

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HILLSIDE FIRST SCHOOL**

Verwood

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113683

Headteacher: Miss Sally Phillips

Lead inspector: Mrs Patricia Davies

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 256439

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	319
School address:	Hillside Road Verwood Dorset
Postcode:	BH31 7HE
Telephone number:	01202 822737
Fax number:	01202 822316
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Mike Watts
Date of previous inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- Hillside First is larger than average for this type of school. Pupil numbers have risen over recent years because of rapid housing development, and this development has brought in families from other areas.
- The school is located in a 'dormitory' village near Ringwood. Most families are from owner-occupied homes, and a significant minority from local housing association accommodation. There is not a lot of movement of pupils in and out of the school other than at the normal point of entry into the Reception Year and when pupils leave at the end of Year 4.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, placing the school in the lowest category nationally. However, this category does not accurately reflect the school's socio-economic context, which has seen some change over recent years with the new building development. Local authority data on the socio-economic status of the area from which the school draws its pupils indicates a proportion a little above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average, and no pupil has English as an additional language. Most pupils come from White United Kingdom backgrounds.
- Children enter the Reception class with a wide range of ability but, when taken overall, attainment is broadly similar to that expected of children of a similar age.
- There have been many changes to staff over the last two years, including key staff and subject leaders and a new headteacher.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22460	P Davies	<i>Lead inspector</i>	English; Foundation Stage.
19338	G Ellis	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
20457	B Fletcher	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Music; Physical Education; Religious Education; Special educational needs.
22831	C Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Art and design; Design and technology; Information and communication technology.
24528	G Muton	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History.

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

# REPORT CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>4</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>7</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>27</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Hillside gives its pupils a satisfactory education** within a happy and secure learning environment where everyone is valued. The headteacher is firmly focused on creating the conditions for each pupil to do as well as he or she can, and has communicated this vision effectively to staff and governors. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although increased levels of progress lower down the school have not yet had a full impact on the standards achieved by the oldest pupils. Consequently, the attainment of the current Year 4 is broadly similar to national expectations in reading, science and information and communication technology (ICT), but below that expected nationally in writing and mathematics. More stable staffing has made a significant contribution to overall satisfactory teaching and learning. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to their work. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership and management of the headteacher.
- Consistently good teaching and learning in the Reception classes.
- The effectiveness of the school's care and support, which creates a positive ethos where pupils are interested in their activities and work well.
- The range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors, which enrich the curriculum.
- Good links with parents.
- Standards in English and mathematics, which are below national expectations in Year 4.
- Too little monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by key staff and subject leaders.
- The limited use of ICT across the curriculum.

Improvement since the last inspection in March 1998 has been satisfactory. Staff changes have brought a clear and renewed focus on raising standards and much improvement to assessment, and measures taken to stabilise staffing and improve teaching are beginning to pay off. As a result, the rate of progress is improving and standards are beginning to rise. The new senior team has been established for only a short time and is now beginning to develop its roles and responsibilities as a major school priority. The achievement of more able pupils is being strengthened, and communication with parents is now good.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	B	D	C	E
Writing	D	D	B	C
Mathematics	C	E	D	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

The most recent national test results of 2003 show a marked improvement on those of the previous year. The improvements were most marked at the higher Level 3, and particularly in writing, where no pupil had gained this higher level in 2002. Attainment on entry is now broadly average. The comparison with other, similar, schools is based on eligibility for free school meals. This school is in the group with the lowest percentage of such pupils, although the school's socio-economic context does not fully reflect this placing. **Achievement is satisfactory overall** because all pupils are now benefiting from improvements to assessment and teaching. Those with special educational needs are starting to gain from changes made to the deployment of support staff, and make satisfactory

progress. Standards in the current Year 2 reflect the improved test results of last year, as they are broadly similar to national expectations in reading, mathematics, science and ICT, and above national expectations in writing. However, the current Year 4 pupils have not benefited to the same degree as younger pupils from recent improvements. Therefore, their sound progress this term has not been enough to bring standards up to the level of national expectations in writing and mathematics, and it is likely that their attainment will still be below national expectations in these subjects by the end of the school year. Standards in other subjects are in line with national expectations.

