

INSPECTION REPORT

CHILTHORNE DOMER CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123815

Headteacher: Mrs Heather Cunningham

Lead inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

Dates of inspection: Monday 1st – Wednesday 3rd March 2004

Inspection number: 255785

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	94
School address:	Chilthorne Domer CE (VC) Primary School Main Street Chilthorne Domer YEOVIL Somerset
Postcode:	BA22 8RD
Telephone number:	01935 840407
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Appropriate authority:	LEA
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Caswell
Date of previous inspection:	8 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the village of Chilthorne Domer, to the north-west of the town of Yeovil. The school takes pupils from the local village, but over half travel to the school from Yeovil. It is a voluntary controlled Church of England primary school, and is much smaller than most primary schools. There are 94 boys and girls on roll between the ages of 4 and 11. The number of pupils in each year group varies considerably, with 19 in Year 4 and only nine in Year 6, of whom only two are boys. The socio-economic background of the pupils is very varied. Most pupils come from areas in which socio-economic circumstances are average, although a fifth of the pupils come from below average backgrounds. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. This is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who join or leave the school, other than at the usual times of joining or leaving, is above the national average. Very few pupils take up their entitlement to a free school meal but, as the school does not provide cooked school lunches, the number eligible for free school meals is thought to be near the national average. Around 11 per of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is below average. Two pupils receive help from outside specialists for speech, communication and hearing difficulties. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Children are admitted into the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they have their fifth birthday. The attainment of children when they start school varies widely, but is below average overall. A new headteacher has taken over the running of the school since the last inspection, and a new deputy headteacher joined the school in September. Because the school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school, the inspection of collective worship is carried out under Section 23 of the Schools Inspections Act 1996 (Denominational Education) by an inspector approved by the Diocese and appointed by the governing body.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
28899	Mr G R Sims	Lead inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Information and communication technology Music Physical education English as an additional language
08971	Mrs J Hesslewood	Lay inspector	
32136	Mrs L Brookes	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Mathematics Science Religious education Geography History Personal, social and health education Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Chilthorne Domer CE Primary School is an improving school which now provides its pupils with good quality education. It offers good value for money. The overall quality of the teaching is good. As a result, pupils achieve well, reaching nationally expected standards by the end of Year 6. The school is led and managed well, and there is a strong impetus for continuing improvement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and her deputy provide good leadership. They have high aspirations and a strong determination to bring further improvement to the school.
- Pupils of all capabilities generally achieve well. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average in mathematics, but pupils' writing is a weakness throughout the school.
- The overall quality of the teaching is good, although it is not entirely consistent. There is a significant amount of very good practice, but also some which is just satisfactory.
- There is a good ethos within the school. With a few exceptions, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good, and staff work hard to encourage and interest the pupils.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work and keeping track of their progress are improving, but teachers do not give pupils clear enough indication as to how they can improve their work.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional activities, but some opportunities are missed to plan links between subjects, particularly to develop pupils' literacy skills.

After the last inspection, some aspects of the school declined. Over the last two years, the current headteacher has improved the school's management procedures. Previous key issues with regard to the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator, resources, the monitoring of attendance and the governors' annual report to parents have been tackled satisfactorily, but co-ordinators still do not have enough opportunity to monitor the teaching of their subjects. Standards are still very similar to those at the time of the last inspection, but recent changes in staffing have led to improvements in the quality of the teaching, and standards are now rising.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	A	D	B
Mathematics	C	A	D	B
Science	B	A	E	C

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Because of the small size of each year group, readers should be cautious in interpreting these comparisons.

Pupils' overall achievement is good. The overall level of attainment on entry to the school is below average. Children make good progress during their year in reception, and most are likely to reach the expected goals in each area of learning by the time they start Year 1. A few are likely to exceed these goals in literacy and numeracy.

Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 have fallen in reading and writing, but they have risen in mathematics. The national test results in 2003 were below the national average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Inspection findings show that standards are improving in reading, and in writing in Year 1, but writing skills are still weak in Year 2.

After the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 improved until 2002, when the school received a School Achievement Award. In 2003, they fell to a low point, when they were below the national average in English and mathematics and well below average in science, the results being unduly affected by the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Inspection findings show that standards are currently above average in mathematics, and average in science and English, although pupils' writing is the weakest aspect of their work. Standards are above those expected for their age in information and communication technology and religious education.

The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the ethos of the school is good. The great majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to school, particularly when the teaching is stimulating. The level of attendance is satisfactory and just above the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. The overall quality of the teaching is good, although it is not always consistent. It is consistently good for children in the reception and Year 1, and there is a significant amount of very good teaching in Years 5 and 6 and, at times, in Year 4. As a result, pupils learn well overall, although progress is noticeably slower where the teaching is only satisfactory. Teachers have a very good awareness of the needs of individual pupils; teaching assistants provide good support for those requiring extra help, and teachers provide additional challenge for the more able pupils. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' work are improving, but teachers are not critical enough when marking pupils' work.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and a good range of additional activities and sporting opportunities outside the formal curriculum. More use could be made of cross-curricular links, particularly to develop pupils' writing skills. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. The school has a satisfactory range of learning resources, but aspects of the school's accommodation are unsatisfactory.

The school takes very good care of its pupils and has very good procedures to ensure their health and safety. Procedures for keeping track of pupils' progress have improved recently. The school provides pupils with good support, advice and guidance and enables them to have a voice in its work and development. The school's links with parents are good, and there are very good links with other schools and the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The governance of the school is good. Governors are well informed, ask pertinent questions and fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities. The headteacher provides good leadership and manages the school well. She has a very clear sense of purpose and high aspirations, and improvements she has made are beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching by other staff ranges from satisfactory to very good. The newly appointed deputy headteacher is having a very positive impact on the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents particularly appreciate the school's open and welcoming approach. They think that the school is led and managed well and that the teaching is good. They are pleased with levels of progress, the standard of behaviour and the fairness with which all pupils are treated. Pupils are very positive about the school and most enjoy their learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- Disseminate the very good teaching practice which exists within the school to improve the quality of teaching where it is only satisfactory.

- Provide more critical feedback when marking pupils' work and ensure that pupils learn from their mistakes.
- Develop better cross-curricular links, especially with regard to developing pupils' literacy skills.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

During their time in the school, pupils achieve well. Achievement in reception and in Key Stage 2¹ is good, and in Key Stage 1 it is satisfactory. Standards of attainment are improving and are now average by the end of Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective changes have been made to halt the decline in standards at Key Stage 1 and the recent fall at Key Stage 2. Standards are now rising again.
- By the time pupils leave school, standards are above average in mathematics and are above average in information and communication technology.
- Although there are examples of good quality writing, the overall quality of writing throughout the school is weak.
- Children make good progress in reception and, from a below-average starting point, most are well on course to achieve the expected goals by the time they start Year 1.
- The school caters well for the needs of all groups of pupils, so that those with special educational needs, as well as the more able pupils, achieve well.

