However, overall the principles of best value are well applied.
63. The school is effective, its pupils achieve well, its income is below average; it provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The headteacher, governors and staff should now:
 - 1) Improve the provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship by:
 - identifying citizenship clearly in each subject of the curriculum;
 - providing support for teachers over what and how to teach and the selection of resources;
 - using a stable team of teachers trained to teach PSHE;
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning to ensure greater consistency.
(Paras: 19, 27, 49, 56, 100-102)
 - 2) Improve the consistency of the provision for gifted and talented pupils by identifying them clearly in all subjects and providing them with an appropriately challenging curriculum
(Paras: 15, 19, 20, 25, 71, 103, 109, 115)

Minor weaknesses

Improve the quality of the procedures for assessment by increasing the monitoring and evaluation of assessed work in the humanities and extending the use of National Curriculum levels in ICT, music and French.
(Paras: 42, 45, 111, 117, 123, 131, 139, 150)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	99
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	23	43	24	5	0	0
Percentage	4	23	44	24	5	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	605
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	22

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	157

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	6.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.3

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
	2003 (2002)	82 (78)	68 (79)	150 (157)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	65 (55)	58 (47)	77 (71)
	Girls	59 (62)	49 (46)	63 (66)
	Total	124 (117)	107 (93)	140 (137)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (75)	71 (59)	93 (87)
	National	<i>N/a</i> (75)	<i>N/a</i> (73)	<i>N/a</i> (86)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	54 (54)	57 (48)	70 (62)
	Girls	56 (59)	42 (42)	62 (63)
	Total	110 (113)	99 (90)	132 (125)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (72)	66 (57)	87 (86)
	National	<i>N/a</i> (73)	<i>N/a</i> (74)	<i>N/a</i> (82)

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

2003 figures are in italics. National figures for 2003 are not yet available.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
572	9	0
1	0	0
15	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
6	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	28.84
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.9

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	696

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.2
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	26.4
Key Stage 3	27.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002/03
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	£
Total income	1,484,771
Total expenditure	1,466,458
Expenditure per pupil	2,428
Balance brought forward from previous year	25,629
Balance carried forward to next year	18,313

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.28
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.52
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.47
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	605
Number of questionnaires returned	409

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	52	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	45	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	59	8	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	56	18	4	2
The teaching is good.	42	53	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	49	12	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	40	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	41	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	50	17	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	44	47	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	48	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	46	4	1	3

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils' achievement is very good and current standards are well above average by the end of Year 8.
- The effective teaching of literacy has helped to raise standards.
- The formal monitoring of teaching and learning provides guidance on how to improve.
- Very good leadership and management ensure the capacity to take effective action.

Areas for improvement

- The department needs to identify gifted and talented pupils more clearly and provide them with appropriately challenging tasks.
- The development of strategies to improve the performance of girls.

65. In 2002, the results of the National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds were average. The performance of girls was slightly better than that of boys but boys exceeded their national average whilst girls fell below. Results in English were similar to those obtained in science and better than those in mathematics. Over the past five years the performance of girls has been better than that of boys and pupils' performance has steadily improved. The test results in 2003 show further improvement but no national comparisons are yet available.
66. Standards at the end of Year 6 are now above average. This is consistent with a pattern of steady improvement. Standards at the end of Year 8 are well above average and pupils are doing well given their test results when they were in Year 6. Pupils are now achieving very well throughout the school because there have been significant developments in the English department. For example, schemes of work are being redeveloped to indicate the content to be taught, the teaching and learning styles to be adopted, how work can be presented for different groups of children, resources to be used and the range of work to be assessed and methods of assessment to be used. The redeveloped schemes will also include planned provision for citizenship and the use of ICT.
67. By the end of Year 6 most pupils speak fluently and possess a good vocabulary. By the end of Year 8, they adapt their speech to a wider range of situations and are aware of when to use formal or less formal language. Higher attainers are impressive communicators when provided with the opportunity. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils were very aware of their own learning and explained what they had done and needed to do to improve. Middle attainers express themselves clearly. Lower attainers speak more briefly, but thorough preparation allows them to develop ideas and improve their performance. For example, a well-planned and managed lesson introducing Shakespearean language enabled all pupils to rehearse and deliver a series of Shakespearean insults.
68. By the end of Year 6 most pupils read texts that are appropriate for their age and, because of the emphasis the school places on private reading, many pupils read a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. Most pupils read accurately and independently and have developed routines to help them understand what they read. In

a Year 6 lesson introducing reading journals, for example, pupils recorded their views clearly and developed strategies for introducing texts to younger children. Lower attaining pupils read with less confidence, following the text with a finger and reading one word at a time. In Years 7 and 8 pupils read fluently. They understand ideas, themes and characters well, and identify the key features in a text. Higher attaining pupils infer and deduce well. Lower attainers read slowly and usually their understanding is confined to the literal meaning. Many pupils read for pleasure. They have favourite authors and talk knowledgeably about the stories they like best. Pupils are enthusiastic library users. They appreciate the easy access provided by the well-managed library.

69. Although writing has improved recently, pupils do not write as well as they speak and read. Lower attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not use full stops, capital letters and question marks correctly. However, average and higher attaining pupils are able to use grammatically complex sentences to extend meaning. This is because the redeveloped schemes of work include several strategies to improve pupils' writing. For example, all pupils are given realistic but challenging targets. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are able to write in a good range of styles, including letters, narratives and reports. Pupils understand how to plan their work and the need to re-draft it to improve quality. By the end of Year 8, pupils broaden their scope and the highest attainers are able to write well-structured pieces that engage and sustain readers' interest. Lower attaining pupils write well enough to be understood and are beginning to use full stops, capital letters and question marks accurately. The presentation of pupils' written work is very good in all years. Handwriting is well formed, clear and neat.
70. Teaching and learning in Years 5 to 8 are very effective. In nine out of ten lessons observed, teaching was good or better. Two lessons were excellent. The school has carefully implemented the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy. This has meant that well-structured lessons have been taught very thoroughly. This has done a lot to improve the confidence and raise the self-esteem of lower attaining pupils. English teachers are enthusiastic and keen to share their expertise and to learn from each other. There is, therefore, a strong element of consistency in their teaching. Subject expertise is very high. The result is that teachers are able to show pupils what to do to reach high standards. The pupils respond by working hard and are often inspired by their teachers. This was seen, for example, in a Year 7 lesson introducing Middle English and *The Canterbury Tales*. In this lesson, a group of higher attaining pupils engaged the teacher in a discussion of how Norman French might have influenced the development of English.
71. Teachers manage lessons very well. The assessment of pupils' work helps teachers to plan further lessons. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding. They also work hard, applying intellectual and creative effort in their work. Because teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly, and write helpful comments on it, pupils understand what they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils' achievement is very good in relation to their prior attainment. This is because teachers plan effectively, use time, support staff and resources well. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in all years. They benefit from the help of teaching assistants or from teachers providing them with work specifically designed to meet their needs. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress but they are not clearly identified and hence not set appropriate extension work. Otherwise, the department provides an extensive range of valuable opportunities that cater for the interests, talents and individual needs of pupils, and assures progression in their learning.
72. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The co-ordinators have helped colleagues to become a cohesive team. Policy documents are clear and

focused on raising pupils' attainment by providing opportunities for all. Teaching and learning are formally monitored to provide guidance on how to improve.

73. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

Literacy across the curriculum

74. The school has an effective strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy. Through the introduction and implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy, a literacy focus has been established across the whole school. This comprises three cross-curricular strands: writing non-fiction, listening, and reading for information. Following the delivery of in-service training by the literacy co-ordinators, subject teams have identified teaching opportunities for the further development of these key literacy skills. Subject co-ordinators have vigorously applied the whole school literacy policy. Consequently, departments have developed their own literacy policies and teachers recognise their role in making these policies work. For example, there are planned opportunities for pupils to develop language through evaluation in physical education.

75. Speaking and listening is encouraged in most subjects. Teachers in art and design, design and technology, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and science emphasise the correct use of technical language. For example, mathematics teachers place a strong emphasis on the consistent and meaningful use of key language to secure important distinctions between mathematical concepts.

76. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to read in many subjects. In history and ICT, pupils are encouraged to read in order to gather information. Modern foreign language teachers develop pupils' reading comprehension skills. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to produce extended written work in a wide range of subjects, including geography, history, ICT and religious education where writing frames are provided to help pupils to construct appropriate responses. Modern foreign language teachers develop pupils' knowledge and use of grammar.

77. Overall, the level of competence is above national expectations throughout the school.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Overall, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 8.
- Standards are clearly rising in Years 5 and 6.
- The teaching teams in Years 5 and 6 are very well led.

Areas for improvement

- Time is not used sufficiently well during the conclusion of lessons.
- Work for the weakest pupils does not have a sufficiently practical element.
- Not all pupils benefit from similar opportunities to use ICT in their work.

78. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 6 is broadly average. This represents a marked improvement since 2002 when pupils' attainment in the national tests for eleven-year-olds was well below average. Results then were also well below the average for similar schools and standards at the time of the last inspection. Much improved test results for 2003 support the inspection findings of improving standards in Year 6. The school's low average points score was in part exacerbated by the decision not to enter their very weakest pupils for whom it was judged that the test would not be

appropriate. Test results were below those of English and science. Both in the test results last year and in the work of pupils now, there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, or the small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

79. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average but there is a higher than typical proportion of pupils with very weak numeracy. The well-planned and co-ordinated teaching, based on national guidance, has improved standards compared to recent years so that pupils' achievement during Year 6 is now satisfactory. In all years, pupils with special educational needs, including those in the speech and language base, are well supported and make good progress.
80. The standard of work of pupils in Year 8 is above national expectations, as it has been in recent years, this represents good achievement during Years 7 and 8. Even in those years recently, when pupils have begun Year 7 with below average attainment, they have improved significantly by the end of Year 8 to leave with above average standards. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in the upper school are also above average and provide convincing evidence of their progress in earlier years. Pupils in Year 8 who have a particular talent for mathematics benefit regularly from more challenging work by attending special lessons at the upper school. Overall, pupils achieve well during their time at the school.
81. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory overall. Mathematics is taught by twice as many teachers in these years as in Years 7 and 8 and their experience and expertise spans a wide range. This is reflected in the quality of teaching which ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Recent close co-ordination of planning and teaching methods has contributed significantly to the improved standards now evident in pupils' work. In Years 7 and 8, overall teaching is consistently good.
82. In the best teaching, very thorough planning and very efficient management of different activities, ensures that the teacher has the time to provide sustained help to those pupils in need of individual attention. In an exceptionally good lesson, the teacher incorporated a stimulating game, with very effective use of ICT to present and illustrate key concepts with very well-chosen exercises. Tasks so engaged the pupils that the teacher was able to give sufficient time to individuals and small groups to ensure that all pupils worked productively throughout the lesson. Consequently, the least able pupils were able to explain their reasoning about percentages whilst the most capable were able to demonstrate their understanding of the processes by which percentage parts are calculated. In some lessons, teaching involves too great an emphasis on exposition, beyond pupils' concentration span, and is not sufficiently supported with practical aids for pupils' understanding to match the skills they are taught.
83. An important strength in some of the best teaching is the strong and persistent emphasis that teachers give to essential language skills that enable pupils, even those who find learning difficult, to make important distinctions that refine their mathematical understanding. For example, by the end of a Year 8 lesson most of the pupils were able to write grammatically accurate interpretations of statistical charts that showed that they recognised the distinction between the number of items and their proportion. This was achieved because the teacher had skilfully illustrated differences with telling examples, then persistently questioned pupils until they were able to use the essential vocabulary correctly and with understanding. They, in turn, showed a determination to succeed, asking for clarifications when they were uncertain and investing considerable intellectual effort. In the conclusion of the lesson, the teacher made sure that pupils realised the extent of their success so that they left the lesson with a very real sense of their own achievement of the lesson's objectives. A common shortcoming in many lessons, including some that are otherwise good, is the ineffective use of time towards

the end. For example, the review of a lesson on graphs and their interpretation was centred on the contributions of a very few pupils whilst the remainder were unchallenged; their attention wandered and the pace of their learning slackened significantly.

84. Overall, leadership and management are good. In Years 5 and 6, very purposeful leadership and effective management have contributed to rapid improvements in standards. Immediate priorities have been addressed very well alongside important longer-term initiatives. Closer links with first schools have been established to improve progress from Year 4 into Year 5 in the future. The large teaching team plan and work closely together so that standards are rising currently in Years 5 and 6. Monitoring and support have been directed towards those classes most in need and so to where improvements can be made most efficiently. Efforts and resources have been focused effectively on raising standards so that pupils currently in Year 6 are reaching levels that in earlier years would not have been evident until early in Year 7.
85. Leadership and management in Years 7 and 8 are satisfactory. Temporary arrangements have been made that have maintained the established effective practices. Recent refinements to procedures for assessing pupils' work have improved the monitoring of their progress so that good achievement has been maintained. Homework is monitored and makes a good contribution to pupils' progress. Consideration has yet to be given to the need for more challenging programmes of work to ensure that the improvements begun in Years 5 and 6 are effectively extended into Years 7 and 8. Use of ICT is not sufficiently well-co-ordinated for pupils to enjoy the same level of experience.
86. A decline in standards in Years 5 and 6 since the last inspection has been reversed so that overall, improvement since that time has been satisfactory.