Pupils' **personal development is good**. They have positive, and often enthusiastic, attitudes to school and to learning, and relationships and behaviour are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, and there are strengths in the school's provision for moral and social development. However, there is no systematic approach to preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school gives a **satisfactory quality of education**. **Teaching is satisfactory overall**. Much attention has been given to improving teaching, and no lessons were judged unsatisfactory. However, there is quite a wide variation in the quality of teaching (from very good to satisfactory) across the school. Teaching and learning are strongest in the Reception classes, because they are consistently good and activities are closely matched to children's needs. Science is well taught too, and this is because the school now uses scientific enquiry to help pupils learn. Very good teaching was seen in Year 1 and in Years 3 and 4, with the greatest proportion in Year 1. Assessment is satisfactory overall. It has been used well to give teachers much more information about what pupils can and cannot do in English and mathematics, and is increasingly being used to guide the planning of individual lessons.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits outside school, and visitors. The school has focused on curriculum development for mathematics, science and, particularly, English, but recognises that other subjects need further development, notably in the use of ICT across the curriculum.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher gives **good leadership** and has been the driving force behind improvements. **Management is satisfactory** overall, with a whole staff commitment to self-evaluation. A senior team has been established and subject leaders identified, but these arrangements are too new for many key staff and subject leaders to have developed their roles and responsibilities. The governing body gives good support and is beginning to take an informed and active part in shaping the school's future.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views of the school's work and feel it to be accessible and welcoming. There has been some concern about staff changes, and about the quality of communication and information about children's progress, which the inspection team found to be good. Discussions with pupils show that they enjoy school life, and they speak of the school with pride and enthusiasm.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards further in English and mathematics.
- Develop the monitoring role of key staff and subject leaders in relation to teaching and learning and the curriculum.
- Increase the use of ICT across all subjects.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. In Year 2 standards of work are broadly in line with national expectations in all subjects with the exception of writing, where they are above. In the current Year 4 group, standards are broadly in line with national expectations for reading and speaking and listening skills, but are below national expectations in writing and mathematics. Standards are generally similar to national expectations in all other subjects seen.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- The good achievement of children in the Reception group.
- Improved results in the most recent national tests for pupils in Year 2, particularly in writing and at the higher levels.
- Standards in English and mathematics in Year 4, which are below national expectations overall.

#### **Commentary**

##### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003***

<b>Standards in:</b>	<b>School results</b>	<b>National results</b>
Reading	15.6 (15.1)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.6 (13.6)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	15.7 (15.3)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 85 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year .*

1. Attainment on entry to the Reception group is broadly similar to that expected of children of a similar age, but nevertheless represents a wide variety of ability. This current level of attainment is lower than was found at the time of the last inspection and reflects changes to the intake of the school. While there is a significant minority of more able children in the present Reception group, there are also many whose speaking skills, for example, are underdeveloped; this pattern is replicated in most year groups. Relative strengths and weaknesses in attainment also vary between different groups. Early assessments indicate that the present Year 4, for instance, were stronger in language and literacy skills when they first joined the school than they were in mathematics. However, children in the Reception group achieve well, and because of this the majority of the current group look likely to meet the expected learning goals by the end of the year, with a significant minority exceeding them.
2. Although the school's results in the Year 2 national tests have generally kept pace with national trends, there has tended to be large year-on-year variation in reading and mathematics. Writing results have remained depressed, although there was some small overall improvement in 2001 which was maintained the following year. Few pupils have gained the higher Level 3 in writing (there were none in 2002). Test results also show a difference in the relative attainment of boys and girls, with girls generally performing better than boys. There was no significant evidence of this discrepancy during this inspection.
3. However, the most recent national test results (2003) show much improvement, particularly at the higher levels and most markedly so in writing, where there was the largest increase both at the higher ranges of the expected Level 2 and at Level 3. This improvement to higher levels of attainment would appear to indicate that the school is getting to grips with issues related to the achievement of more able pupils, as raised in the previous inspection. The overall improvement is

even more to the school's credit because this year group had the greatest proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In terms of attainment in writing, the comparison with schools in the lowest group of eligibility for free school meals has also improved significantly on that of the previous year, and is now broadly in line with expectations. Improvements to test standards for reading and mathematics have not been enough to raise their grade from the earlier comparison of well below the national average.

4. Inspection evidence supports the improving trend indicated by last summer's test results. A combination of factors has helped to turn things around. These are the headteacher's strong leadership, which is firmly focused on raising achievement, improved teaching, and a more settled staff. The good achievement of Reception-aged children is beginning to filter upwards through the school. For example, assessments of the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 last year show them to have made good progress overall, particularly in the case of Year 1 pupils in mathematics. Standards in the present Year 2 are above national expectations in writing, and are in line with expectations in all other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, as new arrangements to their support have yet to make a full impact and increase their progress further.

5. The current Year 4 group, however, has not benefited to the same degree from recent improvements to the school's performance lower down the school, and has been affected by variations in the quality of teaching. Although evidence from this inspection shows that these pupils are making sound progress this term, the progress is not yet enough to bring standards in English and mathematics up to national expectations for pupils of a similar age. Their attainment is broadly in line with expectations in science and ICT, and in other subjects where it was possible to make a judgement about standards, but they only just conform to expectations in reading and are below them in writing and mathematics. Not enough evidence was seen during the inspection in Year 4 to enable judgements to be made about standards in art and design, design and technology, and geography. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and mathematical skills enable them to make sound progress in other subjects, but the use of ICT skills has not yet been extended enough into other subjects to allow these skills to have a full impact on pupils' progress.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**, as is their attendance. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Pupils' good attitudes to their work and level of interest in their activities.
- Good behaviour in and out of lessons, as a result of the school's high expectations of pupils' conduct.
- Good relationships among pupils and with adults.
- Pupils' confidence and good self-esteem.
- The very effective promotion of social and personal skills in the Reception class, which gives children a good start.
- Good levels of attendance.
- Pupils' awareness of issues associated with a multi-cultural society, which is not well developed.