Commentary

1. Since the last inspection, the school's results have fluctuated considerably, and almost all were lower in 2003 than at the time of the last inspection. There are several reasons for this. Differences in the ability profile of each class, an above average proportion of pupils joining the school after the initial point of entry, staff absence and lack of continuity in teaching have all been factors which have affected the performance of some groups. Because each year group is much smaller than in most schools, small changes in the composition of a year group can make significant changes to its results. Last year's Year 6, for example, contained two pupils with statements of special need, forming a significant proportion of the class. Another significant proportion had joined the school partway through Key Stage 2, and teaching during the year had been affected by some periods of staff absence. At the lower end of the school, teaching arrangements for children in the reception and in Key Stage 1 had been far from ideal for a number of years, with both classes having to cope with frequent changes of teacher. An additional factor affecting results at Key Stage 1 in recent years has been the changing level of attainment of children on entry to the school. At the time of the last inspection, attainment on entry was judged to be average. It is now below average. Although there are some children of above-average ability, there is now a larger proportion of children of below-average ability.
2. As from the start of this school year, a series of effective changes has brought greater stability to the teaching and made a significant difference to the progress pupils are now making. Children in the reception and Year 1 now have a full-time teacher and do not have to cope with the unsettling effect of frequent changes of teacher. Pupils in Year 4, a group that has been severely affected by staffing changes, has been taught as a discrete year group, which has brought some much needed stability and helped pupils to improve. The appointment of a new

¹ **Key Stage:** refers to the different stages of learning in schools. Children start school in the **Foundation Stage**, which caters for children aged 3 to 5 and generally refers to children who are in the nursery, reception or early years classes. **Key Stage 1** is the first stage of compulsory primary education. It caters for pupils aged 5 to 7 and refers to pupils who are in Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 1 is also frequently synonymous with the term Infants. **Key Stage 2** is the second stage of primary education. It caters for pupils aged 7 to 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6. Key Stage 2 is also frequently synonymous with the term Juniors. At the age of 11, pupils start **Key Stage 3**, which marks the beginning of their secondary education.

deputy headteacher, responsible for teaching the pupils in Years 5 and 6, has provided significant motivation and impetus for these pupils. As a result of these changes, pupils are now achieving well in most classes, and the inspection judgements reflect a much more favourable picture than the previous national test results.

3. The changes made to the organisation and teaching arrangements for children in the reception and Year 1 have been very successful. Children make a good start to their education, and they achieve well because of good teaching. By the end of their year in reception, most children are likely to have achieved the goals expected of them in all six areas of learning, or be close to doing so. Judging by current performance, a small proportion of more able children are likely to exceed the goals in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development. Progress in their personal, social and emotional development is also good. Key to their good progress is the very good planning by the class teacher, which ensures that all children in the class are provided with learning experiences which are appropriate to their age and levels² of attainment, and the good support which is provided by teaching assistants who frequently look after these children.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores³ in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.7 (15.6)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	13.8 (14.1)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.1 (14.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In 2003, the results of the national tests at the end of Year 2 were below the national average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. When compared with the results of similar schools⁴, the results were well below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. The overall results mask a very wide range of attainment, with a few pupils exceeding the nationally expected level and a small number working well below this level. The results in reading and writing have fallen quite significantly since the last inspection, reflecting a decline in pupils' language skills on entry to the school and also the staffing problems alluded to previously. In contrast, results in mathematics have improved, the overall trend being similar to that in most other schools.
5. Inspection findings show that the downward trend in English has been reversed and that standards are now improving again. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and standards are now average in English by the end of Year 2, with stronger performance in reading than in writing. Standards are just above average in mathematics. Pupils make better progress in Year 1 than in Year 2, and this is largely a result of more imaginative planning which also places a much greater emphasis on the development of pupils' writing skills across the

² **Levels:** The standard of pupils' work is assessed against National Curriculum Levels. The national expectation for each subject is that pupils should be working comfortably at Level 2 by the end of Year 2, and at Level 4 by the end of Year 6.

³ **Average point scores:** are used as a way of comparing fairly the performance of pupils in one school with those in another. The level achieved by each pupil in the national tests is converted into a points score. The points achieved by all of the pupils are added together and divided by the number of pupils who took the test to arrive at an average point score. An average point score of 15 at the end of Year 2 is equivalent to a middle of the range Level 2, which is the standard expected of seven-year-old pupils. At the end of Year 6, an average point score of 27 is equivalent to Level 4, the national expectation for eleven-year-olds.

⁴ **Similar schools:** The school's results are compared both to the national average (i.e. the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Year 6) and to the average for similar schools (i.e. at the end of Year 2, the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals; at the end of Year 6, the average of the results for all schools whose pupils achieved similar results in their national tests at the end of Year 2).

curriculum. Standards in religious education are above those expected in the locally-agreed syllabus, and pupils attain average standards in information and communication technology by the end of Year 2.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.6 (28.6)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	26.1 (28.6)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	27.0 (30.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 13 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were below the national average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. However, when compared with the results of schools whose pupils achieved similar results at the end of Year 2, they were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. As at Key Stage 1, the results reflect a very wide range of attainment, with an above average proportion of pupils working below the nationally expected level, particularly in mathematics and science. From the last inspection until 2002, the trend in the school's results at Key Stage 2 had been upward, with 2002 marking a high point in all three subjects, when results were well above the national average. The 2003 results were lower than those achieved at the time of the last inspection, but reasons for this have already been mentioned. The school did not meet its targets in 2003, but has improved its procedures for tracking pupils' progress. Targets for 2004 have been raised to challenging levels and reflect the school's aspirations to ensure that all pupils achieve the highest results of which they are capable.
7. Inspection findings show that standards in the current Year 6 are better than the picture painted by the 2003 results. The arrival of the new deputy headteacher has had a significant impact on the motivation and achievement of older pupils. Standards are now average in science and above average in mathematics, although with the current rate of progress they may be higher by the time pupils take their national tests. Standards in English are average overall, although pupils' reading skills are significantly better than their writing skills. Although there is now some very good teaching to help pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop their writing, their written work in English, and particularly in other subjects, frequently contains far too many inaccuracies. Standards in religious education are above the expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus, and standards in information and communication technology are also above average. Although art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were not inspected in detail, the work observed in these subjects was of an average standard. Because of variations in the quality of the teaching in Years 3 and 4, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 varies, but it is good overall. In Years 5 and 6 pupils consistently achieve well and frequently very well.
8. The good support provided by teachers and teaching assistants, and the fact that they generally match tasks well to pupils' capabilities, enable pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. The school has no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils who have been identified as gifted or talented also achieve well because they are provided with additional challenge, a particularly good example of which is an excellent and detailed display produced by one pupil on the background to the names of the school's houses, which are named after famous poets.
9. Over the last three years, girls have attained significantly better results than boys in all national tests at both key stages. This partially reflects the fact that, of pupils identified with special educational needs, by far the greater proportion are boys, but it also indicates some lack of awareness of appropriate teaching styles for boys in previous years. The school is well aware of the differences between boys' and girls' performance and has introduced greater variety into its teaching methods to redress the balance and ensure that neither boys nor girls are in any way disadvantaged. Because of improvements this year, the past differences in performance are not seen to be of current significance.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' interest is stimulated by imaginative teaching techniques.
- The rewards system motivates pupils.
- Individual success is celebrated by all.
- Pupils' social and moral development is nurtured well.
- The level of attendance is improving and is monitored consistently.