Numeracy across the curriculum

87. In all years, pupils master a good range of skills and knowledge across all areas of study so that they are able to use mathematics effectively in other subjects. Correspondingly, in other subjects such as science, ICT and physical education, teachers incorporate aspects of numeracy so that they reinforce learning by application and use of those skills. However, in geography there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their graphical and numerical skills. By the end of Year 6, the most capable pupils can reason very well, construct and name common quadrilaterals and evaluate algebraic terms and expressions. More typically, pupils master written methods of calculation adequately and can carry out mental numeracy in line with expectations. Generally, the least capable pupils have not achieved a level of understanding that makes their learning of basic numeracy secure and enduring.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- The department is very well managed and this promotes efficient teaching and learning.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons very well and demand a great deal of their pupils.
- Well-prepared resources provide all with opportunities to acquire practical skills.
- The above average proportion of Year 6 pupils who reach the higher Level 5 in the national tests.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used frequently enough to display and analyse experimental results.

88. Results in national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2002 were in line with national average levels in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 and above. They were below those of similar schools based on free school meals and in line with similar schools based on prior attainment. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 was above the national average and above similar schools. Boys performed better than girls. Teachers' assessment was a little below that achieved by pupils, but much more accurate compared with achieved results than in the previous inspection showing an improved understanding of national curriculum levels. Pupils did better in science than they did in English and mathematics. There has been a trend of improvement since the previous inspection and this is in line with the national trend in terms of Level 4. The trend of improvement at Level 5 is above the national trend and reflects the good enrichment work done for gifted and talented pupils. The average point score is above the national figure and results have improved since the previous inspection. The 2003 test results showed further improvements but no national comparisons can yet be made. Standards in Year 8 during the inspection were above national expectations for pupils of their age, and overall levels of achievement in science are now good. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress, as do the few pupils with English as an additional language, none of whom are at an early stage of learning English. These pupils receive help from a local authority language specialist. Science is making a strong contribution to literacy, particularly with the use of writing frames and help sheets to improve their spelling and writing-up of experiments.

89. Standards in Year 6 during the inspection were good and there is evidence of improving standards in Years 5 and 6, reflecting the increased attention paid to practical investigations and the way pupils are allowed to develop their ideas independently. This improves their thinking skills and allows them to link predictions with results. Pupils generally acquire a good knowledge of science and can recall earlier work, resulting in confidence in answering and asking questions. This allows them to build on their prior knowledge. For example, pupils of average prior attainment in Year 6 explained how bridges could bend under stress because they could link it with earlier work on how molecules were arranged in solids. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are given good support in lessons and reach standards in line with their ability. The department has a very large bank of modified learning resources which matches their specific needs and these pupils receive very good support from learning support assistants who are often involved in the lesson planning. All pupils make good progress through Years 5 and 6.

90. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 have a good knowledge of science and are good at practical work where their skills have developed since Year 6. This has resulted in improved observation and ability to make accurate predictions. However, there is still a

weakness in planning open-ended experiments with the pupils relying too much on teacher guidance. Evaluation of results is now strong and the pupils effectively link results with their predictions. Lower attaining pupils in Year 8 are well supported in lessons and the national science strategy materials offer challenges which match their needs. For example, a class of mainly below average attainers suggested that body mass had an effect on breathing rate and deduced correctly that a weight loss may help asthma sufferers to breathe more easily.

91. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers plan very well using a very good variety of strategies and learning resources. Most are subject specialists with a good knowledge of their subject. These specialists offer considerable support to their non-specialist colleagues. Lessons are very brisk and generally engage pupils throughout. For example, a demonstration to illustrate the parts of a flower using a very large model captured the interest of Year 5 pupils and started a lively discussion about which parts were concerned with reproduction. As a result, pupils were able to understand how pollination occurred. Clear learning objectives are identified and shared with pupils so they understand what has to be done in the lessons. However, these are not always adequately reviewed at the end of lessons to find out how much the pupils have learned. Pupils learn best in lessons with a high level of challenge. For example, Year 8 pupils carried out an experiment to see if domestic solutions were acidic or alkaline. The teacher then challenged them to use a universal indicator to see if they were strong or weak acids and alkalis. This resulted in good team discussions where ideas were formulated and an opportunity to use scientific language. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Analysis of pupils' work showed that much writing was neat and well presented by both boys and girls. This allows books to be used as good tools for revision. Books are regularly marked with encouraging comments praising effort, but there is an inconsistency in comments informing the pupils on how to improve.
92. The department is very well led and managed and the subject co-ordinator has drawn together new and experienced teachers into a strong team who share good practice. The co-ordinator has a very clear and realistic view of what needs to be done to raise standards further and there is a very good departmental improvement plan with achievable targets. The schemes of work have been rewritten and are derived from national schemes tailored to suit the pupils' needs. They take account of the national strategy for science in Years 7 to 9 and this has provided additional stimulus to learning for all pupils. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress throughout the school and this is an improvement from the previous inspection. There is effective use of target setting from Year 5 using various predictors. A register of pupils who underachieve has been established and early action is helping to raise their standards. Resources are good and the number of texts has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Texts have been bought not only with readability and literacy in mind, but also for their multicultural content. Use of ICT has improved since the previous inspection and pupils now use wordprocessing to enhance their presentation, and regularly research the Internet. However, there is insufficient data-logging, use of spreadsheets and pie charts. Computers are not used enough on a daily basis to display and analyse experimental results. The two laboratories offer satisfactory accommodation, but their refurbishment is a school priority. The department is very well supported by two part-time technicians.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- The quality of work produced by pupils is at least good and often very good.
- Displays of art are of a consistently high standard.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to enhance learning in the art and design room is underdeveloped.