### **Commentary**

6. The school sets high standards for conduct, which are conscientiously and consistently reinforced by all staff. The result is an environment which successfully motivates learning. Support for personal and social skills is particularly effective in the Reception classes and therefore gives the

very youngest children a good start. Behaviour by the overwhelming majority of pupils is good in lessons. They also move around the school in an orderly fashion, for example in going to and returning from assemblies. Behaviour in the playground is sometimes boisterous, but it is good-natured and friendly overall. The less acceptable behaviour by a very small minority of pupils is handled well by staff. This support is understood and appreciated both by pupils and by parents. There has been one recent short-term exclusion.

7. Pupils enjoy school and speak of it with pride and enthusiasm. The school offers a wide variety of clubs and extra-curricular activities, which are well attended. When opportunities arise, pupils willingly take on responsibility for duties within their class and for the whole school. During lessons, pupils are focused on their work, pay attention to their teachers and enthusiastically join in activities and discussions, particularly when they are asked to investigate and explore for themselves. The school successfully promotes their self-esteem and sense of achievement, for example in the weekly achievement assemblies. As a result, the majority of pupils are keen to talk about their work and what they have done well, expressing themselves openly and confidently. They maintain good levels of concentration, working well as part of a group, and helping each other to learn. In lessons, pupils are often encouraged to express their opinions and ideas and are generally happy to respond.

8. The school's good relationships form a continuously strong and positive foundation for pupils' learning. The school's ethos is inclusive and caring. Members of staff are good role models and their reinforcement of moral standards is reflected in pupils' satisfactory understanding and respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The spiritual, cultural and social aspects of pupils' personal development are also satisfactorily promoted. Music and physical education contribute well to pupils' personal, social development, and to their cultural knowledge through the study of music from around the world. However, there is no systematic focus to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society, either through a programmed range of activities or by regular use of visits and visitors, although more are planned.

9. Attendance is above average, and unauthorised absence is below average. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when attendance was found to be satisfactory. The school's procedures for promoting good attendance are well known and understood by parents.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence	
School data	4.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	0.4

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background
No ethnic group recorded

**Exclusions in the last school year**

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
308	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
8	0	0

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of teaching and learning and of assessment is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching and learning in the Reception classes, where they are consistently good.
- The use of investigative approaches to teaching science.
- The teaching of physical education, which is good overall.
- Pupils' good application to their work.
- Too great a variation in teaching quality.

### Commentary

10. Much attention has been given to improving the quality of teaching and learning and creating a stable and effective staff team. Despite the fact that the overall judgement of satisfactory is the same as that made at the time of the last inspection, it is significant that no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection. Nevertheless, there is still a fairly wide variation in teaching and in learning across the school. Very good teaching was seen in Year 1 and in Years 3 and 4 (with the greater proportion in Year 1), and in several subjects, namely English, science, religious education and music.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	5 (12%)	14 (33%)	23 (55%)	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

11. Teaching is at its strongest in the Reception classes, because it is consistently effective. Assessment is thorough and constant, and activities are therefore well focused on what each child needs in order to succeed. Particularly careful attention is given to the knowledge and reinforcement of routines and expectations, with the result that these children develop good social and personal skills and show good levels of independence. Activities are interesting and relate well to children's everyday experience. Lots of conversation with children, and questioning by adults, successfully encourages children to talk about what they are learning.

12. Science is well taught because the school is now focusing on helping pupils to learn through investigation and, in doing so, to take ownership of their learning. Pupils are enormously enthusiastic about this approach, and this high level of interest results in much focused work and participation and, in turn, good overall learning. In a very successful Year 1 science lesson, for example, real excitement was generated within the class by the news that they were to visit the school one evening to experiment with torches as an introduction to their work on light and dark. By means of discussion and questioning, the teacher had skilfully prepared for the work to follow, which involved the children in deciding what they wanted to find out and predicting what might happen. This approach was particularly successful with the more able pupils and effectively targeted the development of speaking and listening skills. Pupils worked together well on this task and their discussion was closely focused and sensible.

13. Other key features of the very best lessons were:

- imaginative teaching strategies, including the use of drama;
- the teacher's own enthusiasm, which was infectious;
- very good relationships, which helped pupils to take part with confidence.

14. Good relationships between pupils and teachers are a significant part of many lessons and create a secure and positive working atmosphere. Physical education is well taught overall because activities are stimulating and imaginative and pupils really enjoy the challenge these give. Pupils' willingness to participate and get on with their work were also important factors in most lessons, including those where teaching and learning were sound, rather than good or better. In satisfactorily taught lessons, some common factors inhibited learning from being good. For example, teaching assistants were not always well deployed. In some of the very successful lessons, on the other hand, high levels of adult support were used to good effect with small groups of pupils during activities.

15. Other relative weaknesses of teaching in otherwise satisfactory lessons are related to assessment. Assessment practices have been greatly improved since the last inspection, particularly for tracking progress in writing, mathematics and ICT. These developments have given teachers much more information about what pupils can and cannot do, and have resulted in the setting of targets in English and mathematics that focus attention on what pupils must do to perform at higher stages of each National Curriculum level. Increasingly, assessment information is used to guide the planning of individual lessons and to ensure that there is enough challenge for pupils of all abilities, but effective use is not yet consistently established. This sometimes adversely affects the level of challenge for the more able in mathematics, for example. Questioning and discussion during lessons were often too generalised, rather than probing and incisive, and levels of challenge were therefore satisfactory. Marking is at least satisfactory, with some good examples of comments which guide pupils on how they could improve their work, in English for example.