Commentary

10. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. However, teachers have to work very hard, using imaginative techniques, in order to stimulate and motivate pupils to learn effectively. For example, pupils respond well to the humour and drama used in literacy, science and numeracy lessons in Years 5 and 6. They maintain their concentration throughout, work well together in pairs and groups, and listen and evaluate each other's work fairly. In a literacy lesson in Year 4, pupils were fully engrossed in their task of note-taking and captivated by the music and animation of the short film used as a resource. Children in reception collaborated well in pairs to draw an island, with lots of imaginative talk effectively focused by a well-briefed teaching assistant. However, where the learning tasks are less challenging, and not all pupils are involved equally, interest and concentration wane.
11. Pupils' behaviour is good in most lessons. When moving around the school, participating in assemblies and eating lunch, their behaviour is often very good, and staff consistently expect and give praise for high standards. Pupils indicate that the use of positive praise, and the newly introduced system of awarding house points for achievement and progress, have motivated them to learn and improved their behaviour. Pupils are happy in school, most want to learn and there have been no exclusions. Any known incidents of bullying or harassment are dealt with effectively. Pupils play together amicably.
12. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Staff treat pupils with respect and listen to their views. Pupils celebrate the success of others and glow with pride when their own achievements are acknowledged. A particularly good example was when 'leaves' were added to the 'kindness tree' in the class for children in the reception and Year 1. The consistent application of school, class and 'golden' rules allows pupils to develop a very clear understanding of right and wrong. Teachers nurture social development particularly well. The school council has a positive influence on the work of the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to express their views and to become involved in the 'democratic process'. Pupils are committed to improving the local environment and improving community play facilities. They had written to the council regarding dog mess, and bins were provided in response. They are discussing local play facilities with, and have given a presentation to, the Parish Council. The skills required for collaborative and co-operative working are developed well in many lessons. Residential visits for older pupils develop teamwork well. Very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities and involvement in community events also foster good social co-operation. Pupils are encouraged to think of people outside their school community and they collect money for a wide range of charities.
13. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Pupils gain an understanding of their own and other people's lives, beliefs and feelings, not only through their religious education lessons and in assemblies, where moments of reflection and prayer are set aside, but also through initiatives designed to encourage greater understanding. Opportunities for deeper appreciation of the natural world through science experiments and the use of music to illustrate feelings are also good features.

14. Provision for cultural development is good. Pupils gain valuable knowledge about other beliefs in their study of world religions. Wherever possible, visitors are invited in to widen pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions. Pupils' interest in the local football team is used well to inspire learning. A recent project on 'equality' stimulated learning across all aspects of pupils' personal development.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.0	School data :	0.5
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

15. Attendance is around the national average for primary schools and shows good improvement on past years. A comprehensive attendance policy was implemented following the previous inspection and absence is monitored closely. Parents are discouraged from taking holidays during term time. Early contact is made with parents if children are absent without explanation. Pupils are punctual and happy to come to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The overall quality of the teaching is good. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which is enriched by a good variety of activities outside the normal curriculum. The staff provide a very good level of care for the pupils. The school's links with parents are good and links with the local community and other schools are very good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of the teaching is good and pupils are now learning well. However, the teaching is not entirely consistent throughout the school. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a significant amount of very good teaching, but also some which is only just satisfactory.
- Changes in staffing and a reorganisation of teaching responsibilities have brought improvements to the quality of the teaching.
- Very good planning and a good variety of interesting activities provide the foundation for good teaching for the school's youngest children.
- Enthusiasm, humour and a good variety of teaching methods are key features in the best lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teaching assistants provide good assistance, particularly for children in the reception and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers take good account of the needs of all pupils, so that pupils with special educational needs and the more able pupils are catered for well.
- The teaching of writing skills is carried out more effectively in some classes than in others.
- When marking pupils' work, particularly their writing, teachers are not critical enough and do not provide them with sufficient guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	5	10	5	0	0	0

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

16. The overall quality of the teaching is good, and there is a significant amount of very good teaching. During the inspection, three-quarters of the lessons were good or better, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. However, the teaching is not entirely consistent throughout the school. The teaching in Key Stage 1 is judged to be satisfactory, and in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 it is good. Evidence from pupils' books, from displays around the school and from talking with pupils reinforces this view. Parents, too, are almost unanimous in thinking that the teaching is good and that staff expect their children to work hard. Nearly all pupils feel that they are learning a lot and that they are made to work hard, but a quarter of the children feel that their lessons are interesting and fun only some of the time.
17. The present inspection indicates that the quality of the teaching has improved this year, as there is much good teaching, in which many of the positive characteristics pointed out in the previous inspection are still present. Changes in staffing and a reorganisation of teaching responsibilities have been beneficial, particularly at the lower end of the school, where children in reception and Year 1 now have much greater stability and continuity of teaching, and at the top end of the school, where pupils now receive enthusiastic, imaginative teaching which stimulates in them a desire to learn. The very good characteristics which are frequently evident in these classes, and in some of the teaching in Year 4, have not yet been fully disseminated to raise the standard of the teaching elsewhere which, at times, is only just satisfactory and does not always provide as much motivation for the pupils.
18. Children's earliest experiences of school in the reception are underpinned by consistently good teaching, and very good planning is the foundation for this success. Wherever it is appropriate, the youngest children are taught together with pupils in Year 1, but there are also many sessions in which separate activities are provided for them. These are always linked in well to what the rest of the class is doing, so that all children feel that they are contributing to whatever project is at hand. When compiling pupils' work into attractive booklets, the work of children in the reception features as prominently as that of the older pupils. Teaching assistants play an important and valuable role in teaching the youngest pupils and overseeing their activities, and they do this well. There is very good liaison between the staff, aided by the very good guidance given by the class teacher. The teaching is good in all areas of learning and enables the children to achieve well.
19. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers take care to plan their lessons to be relevant to the needs of all pupils. As a result, pupils with special educational needs, and those who are more able, are generally catered for well. Pupils with special educational needs are occasionally withdrawn from lessons and receive good individually tailored support which is specific to their needs from teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Additional challenges are provided for the more able pupils and those who have been identified as gifted and talented.
20. There are no subjects in which the teaching is weak, although in some classes the teaching is more varied, imaginative and interesting than in others and, as a result, provides greater motivation for the pupils to learn. A key feature in the better planning is the way teachers interlink the teaching in a number of subjects so that pupils are learning a wide range of skills. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good overall. In English, key skills are dealt with systematically in all classes, but too much time is spent in some lessons on activities which are fairly mechanical and do not help pupils to apply these skills in a meaningful context. The more successful teaching concentrates on the bigger picture, so that substantial pieces of work are built up over a series of lessons, which gives pupils time to concentrate on planning,

developing their ideas and refining them. One of the reasons for pupils' writing skills lagging behind other key skills lies in the quality of teachers' marking. Too often, teachers are not critical enough in the way they mark pupils' work. Spelling and grammatical mistakes are often overlooked, particularly in written work for subjects other than English, and not enough indication is given as to how pupils can improve their work. This aspect is better in Years 5 and 6 than in other classes, as the teacher frequently writes a challenging comment at the end of a piece of work. However, pupils rarely go back over their work to follow up these comments.

21. In the best lessons, the teachers use a very good variety of teaching methods, although enthusiasm and humour are key elements which permeate all of these lessons. In a very good English lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, pupils spent time working individually, discussing work with a partner, engaged in whole-class question-and-answer sessions, as well as listening to the teachers' exposition and, horrors, trying out draft sentences by writing them on the table – the use of water-based pens enabled them to be erased quickly and easily! In another lesson, they watched with great interest as the teacher made a cloud by boiling water in a kettle and using a cold metal tray to demonstrate condensation. The pupils also learnt, incidentally, about electric circuits and what happens when they are overloaded! Pupils in Year 1 were given the task of working together to produce a poster of what they had seen and how it made them feel as they had sat outside and listened, a good task which combined effectively elements of religious education, English and personal, social and health education. In Year 4, the teacher made very good use of role-play to illustrate the Christian values of forgiveness, honesty, courage, friendship, self-sacrifice, involving all pupils well and making a very effective lesson.
22. The school has improved its systems for assessing pupils' academic progress since the last inspection, particularly in English and mathematics, and these are satisfactory. A system for assessing progress in science is currently being trialled. When assessing pupils' work, teachers are now linking their judgements better with National Curriculum levels. They are using the volume of data being produced to monitor pupils' progress more closely. The tracking of individual pupils is a relatively recent introduction, and the system has not yet had time to have a significant impact. While most teachers do their utmost to raise the self-esteem and self-confidence of pupils in the comments they make on pupils' work, they do not indicate frequently enough how pupils might improve their learning. A 'traffic lights' system of self-assessment is a recent introduction, which has the potential to be a useful tool. Teachers' on-going assessment of pupils' progress during lessons is generally astute and effective.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities and a good range of activities outside the formal curriculum. The overall range of learning resources is satisfactory, but the school's accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' annual, termly and weekly planning is systematic and thorough, but there is not enough cross-curricular planning, particularly to develop pupils' literacy skills.
- The school provides a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities which enhance pupils' learning.
- The extent to which pupils participate in sports is good.
- The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.
- There are various unsatisfactory features of the school's accommodation which restrict opportunities for learning and make the day-to-day management of the school difficult.