93. Art and design has a very high profile in the school and pupils make consistently good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the subject in all year groups. As a result, the quality of work pupils produce is at least good and often very good, especially in observational work, and reflects the very positive attitudes pupils have towards a subject they really enjoy. It also reflects the enthusiasm and expertise of teachers and the quality of input into lessons of teaching assistants. As a result, standards attained in art and design by pupils in Year 6 and Year 8 are above those expected nationally in every aspect of the subject and all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. Displays of art are of a consistently high standard and reflect the importance given to the subject in all year groups.
94. This represents an improvement in standards since the previous inspection, which stated that, even though standards seen were at least in line with national expectations and often above, the recording of critical elements of art and design left room for improvement in Year 7 and Year 8. This criticism has now been addressed.
95. The art and design curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of all pupils and ensures structured progression and reinforcement in the build up of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject in all year groups. This is clearly seen throughout the school and is reflected in art displays and in pupils' work.
96. Pupils in Year 5 engage in critical studies of the work of famous artists such as Rousseau and are encouraged to explore the use of lines and shapes when sketching. They are provided with regular opportunities to investigate the possibilities of using a wide variety of materials and processes for effect. During one lesson seen, pupils worked with interest and enthusiasm whilst employing the resistant properties of wax in printing well. They discussed with confidence the techniques they were using and showed obvious signs of disappointment when the lesson ended. Achievement was good because the session was well structured and relevant to their needs. Year 6 pupils are given opportunities to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding in all aspects of the subject and are able to modify and improve their work to meet their intentions. They are encouraged to critically evaluate their own work and also the work of other pupils. Year 6's work in two-point perspective and also in still-life paintings is especially good and displays evidence of very good achievement. Year 7 pupils also achieve well and their work in the style of Edvard Munch is of a very high standard, especially paintings depicting interpretations of 'The Scream'. By Year 8, pupils have developed higher than average skills in art and design and have attained at least good standards in drawing, painting, printing, ceramics and collage work.
97. The standard of teaching of art and design throughout the school is good and this was reflected in the lessons observed during the inspection and also in the achievement of

pupils. No teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory. Most teachers display good, and sometimes very good, subject knowledge and have high expectations. This was particularly evident during a very well taught lesson on still-life painting to Year 6 pupils when the teacher's very well-developed subject knowledge and good use of a range of motivational strategies led to pupils responding very well to the challenge of drawing an outline shape in relation to their perspective. The quality of pupils' work reflected the concentration they put into their drawings and was evident in the very good achievement of nearly all pupils, with no differences in achievement between boys and girls. In lessons where teaching is less successful, work is often not matched to the previous knowledge and skill development of pupils and this affects overall attainment.

98. Leadership and management of the subject is very good and the co-ordinator has ensured that all teachers understand the importance the school places on art and design as an outlet for creative ability. Procedures for checking pupils' progress are satisfactory and assessment information is used to improve pupils' achievement in future lessons.
99. Resources for teaching art and design are very good and cover all aspects of the National Curriculum Programme of Study. They are easily accessed and well used by all year groups. Accommodation is also very good and is used very well to enhance teaching and learning. Links to other subject areas, such as literacy and history, are good but, whilst the use of ICT to aid learning in art and design is satisfactory overall, the use of ICT to enhance learning within the artroom remains an area for future development.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- There are very good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility at school.
- Pupils learn about citizenship well when participating in assemblies, circle time, the school's council and charity events.
- The appointment of a co-ordinator for citizenship and personal, social and health education.
- Teaching is at least satisfactory in lessons where citizenship is identified.

Areas for improvement

- Not all subjects have clearly identified where citizenship is present in their curriculum.
- Curriculum planning is insufficiently detailed.
- Staffing, sharing of resources and subject training are inconsistent.
- Monitoring of the quality and consistency of the provision are insufficient.

100. Pupils' attainment is at the expected level at the end of Years 6 and 8. Pupils in Year 5 enjoy circle time discussions and most contribute their ideas clearly about helping others. They worked well in groups to discover that a story can be told from different viewpoints. Year 7 pupils showed a caring and mature attitude when preparing for their 'buddy' responsibilities. Over half of Year 8 pupils travelled abroad with the school to learn about life in France. The content of many school assemblies raises pupils' awareness of global and community issues. Pupils have sponsored the education of an African boy and have gained some understanding of the hardships in his life. Visits from professionals and visits to a variety of venues are organised and these help to broaden pupils' knowledge. Pupils' skills of enquiry and communication are developed well in circle and tutor time, especially in Years 5 and 6, and all pupils demonstrate personal and group responsibility well. In addition, there is a very active school council and

issues related to this are addressed in tutor time. However, pupils lack a wider knowledge and understanding of citizenship in areas such as human rights, crime and local government because planning and teaching of these topics is underdeveloped.

101. In PSHE lessons and tutor time, where citizenship was identified, teaching was satisfactory overall. In lessons where citizenship was part of the subject content, teaching was mostly good and one lesson was excellent. Objectives are shared with the pupils at the start of lessons and reviewed at the end. This ensures learning is focused. However, in these introductions opportunities are frequently missed to inform pupils about the citizenship aspect of their learning. A variety of techniques are used to support pupils' learning including circle time, role-play, discussion and debate. In one excellent lesson group work was used very effectively. Pupils are encouraged to present their work in a variety of ways and most teachers do not rely on commercially produced handouts. However, the amount of recorded work in most groups is insufficient to inform pupils fully about some areas of the programme of study. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested. They join in discussions with considerable energy and their very positive attitudes assist their learning.
102. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. However, the long-term absence of the newly appointed co-ordinator has limited the progress made in establishing citizenship. For example, there has been no monitoring of the consistency and quality of teaching. The co-ordinator has identified that allocation of staff to PSHE and citizenship has been unsatisfactory because several staff were new to the school and others were new to the teaching group. Many were not the form's tutor. This made it difficult to hold subject meetings, to share resources and to provide regular training. Although an audit has been conducted, not all subjects have clearly identified where aspects of citizenship are to be found in their curriculum. Not enough detailed planning has followed this audit. There is a need to draw all strands of delivery together to provide a balanced plan, matched to the statutory programmes of study in Years 7 and 8, identifying what is to be taught, when and where to each year group.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards in Years 7 and 8 have improved since the last inspection, pupils are not now over-reliant on their teachers.
- Learning resources are very good and include special facilities for SEN pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to generate their own product ideas or work from their own detailed planning during the design process.
- Higher ability pupils are not always challenged by their work and this reduces their overall achievement.

103. Standards of attainment in Year 6 and in Year 8 are comparable to national expectations and the overall achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, is satisfactory in all years. All pupils follow a broad and relevant programme of study but they are not given sufficient opportunities to generate their own ideas for products or work from their own detailed planning during the design process. The school has fully addressed the concerns of the previous inspection, which reported that standards of attainment were below national expectations in Year 8 and that pupils could not research independently and required guidance in shaping, assembling and joining materials. Pupils now work

confidently and independently with tools, equipment, materials and components appropriate to their level of attainment and are able to investigate and evaluate the processes they use and the products they make. Higher ability pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged by the work set and this affects their overall achievement.