### **The curriculum**

16. The quality of curriculum opportunities provided by the school is **satisfactory**, with good opportunities for enrichment. The quality and quantity of resources, including staffing and accommodation are **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- A good Foundation Stage curriculum.
- The English curriculum, which is good.
- Good opportunities for pupils to learn investigational skills in science.
- A good range of activities outside school hours, and enrichment through visits and visitors.
- Not enough use of computers in subjects across the curriculum.
- Systems for reviewing and evaluating the curriculum, as these are underdeveloped.
- Planning for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), which does not have enough detail.

### **Commentary**

17. The school has a broad curriculum that meets statutory requirements and prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. There have been significant recent changes to the way pupils with special educational needs are supported. Although new ways of working are not yet fully embedded, the provision made for these children is satisfactory, with individual targets well matched to their needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum for the Reception aged children is interesting, and closely matched to the children's needs.

18. The school's first, and well-chosen, priorities have been to improve standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and particularly in writing. Planning for this aspect of English is well focused, and as a result the greatest gains at the higher Level 3 in last summer's

national Year 2 tests were in this subject. The school has now already moved on to improving the reading curriculum through allocating additional sessions for group reading, which has also made it possible to devote more time to writing during literacy lessons. A focus on improving pupils' practical skills in science has also been effective.

19. A wide range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' classroom experiences, and they respond enthusiastically to these opportunities. Year 4 pupils, for example, visited the Singleton Open Air museum in connection with their work on the Tudors. Visits are made to local churches, as well as to the library and the heritage centre. Visitors to the school include theatre groups and musicians, local teachers and clergy, and the police and the school nurse. There is also a good variety of out of hours activities, and those for music and sport make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment and achievement in music and physical education. They are available to all pupils in Years 3 and 4, and during the inspection over twenty pupils attended the choir practice and over forty were enjoying after-school football. Participation in sport and the arts is encouraged further by inter-school competitions and school concerts. Pupils' achievements outside school are valued and recognised in achievement assemblies.

20. The school is well aware that, having concentrated first on improving English, mathematics and science, it must turn its attention to other subjects, both in their own right and in the contribution they can each make to others. Improvements to ICT are perhaps most illustrative of this current point in the school's development. There has been much improvement to this subject itself, but there is no systematic and planned use of it right across the curriculum. During the current inspection, only limited use of computers in classrooms was to be seen. Neither have opportunities for developing research skills been thoroughly identified in all subjects to support achievement in reading as well as in the subjects themselves. However, national guidance materials have been adopted for many of these subjects as a valuable starting point, and this planning is being put to use. At this stage, though, there has been no overall review of the curriculum. Nor has there been an attempt to judge whether the allotment of teaching time a little below the national recommended level at Key Stage 2 is having any adverse impact. Currently, decisions about curriculum content are made at different levels, such as at the level of year groups or key stage. Further progress is inhibited by the fact that many staff are very new to their roles as subject leaders.

21. A basic plan for pupils' PSHE has been put in place, and time allocated on the timetable. This aspect of the curriculum includes education for drugs awareness and appropriate aspects of sex and relationships. However, planning systems and staff resources are not sufficiently developed for PSHE, with the result that lesson content is too reliant on teachers' own ideas, and planning for progression and continuity is thus impaired.

22. There have been considerable changes to staff over the last two years. The headteacher and governors have worked hard to gain more permanence and stability, and consequently the picture this term is much more settled. However, the current teaching staff is relatively inexperienced, with many in the early stages of their careers, particularly those in Years 3 and 4. There have been some valuable additions to resources in recent years, most notably in ICT but also in religious education. Books have also been selected to stimulate greater interest in boys for reading.

23. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. Unallocated funds have been used well to improved library facilities and create the computer room. Plans are also in place to improve the office and visitors' Reception area, which are too cramped. The heated swimming pool and large playing field are very good facilities, but the arrangement of small playgrounds creates supervision problems. Temporary buildings also cause some difficulties, as they are too remote from the school. Pupils in these classrooms often have to walk to the main building in the rain or cold when going to assemblies or to computer lessons and other activities. The school hall is small, and the need to store equipment around the walls further reduces the space available for physical education lessons and assemblies.

## Care, guidance and support

The school's arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **good**, as is the level of support, advice and guidance. Arrangements for involving pupils in the school's work and development are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A caring environment, which is safe and secure.
- Good knowledge of pupils and their individual needs.
- The good level of support for pupils' progress and personal development.
- Good induction arrangements for Reception children.
- Limited formal opportunities for pupils to share their views about the school's development.

### Commentary

24. Pupils are happy in school because they feel part of a secure community where they know that everyone is valued, and they understand how to get help if they need it. Pupils are well supervised and staff know them well. Personal development is informally, but effectively, monitored so that staff can quickly recognise pupils' needs and give them good standards of pastoral support and care. Staff act quickly to help any pupil who is concerned or in need of support, and if necessary the school has access to professional counselling for individual pupils. Induction arrangements for the youngest children in the Reception class are carefully staged in order that each child shall get a good level of adult attention, and to ensure that expectations are firmly established and needs are individually assessed. Those pupils with special educational needs are entirely included in every aspect of school life and their needs are carefully monitored. Assessment arrangements have been substantially improved and pupils' progress is carefully tracked in English and mathematics. National guidance systems have been adopted for keeping track of standards and achievement in ICT and in most foundation subjects.