Commentary

23. The school keeps its curriculum under constant and effective review and implements changes appropriately. Curriculum planning and schemes of work have been systematically developed to ensure full access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. Each subject is given an

appropriate amount of time. Some teachers interlink the teaching of different subjects so that each complements the other. A number of very effective examples were observed during the inspection, but some staff miss opportunities to improve curricular planning in this way. Not enough use is made of cross-curricular opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills.

24. A good range of educational visits and visitors to the school gives pupils extra chances to learn. The depth and range of clubs offered is good. Given the small size of the school, there is a good range of clubs on offer. Educational visits are planned regularly and enhance the quality of learning. Visitors are invited to talk with pupils and share their knowledge and expertise. Sport is well-represented and benefits from coaching from outside experts. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in team sports and to compete against other schools in different leagues.
25. The school has good procedures to support and guide pupils with special educational needs. Progress against individual targets is reviewed and updated regularly by the special needs co-ordinator, the special needs learning support assistant and the governor with responsibility for special educational needs. Teachers know the pupils well and have good support from the school's co-ordinator. Local authority learning support services are involved and consulted as necessary. Assessment procedures for those with special educational needs are appropriate. Pupils with specific needs are identified early, and the targets in their individual education plans monitored regularly. They receive good support in class, as well as during targeted sessions one-to-one, and in small groups, when they are withdrawn from class. Closer involvement with parents, and the children themselves, is planned as current practice is reviewed and revised.
26. The school has identified pupils who are gifted and talented. In addition to the school's extra-curricular activities, and appropriate differentiation in lessons, pupils are invited to attend an enrichment club at a local school, as well as attending specific courses. They are set extra topics to research in order to challenge them further. Such challenges are appropriate to their talents and skills.
27. Although the school makes effective use of its accommodation, much of which is internally attractive, there are a number of shortcomings which have an adverse effect on pupils' progress and the day-to-day organisation of the school. The school hall is far too small, and also unsuitable, for indoor physical education lessons. Although the school is able to use the nearby attractive village hall, this lacks gymnastic apparatus and is also too small for the oldest pupils. There are no rooms for individual pupils or small groups to be taught outside the classroom. There are no central facilities for teaching information and communication technology which limits opportunities for whole-class or large-group teaching in this subject. One of the classrooms is very awkwardly shaped and, whilst adequate for its current number of 19 pupils, is too small to accommodate a standard class size. There is no office for the headteacher, which makes it difficult to hold confidential interviews or discussions, and poses additional obstacles to managing the school.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very well for the health, safety, care and welfare of pupils. It provides good support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of achievements and personal development. The school involves pupils effectively in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very caring, supportive environment in which pupils can learn and develop well.
- Health and safety procedures are implemented and monitored effectively.
- The school has good systems to reward pupils' academic and personal achievements.
- The school has good systems for listening to pupils' views and taking account of them.

Commentary

28. Teachers and staff work hard to provide pupils with a very good standard of care. Pupils feel they have a supportive adult to talk to about their work or about any worries they may have. Bullying and harassment are discussed openly and dealt with effectively. Staff have a very good understanding of the background and personal needs of individual pupils. Most lessons are tailored to suit individual pupils' learning needs.
29. Good improvements have been made to the implementation and monitoring of policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of all pupils. Good attention is paid to fire drills, personal hygiene, pupils' medical needs and first aid. Healthy habits are promoted well. Fruit is the only snack allowed, and pupils have access to drinking water throughout the day. Lunchtime is supervised well. Good, simple, behaviour management strategies, which complement the school's existing rewards system, ensure a happy, sociable break for all. Risk assessments for trips and residential visits are fully documented. Health and safety instructions are issued and adhered to in physical education and science lessons. Child protection procedures follow the recommendations of the Area Child Protection Committee. The headteacher and deputy headteacher act as named persons responsible for child protection in the school. All staff are updated annually on the correct procedures to follow, and there are notices in prominent places to act as reminders. The school's approach to Internet safety is good. Good working relationships exist between the school and welfare agencies for the benefit of the pupils.
30. A newly introduced house-point system rewards pupils' academic and personal achievements. Class targets, worker of the week, and schemes to improve pupils' self-esteem such as 'what have you done today to be proud of?' are monitored informally, and all guide and support pupils' learning and personal development effectively.
31. All pupils have the opportunity to take an active part in school life through the school council and other consultation exercises. During discussions with inspectors about current and future projects, which included improvements to the toilets and playground and the planned introduction of 'playground buddies', pupils in Years 2 and 3 felt happy that they were contributing to and involved in the initiatives and improvements.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good. Links with the community are very good, as are links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school encourages active participation of parents in many aspects of school life and this contributes well to pupils' learning.
- The school provides parents with good quality information about their children's progress and what is happening.
- Very productive links with the local and wider community make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- Strong, effective, collaborative working partnerships with other schools and educational institutions benefit pupils' learning.

Commentary

32. The school has maintained good links with parents and the community. Parents are actively and effectively encouraged to support their children's education. They are supportive of the school's aims and feel staff always make them welcome. An effective induction programme, followed by numerous invitations to classroom events, nurtures a good partnership approach with the parents of the youngest pupils. Where parents help at home or in school, pupils' learning is enhanced. Parents help with reading and homework, and many attended a numeracy workshop which helps them support numeracy at home. Parents help in the classroom with cookery, art, science, sewing and hearing readers. They help run after school-

clubs, assist on trips and visits and help with supervision of swimming sessions. Parents have also worked to improve the school environment, laying flooring, painting and putting up signs. An active PTFA (parent, teacher and friends' association) holds many innovative and imaginative events to raise money for the school. They made a contribution to the refurbishment of the village hall, which the school uses for physical education.

33. Good-quality information about the work of the school is provided through the attractive prospectus, comprehensive governors' annual report, informative web site and regular letters presenting information about the curriculum. Parents are welcome to look at and discuss their children's work both informally and during the regular consultation evenings. Reports use all the available information about a pupil's achievements to describe their progress, learning and personal development. They provide good information overall. However, the targets for improvement are often not specific enough. The school has improved its procedures for consulting parents. Changes to the school name and logo were completed following a full consultation. There are systems in place to involve parents in the development of the school improvement plan.
34. Pupils benefit from, and contribute actively to, the school's outward-looking approach and productive links with the community. Links with the church are good. Pupils visit the local church, and various members of the clergy take assemblies regularly. Pupils produce a newsletter, which is distributed to the whole village with the parish news. The school choir often entertains old folk in the village hall and at the Christmas carol service. Harvest festival boxes are taken round to villagers. The people value these links; the pupils have received many letters of thanks. The school is actively involved in the Somerset Waste Action Programme, where pupils enjoy visits and workshops. A very effective visit from a local journalist illustrated very clearly to pupils in Year 4 the link between their literacy lesson on note-taking and its relevance to the wider world of work.
35. Active partnerships with other local schools, good liaison and transfer arrangements with secondary schools, together with the shared employment of a computer technician, all benefit the academic and personal development of pupils. Participation in the Somerset School Centred Teacher Training Scheme is a good feature, the student teachers bringing fresh ideas and approaches to teaching and learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The governance of the school is good. The headteacher provides good, and in some respects very good, leadership. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching by other staff ranges from satisfactory to very good, but is good overall. The school is managed well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and her deputy have a very clear vision for the school, high aspirations and a strong determination to bring further improvement.
- There is a very good commitment to ensuring that appropriate support and additional help is provided to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and manage the school's budget efficiently and effectively.
- Some improvements have been made to the monitoring of teaching and learning by subject co-ordinators, but this still remains a relative weakness.