104. Pupils enjoy design and technology and are keen to learn. They are proud of what they achieve. Year 5 pupils build up their knowledge, skills and understanding through focused practical activities such as weaving, baking biscuits and constructing model vehicles. Pupils in Year 6 increase their understanding of the practical uses of textiles when making slippers and construct moving vehicles powered by electric motors. They work with accuracy from plans whilst using a suitable range of tools, materials and components and consider the functional qualities of their finished products. Their work does not, however, contain evidence of pupils being given regular opportunities to generate or develop their own design ideas and this limits their achievement in this area.
105. Similarly in Year 7 pupils are given only limited opportunities to develop their understanding of the initial design process and this was evident during discussions with pupils and also in an observed lesson completing 'Be Seen' bags. All the finished products contained evidence of a sound understanding of how to use a variety of materials and equipment, such as sewing machines, with confidence and pupils evaluated the quality of their products to set criteria well. Yet all the bags were identical in style and size and had been constructed from similar templates. Pupils had not been given the opportunity to use their own ideas at the design stage. As a result, the bags only differed in the style of motifs painted on them.
106. Work in Year 8 is similarly lacking in pupil input at the design stage but contains evidence of a satisfactory build up of skills in the use of tools and equipment and also in developing pupils' understanding of the processes used in all aspects of design and technology, including computer-aided design and food technology. However, there was evidence in nearly all year groups of higher attaining pupils being insufficiently challenged by the work set for them, especially in work related to the process of designing.
107. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is good on occasion. Pupils learn better when taught by specialist staff, especially in Years 7 and 8. Some teachers, however, have less secure subject knowledge and this sometimes limits pupils' achievement. When teaching is good, teachers have high expectations, plan effectively and use time and resources well. In these lessons, pupils display interest, concentration and independence whilst working and their achievement is good. When teaching is less successful, the pace of lessons is slower and groups of pupils sometimes become disinterested, thereby reducing progress.
108. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject soundly and has ensured that all year groups follow the same programme of study. Links to other subject areas, such as ICT and mathematics, are good and enhance learning. Resources are very good and more than meet the needs of teaching in all areas of design and technology. The accommodation has been greatly improved since the previous inspection and is now good and is in some respects very good, especially in meeting the needs of pupils with physical disabilities.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 is good.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and good relationships with their teachers improve their achievement.
- Teaching and learning benefit from the increasingly integrated use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils underachieve, particularly higher attainers in Years 7 and 8.
- The quality of marking and assessment are inconsistent.
- The work of non-specialist teachers is not effectively monitored and evaluated.

109. At the end Year 6, the standard of attainment in lessons and pupils' work is always in line with, and sometimes above, national expectations. Pupils have sound mapping skills and have a strong sense of place. They can confidently describe and explain physical features using appropriate geographical vocabulary and are able to research and retrieve information using the school's ICT facilities. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well in lessons and over time. From the work seen, there is increased understanding of concepts and processes which are accurately and confidently described using increasing specialist geographical terms in lessons. At the end of Year 8, the overall standard of attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils have a sound knowledge of European countries, can use four and six figure grid references and understand settlement patterns. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their graphical and numerical skills. Pupils produce accurate and neatly presented written work that is at least satisfactory and often good. At the end of Year 8, achievement in lessons and over time is at least satisfactory and on occasion good, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. However, higher attaining pupils only achieve average expectations due the lack of challenge in the learning materials. All pupils show progress in their knowledge and understanding and are able to use a greater range of geographical terms with increased precision. There is increased opportunity in all years for pupils to consolidate achievement by the use of fieldwork and through the integration of ICT into the programmes of work
110. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall; it is good in Years 5 and 6 and satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. Lessons are always well planned and structured, with pupils grouped by ability and set tasks according to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well and are encouraged to take an active part in all lessons. The most effective lessons had a prompt start, engaging activities using a range of teaching styles and opportunities for pupil feedback during plenary sessions. Good relationships between pupils and teachers are a strong feature of lessons, for example all pupils respond in a very positive manner to well-framed questions, creating an environment conducive to learning. Non-specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8 did not set higher attainers sufficiently demanding tasks. Despite a recent subject review, marking remained inconsistent and varied in quality.
111. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and some aspects are good. Developing schemes of work, a detailed geography policy and evidence of future plans has moved the subject on from the previous inspection. The co-ordinator of humanities has insufficient non-contact time to carry out monitoring and evaluation effectively. For example, the monitoring of classroom practice and moderation of internal assessments is underdeveloped due to the large number of non-specialists teaching geography and the lack of opportunity to share good practice. Consequently, assessments using National Curriculum levels are insecure, require further development and should be shared with pupils.
112. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Teaching remains satisfactory overall and good in Years 5 and 6. ICT is now integrated into the

teaching of geography and the behaviour of pupils is now good at all times. The needs of high attainers in Years 7 and 8 is still to be addressed. Marking and assessment remains an issue, together with the lack of monitoring classroom practice.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils attain good standards by the end of Year 6.
- The co-ordinator has provided good leadership in beginning to address areas for improvement.
- There are a good quality and range of curriculum opportunities which add to pupils' enjoyment of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The overall achievement of some higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 8 is insufficient, owing to a lack of consistently challenging work.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching, so that the best practice is not spread consistently across the subject.
- There is insufficient assessment, resulting in an inadequate and sometimes inaccurate picture of pupil attainment.

113. Overall, standards in history are satisfactory. Standards of pupils are above expectations by the end of Year 6, and in line with expectations by the end of Year 8, in the key areas of knowledge, understanding and the development of historical skills. Since most pupils join the school with standards which are close to national expectations, this represents good achievement for pupils by the end of Year 6, and satisfactory achievement by the end of Year 8. This is true of most pupils, including those with special educational needs. However, a minority of more competent pupils, particularly older ones, do not achieve as well as they might, because they do not receive consistently challenging teaching. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls. The school's assessment of pupils in Year 8 in 2002 was over-generous for those attaining the higher levels.
114. By the end of Year 6, most pupils, whatever their level of ability, make good progress in developing knowledge and understanding of everyday life in Ancient Egypt and events in Tudor England. Pupils' ability to develop the skill of extracting and evaluating information about topics such as the Armada or the *Mary Rose* from a variety of sources is particularly good. Pupils begin to address challenging concepts of cause and consequence and change and continuity when examining developments in the landscape and structure of Victorian England, and they develop their understanding of chronology through timelines. Pupils also make good progress in learning how to investigate databases, for example when researching Henry VIII's reign.
115. By the end of Year 8, pupils continue to develop a range of skills, for example by considering different interpretations of individuals such as King John, or investigating the causes and consequences of the Norman Conquest. When studying a topic such as the Black peoples of America, pupils learn to use the appropriate technical vocabulary and are able to discuss the moral and social issues implicit in a subject such as civil rights, thereby making a good contribution towards their understanding of citizenship. However, some higher attaining pupils do not achieve to their full potential, particularly when set unchallenging tasks. Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and write with accuracy and reasonable fluency, although a minority makes careless errors in spelling and punctuation.