25. There are good policies and procedures relating to health and safety, first aid and child protection. Co-ordination with outside agencies is effective, so that further support may be called upon in appropriate cases. Staff and governors carry out regular and systematic risk assessments, with good professional support from the local authority. These arrangements reflect the school's strong commitment to care and welfare.

26. The school's overall arrangements for involving pupils in the work and development of the school are satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to express themselves in lessons and are involved in the setting of individual targets. The school also reacts positively to pupils' concerns, for example the need for playground rules for football, and pupils are also involved in drawing up class rules. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons are also used well to follow up particular issues. However, the school recognises the need to extend and develop the present opportunities for pupils to share their views, by the creation, for example, of a School Council. This particular project is planned to take place this term.

### Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents and the community. Links with other schools are **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Good relationships between parents and the school.
- Good communication with parents.
- Good links with the community.
- Effective liaison with the on-site pre-school unit.
  
- There are no significant weaknesses.

## **Commentary**

27. Parents think well of the school and give good general support. For example, many come to support their children at the 'showing' assemblies, and also help the school's finances through fund raising. They feel the school is accessible and welcoming, and that staff members are approachable. A significant number of parents directly assist in school with activities in classes.

28. Communication, identified by the last inspection as a weakness, has been much improved, though some parents feel that it is still not adequate enough. The school communicates frequently with parents and as a result the majority feel well informed about the school's work and therefore able to support their children. The prospectus and the annual Governors' report are well produced and informative. Newsletters are frequent, and each term the school sends out detailed curriculum information, including advice on how parents can contribute to their children's learning. There is now a school website. The school has also arranged curriculum-related meetings for parents, for example the recent literacy workshop. These meetings are valued by parents and very well supported. The school has also consulted parents through questionnaires, notably about the quality of communication.

29. A significant minority of parents still felt they were not kept well informed about their children's progress. The inspection team does not agree with this view. Parents receive much information about their children's progress through consultation meetings with staff and informal contact throughout the year. The pupils' annual reports are good overall. Their particular strengths are:

- generally full information about English, mathematics and science;
- the inclusion of specific individual targets, which give parents very practical guidance.

30. Although the targets are not all directly related to National Curriculum levels, they give useful indications of pupils' 'effort' and of their attainment in relation to national expectations in English and mathematics. General comments are detailed and show good knowledge of the children. Some parents also expressed concerns about recent changes to staff, a situation that is now largely resolved.

31. The school has established good links with the community. There is a good range of visits within the locality, and local visitors to the school. The school field is a good resource for a number of community activities, for example the local youth football group. There are good links with local churches and sports organisations, with the lawn tennis association and the rugby club contributing to the development of pupils' skills in these games. Work experience placements are found at the school for secondary school students. There are satisfactory arrangements for the transfer of pupils to Middle school, and a particularly good link with the on-site pre-school unit. Most of the children in the Reception group have attended this unit before starting school, so these links are very valuable. Assessment information and practices have been modified and exchanged to the benefit of both groups of children, and the unit's outside area is shared with the Reception classes. These mutual arrangements help to acclimatise the children to the school environment and ensure their smooth transfer into the Foundation Stage.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is **satisfactory**, with strong educational direction given by the headteacher.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The good leadership and management of the headteacher.
- A strong commitment from all staff to raising standards and ensuring that all pupils achieve well.
- A supportive governing body.
- Successful recruitment of staff to bring greater stability.
- The monitoring role of senior staff and subject leaders which, with the exception of the headteacher, is underdeveloped.

### Commentary

32. Hillside is a happy school that endeavours to serve all its pupils equally well. The experienced headteacher is firmly committed to creating the conditions for all pupils to achieve as well as they possibly can. Since her appointment two years ago, she has been the driving force behind improvements and the renewed focus on standards and achievement. She has communicated this vision effectively to staff and governors, who are fully supportive of her work. The impact of developments and innovation is at an early stage, but a number of features are testimony to the hard work that has taken place, and to its successful outcome. Examples are recent improvements to national test results, the absence during the inspection of unsatisfactory teaching and learning, and the more stable staffing situation. Test results indicate that the school has begun to tackle the lack of challenge for more able pupils, outlined as a key issue in the last inspection, although the school recognises that further improvement needs to be made.

33. Another key issue from the previous inspection focused on the contribution of senior staff to the school's leadership. A new senior team and key stage management structure have been established for only a short time and the senior team is in the process of refining its delegated duties. One member is away on long-term sickness leave. Key responsibilities, such as the professional development of staff and curriculum review, are not yet fully delegated, but the newly appointed and energetic deputy headteacher has started to develop her monitoring role. The appointment of new staff also means that many subject leaders are new to their role (science and most foundation subjects), and some are also inexperienced. In the absence of a settled team to support her up to now, the headteacher has fulfilled most of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning herself, and has acted robustly on weaknesses in teaching. She is aware that these evaluative skills must now be developed in other key staff to enable them to take a full role in evaluating the school's work and provision, determining its strategic direction, and ensuring that inconsistencies in performance are eliminated. At present, good practice in teaching is not always shared, and this affects the quality of learning.