Commentary

36. The governance of the school is good. As at the time of the previous inspection, the governing body continues to maintain an effective overview of the educational development of the school and fulfils its statutory responsibilities in a conscientious manner. The governing body has a good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors demonstrate a high level of commitment to the school's work and direction. They have a well-defined structure

of committees and individual responsibilities that are carried out conscientiously. A number of governors visit the school regularly to assist with monitoring tasks and contribute fully to the life of the school. They monitor spending regularly, and manage the limited budget as efficiently as possible. The principles of best value are applied.

37. Since her appointment two-and-a-half years ago, the new headteacher has led the school forward with energy and determination, rectifying previous weaknesses in the school's procedures and successfully introducing new initiatives. Staff reorganisation and the recent appointment of a new deputy headteacher have been crucial steps to improving the quality of the teaching and helping to re-establish the strong team approach which was mentioned at the last inspection. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, which is based on the desire to provide high-quality education for all pupils, and her own teaching practice provides a very good role-model for other staff in this respect. There is a very good commitment to meeting the very diverse range of pupils' needs, seen in the emphasis given to providing support for pupils with special educational needs, the additional challenges provided for pupils identified as gifted and talented, and the booster and reinforcement classes for selected pupils which take place out of school hours.
38. The leadership provided by other staff varies. At best it is very effective. The new deputy headteacher has brought new ideas, freshness and dynamism to the post and, as a leading mathematics teacher, provides teaching expertise and a very good role model for other staff. The reorganisation of the teaching for the school's youngest children has been managed effectively, and good leadership of religious education has been an important factor in helping pupils to achieve above average standards in this subject. The co-ordination of science was seen to be a weakness, but responsibility for the subject has been devolved to another member of staff and appropriate steps have been taken to provide training in order to improve expertise. The leadership of English is satisfactory, although there has not been a consistent approach to developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum.
39. One of the key issues from the previous inspection was to ensure sufficient opportunities for staff to monitor teaching in their curriculum areas. There has been some improvement, but this remains a relative weakness which the school has found hard to implement within the limitations of its budget. Weaknesses in the co-ordination of special educational needs, mentioned in the last inspection, have been rectified. As special educational needs co-ordinator, the headteacher provides good leadership of this aspect of the school's work and receives very good support from a well-qualified governor.
40. The school's finances are monitored and managed well. Governors maintain a very careful overview of the budget which becomes ever tighter. An apparently healthy balance reflects income which can only be spent on maintenance of the school building and leaves no leeway for educational priorities. The day-to-day financial systems and administrative procedures are managed very efficiently by the school secretary.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	271,018
Total expenditure	276,106
Expenditure per pupil	2,817

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	19,085
Balance carried forward to the next	13,997

41. In the light of the good teaching, the good achievement of pupils of all abilities, the good leadership and management, and an average income per pupil, the school is deemed to be giving good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are learning to work collaboratively and independently.
- Their knowledge of letters and their sounds is promoted effectively.
- Children's speaking and listening skills are fostered effectively through many activities, and their mathematical vocabulary is developing well.
- Children have good opportunities to explore and learn about their world in the classroom, outdoors and further afield.
- Children's physical skills are developed well through a good variety of activities.
- Access to a good range of resources for creative work gives children good opportunities to develop their creativity.

Commentary

42. The pupils in the reception class receive a good start to their education. Teaching is good in all areas of learning, and very good quality planning and organisation contribute to the effectiveness of these early years of education. Although standards on entry cover a broad spectrum, the majority of the children are assessed as being of slightly below average attainment. During their time in the reception class, the children make good progress and achieve well. By the time they move into Year 1, most of the pupils will either have achieved the Early Learning Goals⁵ in all six areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum, or be close to doing so. Judging by current performance, it is likely that a few of the children will exceed the goals in literacy and numeracy and be working within the early stages of the National Curriculum.
43. The children's **personal, social and emotional development** is promoted and developed well. Most children are developing their confidence and establishing good relationships with one another, the class teacher and the classroom assistants. They behave well and are encouraged to be considerate of others. Children's interest and attention are captured by the enthusiasm of the adults, and by their good use of resources. These qualities, together with intelligent and sensitive planning, ensure that concentration is fostered and maintained well. All the children receive plenty of praise and encouragement, and those with special educational needs are supported effectively. Personal independence in toileting and changing for physical education are promoted and encouraged well.
44. Good opportunities are provided for children to extend their speaking skills through all areas of learning. Their **communication, language and literacy** skills are developing well. Sensitive adult input encourages them to talk about what they are doing. Adults are patient and give the children time to think about what they want to say, and to articulate their thoughts. When listening to stories, the children join in enthusiastically with the repetitive phrases. Emergent writing skills are developed effectively. More able children are beginning to write phrases and sentences, and most can write their own names legibly. The classroom has a good range of picture-fiction and non-fiction books, which are accessible to the children and which help them to develop an interest in reading.

⁵ **Early Learning Goals:** are a set of standards which it is expected that most children will achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage. They are set out into six areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development.

45. The children are making good progress in their early understanding of number, shape and measure, and provision for **mathematical development** is good. Some can handle simple calculations with numbers to five and above, and most can count to ten, and backwards, with understanding. Games and puzzles, specifically designed to support early understanding of number, are available, and their use is planned effectively. Shape recognition is good, and children are learning the names of simple and more complex shapes. Their use of mathematical vocabulary, such as 'bigger' or 'smaller', is fostered well.
46. Children make good progress in their **knowledge and understanding of the world** because they have plenty of opportunities to experience a wide range of activities. They show a curiosity and interest in everything presented to them, and make suitable gains in their learning. Expeditions around the school and the village, as well as further afield, make them aware of the wider world. The children learn more about their world by handling and discussing a variety of objects, and displays encourage their interest and curiosity effectively. Photographs show them on an autumn walk to look at changing leaf colours and to collect acorns and conkers. The display supporting the 'Penguins' topic has pictures, artefacts and relevant books as well as world globes. The children quickly learn to use computers and are developing good control of the mouse. Good use is made of classroom computers to support children's developing reading, writing and mathematical skills.
47. Opportunities to promote children's **physical development** are planned and organised efficiently. The children use the school hall for music and movement, and they have regular, planned access to a small outdoor area adjacent to the classroom, as well as to the larger playground. They responded well to a taped programme, waving imaginary balloons enthusiastically. There is no large equipment, such as a climbing frame, but the children are able to use the wooden adventure equipment in the playground. Their dexterity is developed well through the use of pencils, brushes, scissors and small construction apparatus.
48. Planning for children's **creative development** is appropriate, giving children a range of artistic experiences. They use a variety of pencils, paints, pastels and collage to create images. Many examples of children's work are on display. Children are introduced to well-known artists and their work, and have used oil pastels to create their own work in the style of Van Gogh. They handle play-dough and use a variety of tools to create different effects. They learn to sing a number of songs and rhymes, and are given opportunities to listen to music as well as playing percussion instruments. They have good opportunities to use their imagination through role-play and enjoy using the classroom 'shop'.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has taken effective measures to stop the decline in standards at Key Stage 1 and to improve provision in Key Stage 2.
- Although standards are still only average, pupils achieve well in Year 1 and in many lessons in Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Short, regularly timetabled sessions for speaking and listening, and other sessions for reading activities, are used effectively to develop pupils' language skills.
- Imaginative planning of writing tasks is helping to motivate pupils and raise standards, but the practice is not universal and writing remains the weakest of pupils' English skills.
- Teachers are not critical enough when marking pupils' work and do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to learn from their mistakes.