116. It was not possible to observe any teaching of pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, the overall quality of teaching of older pupils is satisfactory. Where the teaching is effective teachers have high expectations and involve pupils actively in their own learning. This was particularly evident in a Year 8 lesson in which the teacher used video material to consider economic and social change in pre-1900 England. The teacher's questioning was challenging in forcing pupils to substantiate their assertions and he also monitored their progress carefully, so that all pupils made very good progress in developing a better understanding of change over a long period of time. In this and most other lessons, classroom management is effective in keeping the pupils on task and thinking constructively about complex issues. Pupils show very positive attitudes in these lessons and enjoy opportunities for discussion. Where the teaching is less effective, tasks are not made sufficiently clear, or more importantly, the activities are too unchallenging for higher attainers in particular, which reduces the pace and quality of learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on Tudor England, pupils spent too much time on constructing a very basic timeline which did not help them to meet the objective of establishing the significance of particular political or religious events in Tudor England.
117. Leadership and management in history are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of how to improve the subject and has set appropriate targets. However, management is less effective, because she has too few opportunities to monitor progress. Although there is monitoring particularly of standards, there is relatively little monitoring of teaching, which results in many non-specialist teachers having too few opportunities to develop good practice, particularly in dealing with older pupils. Whilst everyday marking is very helpful, assessment overall is unsatisfactory, and some teachers and pupils are unsure of what standards to expect. However, teachers are making good progress in improving literacy in line with the school policy, and increasing use is being made of computer software as a research and communications tool. Pupils enjoy the good range of curriculum enrichment activities in history, particularly trips to historical sites such as Corfe Castle.
118. Standards by the end of Year 6 are better than they were in 1997. Teaching and pupil progress overall remain satisfactory, pupils' attitudes remain good, and planning and the use of ICT have improved. Higher attainers are still not always given appropriate work. There have been positive developments in addressing literacy and numeracy, for example through graph work. Therefore, overall there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- The standards that pupils reach by the time they leave school are well above average.
- Teaching is good overall and often very good, leading to very good achievement.
- Pupils develop independence in the use of computers and use their skills across the whole curriculum.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for development

- The availability of ICT equipment in specialist rooms varies and some curriculum areas find access to computer rooms difficult.

119. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Pupils are adept at combining information from different sources, such as the Internet or graphs they have produced using a spreadsheet, to produce different types of document. They are also good at writing programs to control a robot. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 8, standards are well above what is expected. The majority of pupils can produce documents, presentations or Web pages to present information to different audiences. Higher attaining pupils independently select which computer programs to use or choose the best sources of information. Teacher assessments over the last three years show that the attainment of boys and girls is similar. At the time of the inspection there was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, when compared with the national picture.
120. Pupils come into the school with average knowledge and skills in the use of ICT, although this is mostly confined to wordprocessing or simple simulations. Overall achievement is, therefore, very good and pupils achieve equally well in all years. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs do equally well because they are very well supported. The higher attaining pupils and those with a talent for ICT are also given appropriate opportunities to tackle more challenging work, move at a faster pace or help with demonstrations. Boys and girls achieve equally well because the scheme of work provides different types of activity to interest and challenge them.
121. Teaching is good overall and often very good, leading to good learning for all the classes. Occasionally teaching is excellent. The best lessons combine excellent use of resources and teacher skills, to communicate effectively and continually with all pupils, ensuring their confidence and progress. The pupils' interest, involvement and behaviour are always very good; pupils start work on their own initiative immediately on entering the classroom. They are stimulated by the tasks they are given and show initiative in solving the challenging problems they are set. This was very apparent in an excellent Year 6 lesson. The exciting demonstration built upon pupils' knowledge of computer control in everyday life. The teacher's expert use of the computer network and interactive display enabled clear instruction and support. By the end of the lesson, pupils of all different levels of attainment had constructed a computer program to control a robot. Pupils with speech and language difficulties also made excellent progress because of the support given by the teacher and classroom assistants. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen, taken by an inexperienced teacher, who failed to match the work given to the stage reached previously by the pupils. As a consequence, many pupils failed to understand and did not make enough progress. However, the co-ordinator's monitoring of teaching and learning is good, so that all teachers are able to benefit from her knowledge and experience and to make improvements.

122. The improvement made in ICT since the last inspection has been very good. The very good leadership and management of ICT have played an important part in this success. Standards of attainment have risen at all levels. Pupils now develop considerable independence and can apply their skills across a wide range of areas. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is now good.
123. As a result of a very comprehensive system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, teachers are able to plan and adapt their lessons very well to the pupils' changing needs. Pupils are involved individually in setting targets for improvement and keep their own records of achievement that are regularly updated and confirmed by the teachers. The mass of information generated enables the ICT co-ordinator to identify areas for improvement in the schemes of work, for example to stimulate boys' interest where it was found that they were not achieving as well as the girls. However, although most pupils are clear about whether they are doing well or lagging behind, few could relate their grades to actual National Curriculum levels. Some said they were confused by all the different letters, numbers and boxes.
124. Further improvements to ICT depend on developments in the provision of, and access to, resources and accommodation. Given the commitment and enthusiasm of staff and pupils and the high value placed on achievement in this area, the school has a very good capacity to improve even further.

Cross-curricular information and communication technology

125. The curriculum for ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection. It meets statutory requirements and the school now provides a good range of experiences in ICT across the curriculum. Pupils learn their computer skills and a wider knowledge of ICT in everyday life through specialist ICT lessons from Year 5 onwards. This knowledge and skill is very effectively applied when they use computers in other subjects. All subject leaders plan ICT into their schemes of work, and in most subjects, pupils are able to use computers to enhance their learning. For instance, in geography, pupils collect weather information from the World Wide Web and use this to explore patterns through the use of graphs. In religious education, pupils undertake research using CD-Roms and produce multimedia presentations. In music, pupils use programmable keyboards. In their French lessons, pupils are learning to send e-mails to their French counterparts. However, there is room to extend the use of ICT to teach and learn mathematics, science and art and design. Some departments do not make best use of the opportunities provided by the computer network and very good software. The ICT co-ordinator has compensated for this by building in some outstanding opportunities, for example in graphic design and robotics, which all pupils benefit from. She has also ensured that subject leaders are fully aware of what pupils are able to do.
126. The school's Internet connection enables pupils to send in their homework from home by e-mail. Parents are encouraged to find out what the pupils are learning, through a very 'user-friendly' website. The school has recently purchased interactive whiteboards and teachers use these effectively in mathematics and ICT lessons. In the best lessons, pupils are fully involved in demonstrations using the equipment. Teachers are also able to take over the pupils' computer screens for illustrating points whilst the lesson is in progress.
127. Pupils with special educational needs are well served using ICT. Teachers and teaching assistants undergo training, provided by the ICT co-ordinator and national schemes and give very effective support. A range of aids, such as special keyboards or joysticks, large monitors and specially adapted furniture are provided to help pupils with a physical disability to use the equipment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Strengths

- The overall standards and achievement by the end of Year 8 are above average.
- The development of oral skills in Year 8, particularly among boys.
- The development of writing skills in Year 8.