34. Nevertheless, some key staff are already giving good leadership within particular areas of responsibility. This is true for English and special educational needs, for example. The Foundation Stage staff collectively ensures improvement, innovation and good teaching. Teachers who are new to the school are well supported by the senior management team and by the local authority. There is a sound programme of in-service training in place, and this is properly related to the needs of individual teachers and to the broader needs of the school. The headteacher and governors have been very effective in recruiting good quality teachers and teachers' assistants, and this is beginning to make a positive impact upon the quality of learning.

35. The governing body gives the school good support. The headteacher and the chair of governors are in regular contact. The governors, several of whom are recent appointments, are developing a sound grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, largely because they receive good quality information from the school. Consequently, they are beginning to take an informed part in shaping the school's future. They have established a school improvement group that considers all aspects of the school's organisation and management. Teachers give presentations of their work to the governing body, and some governors are able to visit during the working day to see for themselves how the school works. Governors are also helping to draw up indicators for judging the success of initiatives, but do not as yet take a full part in judging outcomes and acting in their role as a 'critical friend'.

36. The school improvement plan is the product of wide consultation that includes the staff and governors. The plan is a good working document, as it has a clear set of aims to which all plans are linked and the priorities for development are agreed jointly. At the same time, the plan is flexible and responsive to needs. It is monitored regularly and, if necessary, priorities are reset.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>	
Total income	697,176.00
Total expenditure	598,475.00
Expenditure per pupil	1,876.00

<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Balance from previous year	40,578.00
Balance carried forward to the next	88,755.00

37. Financial management is secure and spending is prudent and judicious. The budget shows a significant surplus, which has been earmarked for further building. Good quality information is given to governors so that they may determine future spending on the basis of fact. Good use is made of computer technology in compiling and maintaining the budget. The school secretary keeps meticulous records of daily expenditure and can quickly provide the balance on the current account. Audit recommendations are promptly carried out. The principles of best value are not yet embedded in financial management, but a start has been made on assessing value for money. To this end, the school is beginning to evaluate its own performance by analysing test results and by the scrutiny of teachers' plans. This is leading the way to changes in the curriculum and to improved learning.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

38. The two Reception classes form a tightly knit and effective area of the school's work where teachers and support staff work closely together. There has been considerable improvement to planning and assessment over the past two years, so that the needs of individual children are well met and activities are stimulating and varied. Teaching and learning are consistently good, and very good in relation to personal, social and emotional development. Activities are planned jointly by teachers and support staff so that all adults are well informed about their tasks. Children's learning is monitored carefully on a day-by-day basis and those with special educational needs are therefore spotted quickly and given appropriate support. Those with high level needs are supported with conspicuous care and sensitivity. Children enter the Reception classes with a wide range of abilities, but all these positive features ensure that they have an effective start to their education and achieve well. Some higher attainers achieve very well. As a result, it is already clear that the majority of the children in the present group will be meeting the expectations of the early learning goals for this age by the end of the school year, with a significant minority exceeding them.

39. Most children attend the adjacent pre-school unit before joining the school, and there is valuable liaison with the unit that allows for a smooth transition. All children enter the Reception group at the beginning of the school year in which they reach the age of five, and attend part-time. A staged programme of full-time attendance is then introduced, starting with the older children after the autumn half term. Morning and afternoon sessions, each with half the group, allow staff to build-up routines and expectations and give a good level of individual attention. Parents expressed much satisfaction with the friendliness of staff and how well their children are enabled to settle into school life.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- A happy and industrious atmosphere.
- Staff act as good role models.
- Constant reinforcement of routines and expectations.
  
- There are no significant weaknesses.

#### **Commentary**

40. The very good relationships among adults create a warm and calm environment where children clearly feel comfortable and secure. The staff provide a good role model, and this is reflected in the children's willingness to work amicably together, and to take turns and share. Such good behaviour is reinforced by staff through rewards and praise. Children are constantly reminded about routines and expectations, and given many opportunities to be independent and behave sensibly, always in a constructive and positive way to which they respond to very well. As a result, children get on with their activities and concentrate well, and respond with willingness and enthusiasm during group sessions. At the end of sessions they quietly collect their coats, and those who can are gently encouraged to fasten them themselves, whilst support staff unobtrusively join the group to help those who need a hand.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Constant promotion of speaking and listening skills.
- Well-focused attention on developing children's phonic knowledge and understanding.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

### Commentary

41. All staff constantly talk to children about their work and encourage them to reply. This approach is important because a significant proportion of the children respond in little more than individual words or short phrases. Adults also really listen to what children have to say, carefully recording significant responses as evidence of learning and as information about what needs to be planned next. Role-play activities (in the Farm Shop, for example) also give children valuable opportunities to talk together. Children listen with interest and attention to performances in the puppet theatre. Teachers give close attention to building up phonic knowledge. Short bursts of group work are particularly effective, and so too is the reinforcement of knowledge through a combination of visual prompts, letter sounds and action. As a result, children readily remember and identify individual letter sounds and some blends of letters. Many children write their own names and use marks to represent words. Higher attainers are using letters in their writing.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The use of 'real' resources and links with everyday experiences.
- Links with other areas of learning.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