Commentary

49. Since the last inspection, standards in both reading and writing at Key Stage 1 have fallen quite significantly, in contrast to the gradual improvement that has been evident in most schools. The reasons for this are partly due to a gradual decline in the level of ability of children joining the school, but more significantly to lack of stability in staffing arrangements and a consequent lack of continuity in teaching. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were below the national average in both reading and writing, and they were well below the average for similar schools. The school has taken effective steps to improve the situation. Weaknesses in speaking and listening were identified as a prime cause of difficulties in developing literacy skills, and so greater emphasis is now given to this aspect of pupils' language development. Additional sessions to develop reading skills are now timetabled each day, and individual pupils who have particular difficulties with reading receive additional tuition from teaching assistants. As a result, standards are now improving again. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, although progress in Year 1 is better than in Year 2. The inspection findings indicate that pupils' achievement is satisfactory and that standards are now average in English at the end of Key Stage 1, with stronger performance in reading than in writing.
50. The picture at Key Stage 2 has varied markedly over the last few years. After a period of stability, the school's results rose to a high point in 2002, but then fell dramatically in 2003. With small numbers in each year group, variations in the school's results are likely to be more marked than in a larger school, and those in 2003 were affected by a high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need and a large proportion of pupils who joined the school partway through Key Stage 2. In addition, this particular year group had suffered some disruption to their teaching during the year. The results in 2003 were below the national average, but when compared to similar schools on the basis of pupils' prior attainment, they were above average. As at Key Stage 1, the school has made changes which are resulting in better provision for pupils in Key Stage 2. Greater emphasis on speaking and listening, more opportunities for reading, specially targeted teaching for pupils in Year 4 and a change of staff in Years 5 and 6 are all helping to bring improvements. The inspection findings show that pupils are achieving well in Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 5 and 6 and, although standards are only average, this marks an improvement on the previous year.
51. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, but it is not entirely consistent throughout the school. The teaching is consistently good, and frequently very good, in Year 1 and Years 5 and 6, and there is also some very good teaching in Year 4. Staffing changes and reorganisation at the start of the school year have improved the quality of teaching, but the changes have not been in place long enough for the effects to be reflected in improved national test results. The teaching of reading, speaking and listening is of a more uniformly good standard across the school than the teaching of writing, where there is some highly effective practice, some less effective practice and too much missed opportunity to develop pupils' writing skills.
52. Pupils achieve average standards in speaking and listening throughout the school, although there is a wide variation in the quality of pupils' spoken responses, from pupils who speak in well-constructed sentences, using a wide range of vocabulary to a few whose language development is still well below the level expected for their age. On most days, there is a short speaking-and-listening session, which teachers use effectively to develop pupils' confidence in speaking. They use a good variety of strategies to engage pupils' interest and to develop their listening skills which, for some pupils, lag behind their speaking skills.
53. Pupils' reading skills are generally the strongest of the four key language skills. Standards in reading are monitored closely throughout the school, but they vary widely from one year group to the next, ranging from above average to below average. Standardised tests are used to identify pupils who are below the standard expected for their age, and additional sessions are provided for these pupils, many of them taught effectively by teaching assistants. Evidence from teachers' records show some pupils making very good progress as a result of this help. Group-reading sessions are held in each class on most days, and these provide a further, effective input into the development of pupils' reading skills.

54. Writing skills are a weakness in most year groups and an area the school has, rightly, identified as needing improvement. Pupils' writing skills have not been developed well in the past, but there is now some very good practice which is starting to make inroads into improving these skills. Imaginative planning, which enables pupils to work on substantial pieces of work over a number of lessons is a key feature of the very good teaching in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, spent part of a literacy lesson revising their opening sections for a piece of fantasy writing in the light of comments made by their teacher. Understanding of how to include essential characteristics of this genre had been developed skilfully earlier in the lesson, and sufficient time was provided in subsequent lessons for pupils to expand their writing and, eventually, to produce a good-quality piece of work. Writing is given a meaningful context. Pupils in Year 6, for example, had clearly been motivated by the task of writing a book for children in the reception. In Year 4, the teacher had invited a local newspaper reporter to participate in a lesson, and pupils were very eager to try out their hands as a reporter as they watched a video film and took reporter's notes which were later to be turned into a piece of reporting. The whole activity was brought to life even further as the reporter also took notes at the same time as the pupils and the next day emailed a copy of his report for the pupils to see. Pupils respond to these imaginatively planned lessons with much greater enthusiasm and desire to work than in the lessons which require them to complete mundane exercises which are seen to have little relevance. Although in Years 2 and 3 there are a few examples of more extended writing tasks, over which pupils take some care, English lessons in this class frequently comprise a succession of short, unrelated mechanical tasks, focusing on aspects of grammar, spelling and vocabulary. These fail to motivate the pupils and do not help them to develop more advanced writing skills. Such tasks are also not particularly successful in improving pupils' spelling, their use of grammar, or their sentence structure, as pupils do not transfer the skills practised in isolation into the context of their wider writing. In this respect, none of the teachers provide sufficient guidance when marking pupils' work to help them to improve. Teachers are not critical enough in pointing out where pupils have made mistakes or indicating where improvements could be made. Even when helpful and encouraging comments are written at the end of pupils' work, as is frequently the case in Years 5 and 6, pupils rarely go back over their work to make improvements and learn from their mistakes. There are few examples of information and communication technology being used as a tool to help pupils develop their writing skills. When new technology is used, it is mainly as a presentational device, rather than a tool which allows pupils to incrementally improve their writing.
55. There is a consistently good approach to the development of writing in Year 1, where the teacher strikes the right balance between encouraging pupils' free writing and correcting elements such as key words, use of capital letters and full stops. In this way, pupils are developing a willingness to have a go, whilst gradually learning the conventions of writing and spelling. Pupils' writing is frequently bound together to make books which reinforce the purposes of writing and celebrate pupils' successes.
56. The leadership and management of English are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has attended various training courses, from which she has introduced new ideas to the school. Other new initiatives have arisen as a result of staff debate and the headteacher's concern to improve standards in English. A helpful innovation has been the termly assessment of a piece of writing to gauge pupils' progress and standards of attainment. As a result, teachers have become more aware of what pupils need to do to reach the next level, but the marking and analysis of these pieces of work have not been shared sufficiently with the pupils to make them aware of what they need to do to improve. In one class, very good guidance is given to parents in the front of pupils' spelling logs, giving them a clear indication of how they might help their children to become more proficient at spelling. Some monitoring of teaching has taken place, but not enough to identify and then disseminate some of the very good practice which clearly exists in the school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. One of the major reasons for weaknesses in pupils' writing is that the school does not make enough use of opportunities to develop pupils' writing across the curriculum. The development of cross-curricular links, so that work in one subject can benefit work in another, is uneven.