Areas for improvement

- The single one-hour period in Year 6, particularly when it occurs in the afternoon, is not an efficient use of the total time available and has a negative effect on progress.
- Planning does not always take sufficient account of the range of abilities in each class.
- The scheme of work and the teaching do not give enough emphasis to the contribution of French to the personal development of pupils or to French culture outside France.
- Not enough explicit use is made of National Curriculum criteria in the assessment of pupils' routine classwork.

128. Pupils start French in Year 6, one year before the subject becomes compulsory. In that time, they make satisfactory progress. Most pupils can exchange greetings in French and exchange basic personal information. They understand classroom instructions given in French by the teacher, though their ability to read French is more limited. Most pupils copy accurately the French they have learned orally; a few can manipulate simple structures. The gap of a week between lessons means that a disproportionate amount of time has to be given to reinforcing the language learned in the previous lesson. Lower-attaining pupils have particular difficulty in this respect. The majority of lessons take place at the end of the day and many pupils have difficulty in sustaining their effort and concentration over the full 60 minutes. Achievement for most pupils is satisfactory; it is less so for the highest and lowest attaining pupils whose needs are less well catered for by the planning.
129. By the end of Year 8 standards are above average, a significant proportion of the pupils have reached the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 9. As a result of the teaching strategies employed, higher attaining boys are unusually fluent. At the beginning of one lesson, a number of them vied with each other to provide explanations for the absence of another pupil, using past and present tenses in complex sentences. Most girls were too inhibited to 'have a go', and some thought needs to be given to how they can be encouraged to do so. Lower attaining pupils had more limited oral skills but when a learning support assistant was present they were encouraged to participate and perform simple dialogues before their peers, who appreciated their effort. Listening skills are generally sound as lessons are conducted in French. Little use of native speakers on tape was observed during the inspection and this experience is essential. Reading skills are sound but need to be developed more systematically through the use of longer more demanding texts. The extended writing produced by the higher attaining pupils, particularly girls, is of a high standard; they can write at length about themselves and their weekend activities using both present and past tenses and a wide range of structure and vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs can copy accurately but have only a limited ability to manipulate the language they have learned. The achievement of most pupils during Years 7 and 8 is good.
130. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers are all experienced and have a good command of French, which they use as the means of communication in the class, thereby improving pupils' listening skills. Planning is secure but does not always meet the needs of the wide range of ability in the class. Each lesson has a range of activities

to develop some or all of the language skills. Pupils have opportunities to work in pairs but the tasks they carry out are not always realistic enough. The best teaching has extended the speaking and writing skills of the pupils and these strengths need to be applied by all. Good teaching of French and English together to pupils from the speech and language base maintains their entitlement to a foreign language. Where teaching is less successful, the learning objectives are not precise enough, the explanations not clear enough and pupils do not have the opportunity to ask as well as to answer questions.

131. The strength of the curriculum is that the scheme of work is common to all three middle schools in the pyramid. However, not enough emphasis is given to the contribution that learning French can make to pupils' personal development, or to French culture outside Europe. More than half of Year 8 go to the twin town of Bayeux each year and enjoy trying out their French. Attainment is assessed regularly, using National Curriculum criteria and the tests and mark schemes are common across all three schools to ensure consistency. As the assessment database expands more use can be made of it to set targets and monitor progress. Marking is regular and the comments are helpful but more use should be made of National Curriculum levels so that pupils are more aware of the progress they are making.
132. The leadership and management of the subject are sound. The co-ordinator has a clear view of the development of the subject and the ideas in the development plan are sound, though the criteria for success are not tied closely enough to measurable improvement in attainment. The monitoring of teaching and learning is regular, thorough and effective. The accommodation and resources are both good.
133. Improvement since the last inspection has been substantial, particularly in the standards reached by the majority. Pupils' attitudes and class management have also improved.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths

- Improvement since the last inspection.
- Good teaching.
- Well-planned curriculum, which provides challenge for pupils of all levels of musical ability and offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Support for pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment is not firmly linked to National Curriculum levels so recording and reporting of pupils' attainment does not make it clear precisely what they can do and what they need to improve further.
- Increased involvement of pupils in extra-curricular music groups to further raise standards of performing.

134. By the end of Year 6, pupils' composing and performing are at the standards expected for their age. They can perform short pieces competently though they cannot always repeat them accurately. Pupils' listening and appraising is not quite at expectation. They can talk about the effects they desire to achieve but few compare outcomes with their original ideas.
135. By the end of Year 8 pupils' listening and appraising is at an appropriate level for their age. A significant minority achieve above expectation, they are able both to identify

different variation styles and to justify their views using relevant musical vocabulary. The performing and composing of most pupils is also appropriate for their age, most can polish and improve their own work. A significant minority can also incorporate into their work ideas they have heard elsewhere, and these pupils often also perform to a higher standard than expected. Many of this group have instrumental lessons in school. A small minority of Year 8 pupils are not sufficiently attentive in class and their work is below the standard expected for their age, for example they cannot polish and improve their work unaided because they do not listen to themselves carefully enough as they play. Overall, pupils' achievement during Years 7 and 8 is good.

136. Teachers have identified listening as a key area for improvement and there has been a strong focus on this in recent years. There is noticeable improvement in pupils' listening skills as they progress through the school, with standards clearly much higher in Year 8 than in Year 5.
137. Overall, teaching is good, with some very good features, though there is not complete consistency across all teaching. Most lessons are planned very well and this leads to good achievement overall. As an example, Year 6 were able to arrange a folk song because they had first learned the song by ear so they knew it well enough to be able to play it confidently even if they could not read music. Activities are supported by very good worksheets which provide appropriate stimulus for pupils of all levels of musical ability. Pupils learn well because the level of challenge is increased by gentle steps. Hearing impaired and visually impaired pupils work well in pairs to help each other learn. The schemes of work have been completely re-written since the last inspection and are now stimulating and exciting. New topics are introduced in a lively way, for example the teacher introduced rondo patterns by throwing a ball to and from pupils. When something is not working, there is usually swift adjustment of the activity to help pupils re-focus and make progress. The music curriculum draws on other subjects to help pupils make links between them, for example composing a piece about a journey into space included references to physics and geography. Teachers consistently encourage pupils to use music-specific vocabulary though relatively few do so without prompting. There is usually excellent classroom discipline, though lapses in this led to persistent inattention of pupils in one lesson. Occasionally time is not planned precisely enough, when this happens the end of the lesson is rushed and pupils do not have enough time to reflect on what they have learned.
138. Pupils are given plenty of group work, so they collaborate well and often support each others' learning. They are encouraged to listen thoughtfully to each others' work and they applaud it spontaneously. Music lessons therefore make a very good contribution to their personal development. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually very good. Relationships in class between pupils and with teachers are usually very good. Pupils display positive attitudes and work hard. However, few show initiative without considerable teacher encouragement. Pupils are offered a wide range of extra-curricular ensembles, including two choirs, an orchestra and a samba band, though the number of children participating in these is relatively small considering that one-third of the school population receives instrumental tuition in school.
139. Procedures for assessing pupils' work and reporting it to parents are satisfactory, and include pupil self-assessment, but could be further improved. At present it is not clear to pupils or to parents precisely what pupils can do and what they need to improve further. The department is already looking at ways to use National Curriculum levels for grading work and for pupils to use in self-assessment.
140. Music is managed with energy and flair, which has led to very good improvement since the last inspection. Departmental planning has been logical and has led to greatly improved standards in learning, curriculum, accommodation and resources. Issues