### Commentary

42. Good resources are well used in this area of learning. A wide variety of fruit and vegetables was used to stimulate interest in weighing activities, and this linked well with literacy work on the story 'The Enormous Watermelon'. The different sizes and weights of the vegetables allowed children to experiment with various combinations to balance their scales, and gave an everyday context to their learning. So too did activities in the 'Farm Shop', where the theme was maintained. Well-timed interventions and questions from adults focused closely on building up the concepts and language of *heavier than* and *lighter than*. Children were generally at the early stage of talking about what was happening, but they were closely focused on making their scales balance. They took great care in selecting suitable vegetables and clearly understood the purpose of their task. During number work children count, add and subtract up to ten with familiar objects, matching milk cartons to cups, for example, and record the number of fruit they need on their snack list. Work on shape and pattern was skilfully followed through during a dance session.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### Commentary

43. Some work in this area of learning was seen during the inspection, related to science activities about freezing and melting. The children froze little toys in blocks of ice, and this created a lively interest in the task. Once again, children's ideas were sought and reinforced by staff through constant conversation and questioning. This approach prompted children to give some relatively detailed description of what had happened to the ice when they added salt. A story program was in use on the computer, and one child confidently used the mouse to 'click' on icons and select simple options.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good** overall, but the school cannot always be flexible about the use of the outdoor play area.

### Commentary

44. One session of physical activity was seen during the inspection and this was well taught. The most effective features of the lesson were those that helped the children to achieve well in other areas of learning. In this context children clearly showed their familiarity with routines and with expectations of good behaviour. Their good behaviour created a well-ordered session in which they successfully experimented with different movements and gestures. Some more able children moved with confidence, but some lower attainers were more hesitant. There are plenty of resources and activities to develop finer physical skills, and children use equipment confidently and correctly, for example in their work in art. The reception classes share their playground space with the pre-school unit. As a result, staff cannot always be flexible about when children can play and work outside. Children now benefit from the use of wheeled toys in this area and from some imaginative touches, such as the miniature train, but they do not have access to any climbing apparatus.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### Commentary

45. Children performed well to music in the dance lesson described above, using their imagination and exploring in movement how they would carry a heavy tower of books around the hall. The children are taught Nursery rhymes and sing them confidently and with enjoyment. They are also encouraged to be an appreciative audience when others perform little plays in the puppet theatre, and they applaud the performance. Only a limited amount of art and design work was seen. Children were enjoying making 'splatter' pictures and described how they 'flicked' the paint.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good leadership, which has led to significant improvements, particularly in writing.
- A good curriculum, with an effective focus on improving pupils' phonic knowledge.
- The limited attention given to extending pupils' understanding of the books they read and to research skills.
- Not enough opportunity for the subject leader to monitor lessons in order to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school.

#### Commentary

46. Successful use has been made of the school's performance data to focus attention on those aspects of English most urgently needing attention: in the first instance, this has been performance in writing. Importantly, improvements to assessment and target setting have increased teachers' understanding of pupils' relative strengths and weaknesses and of what they must do next to improve. The effectiveness of the school's effort to improve standards is proven by the significant proportion of Year 2 pupils who gained the higher Level 3 in the recent national tests (2003). Attainment in the present Year 2 reflects this improved picture, with writing standards for these pupils likely to be above national expectations by the end of the academic year. The school has now turned its attention to reading, but improvements are too early to have had the same strong impact on standards as has been the case with writing.

47. The school's assessment information shows examples of good progress, for example in Years 1 and 2 during last year, and these have contributed to pupils' overall satisfactory achievement. Inspection evidence indicates that Year 4 pupils are making at least sound progress this term, although their background of underachievement still inhibits their attainment. Consequently, standards in writing in this year group remain below those expected nationally, although attainment is just in line with expectations for reading and broadly in line with them in speaking and listening skills. Analysis of data suggests that girls continued to outperform boys last year, but there was no significant evidence of this discrepancy during this inspection. Pupils with special educational needs also make sound progress, as they often have close support in small groups, or individually, during lessons.

48. Despite speaking and listening skills being broadly similar to national expectations, and some higher attaining pupils who are articulate speakers, there is a significant proportion of pupils who have difficulty in explaining ideas clearly. This shortcoming has an effect upon the quality of writing and pupils' response to literature, and the school has responded vigorously to these areas of weakness. Over the last eighteen months, the subject leader has been at the forefront of creating a varied English curriculum and giving intensive individual support to teachers (where necessary) with planning. Attention to more technical aspects, such as handwriting, punctuation and phonic skills, has been maintained and strengthened. As a result, more able Year 2 pupils, for example,

- have well-formed joined handwriting;
- use more sophisticated punctuation, such as speech marks, accurately;
- spell most words correctly.

49. Across all ability groups, even when words are not accurately spelt, the attempt is generally phonetically plausible. However, conspicuous emphasis is now also given to extending pupils' range of vocabulary and to strategies for creating interest and fluency. Writing frameworks are also used to guide and focus pupils' work. The effectiveness of these new strategies was particularly

demonstrated in one very successful lesson with Year 1 pupils. During their lesson the previous day these pupils had completed diagrams to show the sequence of the story. This enabled them to focus exclusively on the story's beginning, as instructed, and not stray into subsequent events. They were actively encouraged to use different sentences to start their story, and consequently the completed work showed a very good range of ideas.