There is very good practice in Year 1, where every opportunity is taken for pupils to write in every subject. However, the practice is not continued in Years 2 and 3, where pupils' topic books contain very little writing, but a proliferation of cutting, pasting and drawing activities and the use of worksheets which require very little written input. In Years 5 and 6, there are some good opportunities for pupils to write, for example, about the life of a Victorian child or school life in Ancient Greece, but these opportunities are not used to develop writing skills by showing pupils where they have made mistakes or how they can improve the quality of their writing. Speaking and listening skills are promoted more uniformly across the curriculum. For example, there are plenty of opportunities for whole-class discussion and teachers frequently ask pupils to discuss answers or opinions with a partner.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is of good quality overall.
- A high level of practical work engages pupils' interest and attention.
- Pupils' attitudes in mathematics lessons are good.
- Assessment is developing well and pupils' progress is being tracked.
- There are weaknesses in pupils' ability to handle measurement, although this is currently being addressed.
- The subject is well co-ordinated.

Commentary

58. The 2003 national test results in mathematics were just above the national average at the end of Year 2 and were below average at the end of Year 6. The inspection findings indicate that current standards of attainment are at a similar level at the end of Year 2, but that they have improved at the end of Year 6 and are now above average. Due to consistently good teaching and more rigorous monitoring and assessment, pupils in Year 6 are currently making good progress and achieving well. Standards at Key Stage 2 are rising because of better teaching and improved use of differentiated questioning and tasks in lessons. The overall provision is similar to the picture found at the last inspection, but the school is now in a better position to effect further improvement.
59. By the end of Year 2, most pupils count, order and subtract numbers to at least 20, although some have difficulty in mentally recalling number bonds. In a lesson in Year 1, pupils were observed handling money calculations with confidence. In Year 2, most pupils handle mental calculations with confidence. They were observed calculating 'five less than' with numbers up to 100, and making intelligent observations about the patterns that were emerging on number squares. Pupils know the names and features of common two- and three-dimensional shapes and can count edges, corners and sides with accuracy.
60. By the end of Year 6, most pupils understand place value to three digits, and higher-attaining pupils are confident when making calculations. The school identified that older pupils did not have a secure understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages, so this was the focus for the previous term, and improvement resulted. They are less secure in their knowledge of measurement and its application, but this is the current focus in lessons. Pupils' increasing confidence in their ability to convert kilometres and metres to centimetres and millimetres was observed. The most able pupils plotted conversion graphs for translating ounces to grammes and devised a formula for its operation. The majority are reasonably secure in their use of number. They know about prime numbers, factors and multiples. They know how to collect and organise data and can, for example, produce bar charts, line graphs and pie charts to illustrate their findings. Infant pupils have focused on tallies, arrays and pictograms.

61. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and there are many good opportunities for pupils to work in practical contexts. Lessons are well planned, and often cater well for the lower- and higher-attaining pupils. For example, a more able pupil is given work from Years 7 and 8, such as negative and positive integers, which is more appropriate for his needs and expertise. Where teaching is at its best, particularly in the upper junior class, questions are used well to evaluate pupils' understanding and to advance their learning. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work in mathematics. Presentation is not always as good as it could be, and inaccurate recording sometimes leads to confusion when less able pupils are required to calculate. However, the use of 'squared' pages enable pupils to lay out their work accurately.
62. The subject is led well, and monitoring and tracking of pupils is currently under development. The co-ordinator and the headteacher are strongly committed to raising standards. The teaching is to be routinely monitored and pupils' work scrutinised. Good assessment procedures are in place, and assessment is beginning to be used to track pupils' progress and to inform planning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Basic numeracy skills are taught well in most classes, and pupils' mathematical skills are suitably promoted and extended in their work in other subjects. For example, junior pupils learnt about mathematical nets when undertaking a design and technology project to produce a three-dimensional model of the Ka'ba⁶.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong practical element of the majority of lessons captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
- Most pupils in Year 6 achieve standards that are at least in line with those expected for pupils of their age.
- Pupils' literacy skills are under-developed and do not complement pupils' scientific knowledge.

Commentary

64. In the national tests, the school's performance last year was well below average when compared to all schools nationally and poor when compared to similar schools. A number of factors contributed to the significant fall in standards and a different picture from previous years was the result. Observations during the inspection suggest that standards are likely to rise this year. Good-quality teaching, particularly in the upper junior class, has enabled pupils to develop a good understanding of scientific enquiry through a consistent 'hands-on' approach. In all science lessons seen, pupils were involved in exploration, experiments and challenges which encouraged their thinking and evaluation skills.
65. All groups of pupils, regardless of background, ability or gender, are achieving appropriately because the teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good and very good features. Teachers prepare resources carefully, use teaching assistants effectively, and constantly challenge their pupils to draw scientific conclusions. Pupils frequently work in small groups and, as their interest is constantly sustained by the challenges, their behaviour and personal development are often good. They are encouraged to design their own experiments and older, more able pupils have creative ideas and devise interesting experimental solutions to problems. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, challenged to return the ingredients of solutions they had created to their original state, had interesting and varied ideas on how it could be done. The teacher constantly challenged and developed their scientific thinking. In most of the lessons observed, pupils

⁶ The Ka'ba, situated in Mecca, is Islam's most holy place of worship.

remained constantly on task, determined to learn. Whilst teachers usually promote practical work successfully, some are not so effective at encouraging accurate recording and presentation. Work in books and on worksheets is not always of the same standard as pupils' verbal response. The contribution of science to the development of pupils' literacy skills is, therefore, inconsistent.

66. A new subject leader has recently been appointed to lead and manage science. As yet, though, she has had little opportunity to monitor the work of pupils or teaching and learning in the school but has some clear ideas on how the subject should be developed and improved. Resources have been reviewed and are being supplemented to support the units of learning more closely. The school has identified and acknowledged that there needs to be a whole-school focus on improving standards in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

The inspection of information and communication technology was hampered by the fact that none of the school's computers were working during the inspection, as work was being carried out to install a new server and reconfigure all of the school's computers. It was not possible, therefore, to see teachers and pupils at work, and so judgements have been made on evidence arising from observation of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and staff and the observation of one non-computer-based lesson.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In most classes, teachers provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their information technology skills.
- Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Information and communication technology is used well as a tool for learning across the curriculum.
- The school has made sensible decisions about the deployment of its resources, although more frequent use of new technology is constrained by the number of available computers.

Commentary

67. The evidence available suggests that pupils are working at the expected level by the end of Year 2 and above the expected level at the end of Year 6. For example, pupils in Year 4 use an advanced program to produce an illustrated storyboard about Tutankhamun in connection with their work in history. In the lesson observed, pupils in this class had very clear ideas about how they would use the computer to enhance the layout and design of a poem to give it greater visual appeal and were able to explain how they would achieve this once they had access to a computer. Pupils' self-assessments in Year 6 show sound accomplishment in all aspects of the curriculum and good standards in communicating and finding out information. Pupils in Year 6 talked knowledgeably about a wide range of experiences in information and communication technology, from researching information for history in order to put a presentation together for parents, writing poems in English, finding out information for religious education, using spreadsheets and graphics programs, to the use of a video camera to produce a film of their work, a microscope to investigate in science, and software to produce compositions in music.
68. The quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology appears to be good, although it looks to be stronger in some classes than in others. In Year 4, for example, there is greater evidence of purposeful use of information and communication technology than in Years 2 and 3, where, beyond some simple word-processing and the use of a graphics program, there is little evidence of the wider use of new technology. In contrast, pupils in Year 4 are learning a wide range of skills, such as how to incorporate a digital photograph into the written evaluation of their work in design and technology and how to use a program to produce diagrams of electrical circuits. Solid foundations are being laid in Year 1, where pupils are already producing a number of lines of writing on the computer. In one example, the teacher had

combined writing and illustrations from all pupils into an attractive book about teddies. There are good procedures for assessment, each pupil having a self-assessment booklet which helps to make them aware of what they need to do to achieve the next level and provides an easy guide for teachers as to where pupils might be experiencing difficulties.