needing attention, such as risk assessment and more consistent monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching, have been identified. The department benefits greatly from the help of its support teacher, of the visiting instrumental staff, some of whom run extra-curricular groups, and of the music co-ordinator of the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership. All this, together with strong support from the school's leadership, has raised the status of music in the school considerably.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Attainment in Years 5 to 8 is above the expected level.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Teaching is consistently good and pupils make very good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good and their personal development and relationships are excellent.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The small number of lessons in which teaching does not effectively address the evaluative strand of the National Curriculum.
- The small cramped changing areas.

141. The attainment of girls and boys is above the national average at the end of Year 6 and their standards are above those expected at the end of Year 8. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is below average, especially in gymnastics. By the time they reach the end of Year 8, their attainment is above the expected level. Their achievement is very good and pupils of all abilities are helped to make very good progress by consistently good teaching, excellent relationships with their teachers and the provision of many extra-curricular activities.
142. Boys and girls in all years are fit, active and energetic. They have very good performance skills in athletics, tennis and rounders. Pupils in Year 5 have a good knowledge of running styles and their activities in tennis show good co-ordination. Pupils in Year 6 understand how to exchange a relay baton successfully and know about basic throwing actions. Boys and girls in Year 8 are well co-ordinated and play tennis ground strokes with good control. Pupils in Year 6 understand why warming up before an activity is important and most pupils in Year 8 are able to warm up and stretch independently and effectively. Pupils' analytical and evaluative skills are not so well developed. Pupils find it hard to comment on others' performances in a way that would bring about improvement.
143. A few individual pupils and teams achieve high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, netball, swimming, cricket and football. The attainment of these talented pupils is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the opportunities offered by the hard work and dedication of their teachers. The numbers of pupils who attend extra-curricular activities demonstrate the very positive involvement of pupils in the subject.
144. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good and this promoted good learning. In a quarter of lessons, very good teaching was observed. In these lessons, pupils benefited in their learning because a wide variety of challenging tasks were set and excellent relationships had been established with pupils. The needs

of all pupils are met very well. In some lessons, pupils are divided into ability groups. This helps the lower and higher attainers to succeed. Teachers frequently provide appropriate equipment and set different tasks according to pupils' ability.

145. Teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the pupils. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give pupils a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. All lessons begin with a health and fitness section and this promotes pupils' knowledge of this strand of the National Curriculum. However, opportunities are less effectively provided to encourage pupils to look at and evaluate their own and the work of others. Time on activities is usually very high because teachers manage and organise pupils well. The department focuses on developing literacy and numeracy skills in lessons and key words and objectives are frequently displayed in the gymnasium. Boys and girls have very enthusiastic attitudes and work well together. This has a very positive impact on their learning.
146. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a good varied programme of activities. The school has met the requirements for providing further swimming lessons for those pupils in Year 6 who cannot swim 25 metres. This was a key issue in the previous report and has been satisfactorily resolved. The subject co-ordinator provides clear educational direction and very good leadership for the subject. The quality of teaching is consistently good despite there being three non-specialist teachers in the department. Very detailed lesson plans and excellent support and monitoring are provided. There have been extensive improvements to standards, teaching and administration since the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are linked to the programmes of study and analysis of pupils' performance has begun. These are areas for further development, for example, in assessing pupils' performance on entry and making assessment criteria easier for pupils to understand. The changing facilities are very small and cramped. When more than one group uses the changing rooms some pupils have to use their classroom as a changing area.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

Strengths

- The progress made by pupils in Years 7 and 8 who reach standards that are above those set out in the Dorset Agreed Syllabus.
- The attitudes of the pupils who demonstrate a sensitive understanding of the beliefs and values of others.
- The enthusiasm and hard work of the subject leader who is committed to raising standards.
- The inclusive ethos of the department which promotes the spiritual, social, moral and culture development of all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The system for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient emphasis in teaching pupils about the colour and vitality of religious ceremonies and festivals.
- The size and stability of the teaching team, which includes many non-specialists, makes it difficult for the curriculum co-ordinator to monitor and support them.

147. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are in line with those set out in the locally agreed syllabus and their progress is satisfactory. Pupils can describe the main beliefs and practices of several major religions and can respond sensitively to the beliefs,

values and actions of others. Year 6 pupils have been studying Hinduism and understand the concept of reincarnation. They have a good knowledge of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity. They understand the value of religious literature and clearly grasp the importance of myths and legends in conveying religious history. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress.

148. By the end of Year 8, standards of attainment are slightly above those set out in the locally agreed syllabus and pupils' progress is good. Pupils have a sound understanding of the major beliefs and practices of Christianity and at least three other religions. For example, Year 7 pupils have a good knowledge of the five K's in Sikhism. They are developing the ability to express their own views on religious and moral issues in a thoughtful and sensitive manner. A Year 8 class had carefully prepared searching questions in preparation for interviewing a number of visiting Christians. Pupils of all ability make good progress.
149. The quality of teaching is good. Under the leadership of the committed subject leader lessons are well planned and delivered. Although most of the teachers are non-specialists they have a satisfactory understanding of the subject and use a variety of teaching methods to ensure that lessons are interesting. A Year 6 class had prepared some very good presentations illustrating the five pillars of faith in Islam using a computer. There is a tendency to over-emphasise the development of knowledge rather than increase pupils' awareness of the colour and vitality that can be found in religious ceremonies and festivals. However, the quality of learning is good and all pupils are involved and interested in the subject. Suitable homework assignments are set and marked well. Group work activities are conducted in a caring and sensitive atmosphere which ensures that all students are included.
150. The subject leadership is good but the management of the subject is adversely affected by the very heavy workload that the subject leader carries. Religious education is taught by a large team some of whom change every year. This does have an impact on such things as monitoring and assessment, both of which are unsatisfactory. Progress since the last inspection has been good with the recent review of the curriculum playing a significant role in improving standards.