69. In most classes, there is good coverage of a well-planned curriculum. Outside the formal curriculum, pupils have good opportunities to consolidate their information technology skills. All pupils have an email address, and there are email links with another local school, and schools in Australia and New Zealand, where there are former pupils of Chilthorne Domer. Up until Christmas, an email club was in operation. A number of pupils meet regularly to compile the village newsletter, which provides them with a very good opportunity to practise and develop their skills in a practical context and which also serves to foster very good links with the local community.
70. The leadership and management of information and communication technology are good. The school's accommodation and the limited availability of finance constrain the level of resources and limit the frequency with which pupils can use computers as a tool for learning. The school has made a well-informed decision and moved away from the emerging trend to pool its resources into one area. Equipment from the small computer suite, which was too small for class teaching purposes and which robbed the school of much-needed additional teaching space, has been redistributed to the classrooms where it is put to regular use. However, the relatively low ratio of computers to pupils also constrains opportunities for pupils to use computers in the most effective way. Written work tends to be completed in a single session and pupils do not have the opportunity to produce successive drafts of a piece of writing, saving, then editing their work at a later stage.
71. Teachers make good use of new technology as an aid to teaching. All teachers, for example, complete their planning electronically and email it to the headteacher. Some of the school's teaching assistants have good expertise in information and communication technology and provide good support for teachers and pupils. An interactive whiteboard in the hall is used well and effectively in some lessons, although its location and availability prevent more frequent use by teachers. There are good arrangements for dealing with technical problems through the weekly visit of a technician. The school's commitment to making good use of new technology is seen in the school's lively and informative web-site, which makes information and examples of pupils' work available to parents and to a wider audience. However, from this we gather that little has changed at the school. An inspection report from 1879 comments, 'The children evidently take an interest in their work, which is a great proof that the teaching is good,' a sentiment which still appears to apply to the teaching of information and communication technology.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. Information and communication technology is used quite extensively across the curriculum, and particularly as a tool for learning in English, mathematics, geography and history. A digital camera is used frequently to record evidence for work in many subjects. A video camera is used imaginatively to show how children have settled into the reception class, and parents are invited in to see their children at work, a reassuring feature.

HUMANITIES

73. **History and geography** were not the focus of this inspection. A scrutiny of the pupils' work, together with discussions with pupils and a review of displays of work, suggests that standards in both subjects are in line with national expectations.

Religious education

The provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected.

- Standards reflect the school's Christian ethos.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is some very good teaching in religious education.

Commentary

74. Reflecting the findings at the last inspection, standards are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good.
75. Pupils are introduced to an appropriate range of world faiths, including Christianity, and are developing a good understanding of the similarities and differences between them. Many understand the notion of worship as being central to religion, and are developing good understanding of the use of symbolism in religion. The school's Christian ethos is supported and developed well in religious education lessons. The school hall has a number of class displays of current religious education topics and there are some good cross-curricular links. For example, pupils have used their design and technology, mathematical and information technology skills to design and construct their own model Ka'ba.
76. Only one religious education lesson was observed, in which the teaching was very good and captured pupils' interest and attention. Role-play was used effectively to promote thinking about Christian values. A scrutiny of lesson planning shows that lessons are well-prepared. A good feature of the teaching is the use made of the local church as a resource. This practice of supporting pupils' understanding of religion through first-hand experience is extended by using the Internet and videos to enhance pupils' knowledge of centres of worship from other religions. Occasional visitors are welcomed to extend pupils' learning and understanding. Pupils' response in the lesson seen was very good and matched well by their recall of their learning.
77. The co-ordinator has a good overview and grasp of the subject and how it could be further improved. She has created a school syllabus based on the local education authority's agreed syllabus 'Awareness, Mystery and Value'. Assessment currently takes place through the evaluation of planning. Resources are appropriate and sufficient, with an artefact box for each religion, and are used effectively to support learning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

78. Work in **art and design, design and technology, music and physical education** was only sampled as these subjects were not the main focus of this inspection. Therefore, no overall judgements about provision in these subjects have been made. Samples of pupils' work were examined in art and design and design and technology, and there were brief observations of two lessons in art and design, one in music and one in physical education.
79. Pupils' work in **art and design** is of an average standard. Good teaching was observed in two visits to lessons. In the lesson for pupils in Years 2 and 3, the teacher provided a good recapitulation of the skills learnt the previous week and the opportunity for pupils to try new skills. Evidence on display in the classroom, such as three-dimensional work in clay and illustrations for work on Ancient Egypt, indicate that pupils receive sound opportunities to develop their skills in art and design. The lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 was set within the context of some earlier imaginative writing, as pupils were asked to design a magic container. A particularly good feature of this lesson was the way the teacher questioned each pupil individually to stimulate thought about the design, which then led to the incorporation of greater detail into the pupils' work.
80. The provision for **design and technology** is variable, with good work being produced in some classes and insubstantial projects in others. In Year 4, pupils achieved good standards in a project on packaging, which involved them in investigating different types of packaging, designing and making their own package and evaluating the finished product. Eager involvement is evident from photographic displays and the quality of the finished products. The project also illustrates how effectively work in one subject can complement and extend pupils'

understanding in another. In this case, the investigation of nets in mathematics and the skill of combining text and graphics in information and communication technology were taught as the project unfolded. In other classes, there is little evidence of similarly well-constructed projects, and there are indications that some work remains incomplete.

81. Standards in singing in **music** are similar to those found in most schools. In the lesson observed, dependence on a commercially produced scheme provided a sound structure for the lesson which enabled the pupils to make satisfactory progress.
82. Provision in **physical education**, particularly in gymnastics, is hampered by lack of facilities, but the school does everything it can to compensate for this. The school has a hard-surfaced area which is used for outdoor games and has access to nearby grassed playing fields. However, indoor facilities are severely limited. The hall is quite unsuited to any form of physical activity, and the nearby village hall, to which the school has access, is too small for any vigorous games. Pupils have regular opportunities for swimming and there is also good extra-curricular involvement in sport, including fixtures against other schools.
83. In the one lesson observed, the teaching was of a good standard, with some very good features. The lesson was very well planned and included a wide variety of activities which successively developed pupils' skills in passing and intercepting a ball. A particularly good feature of the lesson was the way the teacher helped develop pupils' understanding of the need for rules when playing games. They were given a short time to play a game without any rules and, as soon as dissent started to show, the teacher brought the class together to discuss what rules they would suggest to make the game fairer. After a further trial, these were then evaluated and pupils' understanding of the importance of rules grew. Another particularly good feature was the level of energy and enthusiasm displayed by both teacher and pupils, although noise levels were excessive and detracted from the overall effectiveness of the lesson. Pupils achieved well in the lesson, improving their skills of passing and catching, although for most pupils these were no better than of average standard.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

84. In addition to meeting all the statutory requirements, the school's provision for personal, social and health education is a positive force in the school. Pupils learn to share and how to behave towards each other in the school community right from the start of their time in school. They learn to participate fully in school life and to take responsibilities seriously. The school's overarching ethos of fairness, tolerance and equality of opportunity shines through and is reinforced in lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility as school councillors, to listen to each other and demonstrate respect for different views and values and to empathise with those less fortunate. No lessons were observed.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale:
excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*