50. The school's emphasis on teaching phonic knowledge has also had a valuable impact on reading and, as a result, most pupils read accurately. However, high attainment is inhibited because pupils do not have enough experience of, for example, exploring and discussing texts, or using books and computers to look for information. Many pupils also need these activities because they have a limited experienced of reading a wide range of literature. The school has identified this weakness and is already tackling it in lessons and through group reading sessions, although the quality of this work is variable at present and there is too great an emphasis on the use of schemed material. Once again, the subject leader is taking a central role in directing the content of group sessions and in training staff to use them effectively. In her own group lesson at Year 2, pupils were locating information in the text to answer simple questions, and were using methods other than phonic cues to read unfamiliar words. In another lesson at Year 4, pupils were accurately identifying examples of the use of instructional features within a good range of challenging texts.

51. The subject leader is very knowledgeable about standards and achievement throughout the school, but has less information about the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and reading sessions. This is because she has not yet had the opportunity to monitor performance in lessons, although time is planned for her to do so soon. She is therefore not at present able to give individual teachers specific feedback, guidance and support. This lack of opportunity is significant because teaching and learning, although satisfactory overall, are inconsistent in quality across the school. In contrast to the situation at the last inspection, however, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In the very best lessons, such as the one mentioned above, the vigour and imagination of teachers easily captivate pupils' attention and motivate them to start their activities swiftly and work hard. In another particularly successful lesson, in Year 3, pupils were responsive and lively because questioning, activities and interventions from the class teacher were both challenging and supportive. In these lessons there is a palpable 'buzz' and industriousness which result in very good learning. Confident teaching of the more restless Year 4 group also enables these pupils to make good progress in lessons. Where pupils make sound rather than good or very good gains in learning, teaching is less confident, and pupils' ideas and enthusiasm are not given enough space either to be aired or developed. In these lessons, discussion and questioning tend to be general rather than sharply focused or probing.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

52. Generally, the use of language and literature across the curriculum is sound, although it is prevented from being any better at present because the school has yet to turn its attention to reviewing the curriculum for subjects in addition to the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT. Opportunities are satisfactorily used in ICT, history and religious education, for example. There are also satisfactory opportunities overall in lessons to discuss and listen to others, and a future focus of strategic planning for the subject is to develop this aspect of the curriculum more formally and fully. Where speaking and listening skills were particularly well targeted, teachers used probing questions to help pupils express ideas, or introduced role play activities.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good tracking systems for assessing progress.
- Work set for higher attainers is not always matched to need, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Too little use of information technology to support and enhance learning.
- Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

### Commentary

53. The teaching of mathematics is a current school priority. A number of measures have already been taken to improve provision, increase achievement and raise standards. The success of these innovations is to be seen in the larger proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in the latest (2003) Year 2 national tests than in the tests of the previous year. The school's assessment information indicates that progress is increasing, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and several factors have contributed to this improvement. For example, the overall quality of teaching is now satisfactory and, unlike the findings of the school's last inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Improvements to teaching and greater stability in staffing creates a good climate for learning and an improvement in mathematical skills. Leadership of the subject has also been strengthened by the recent appointment of a teacher with responsibility for mathematics in Years 3 and 4, although there has been limited opportunity as yet for the co-ordinators to monitor lessons and spread good practice.

54. However, development in mathematics is not as far advanced as it is in writing, for example, and there are several factors currently impeding the increase of achievement beyond its overall satisfactory level. While Year 2 pupils are likely to meet national expectations by the end of this school year, pupils in Year 4 are still recovering from slow progress made in earlier years, and their attainment is likely to be below the expected level. In this year group there is a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties who are struggling to understand the four rules of number, and this affects their ability to make number statements and to solve problems. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported, but not consistently, and this variation means that they cannot always get the help they need to move on. Overall, progress and achievement for Year 4 pupils are just satisfactory. The lack of some basic knowledge and understanding also restricts the progress of Year 2 pupils; for example, number bonds are not securely known and this holds back progress in solving simple number problems.

55. Examples of good teaching were found at both key stages but significantly, and in contrast with English and science, no very good teaching and learning was seen during this inspection. Where mathematics is taught well, relationships are good and pupils are constantly encouraged to learn. Pupils who are struggling with basic ideas benefit when they are able to see and touch number. The use of a large dice with Year 2 pupils, for example, enabled them to understand odd and even numbers more clearly.

56. Teachers question pupils well and give them time to think before answering, but the mental work that should alert them to the demands of the main body of the lesson is sometimes not quite crisp enough to command and sustain attention. Overall, however, pupils are managed well and good behaviour is expected. As a result, pupils rarely disappoint and when they do the error of their ways is swiftly pointed out. Teachers employ a good 'tracking' system in mathematics that enables them to see exactly the progress made by individual pupils. These results are used to help plan lessons. Pupils have an opportunity to try out computer skills in lessons designed for the purpose,



but there is very little use of the computer in classroom numeracy lessons. This is a weakness. Lesson content is usually matched to need, but there are examples of high attaining pupils not being challenged enough by activities, or spending time completing work in which they are already competent, particularly in Years 3 and 4.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

57. At present the use and development of number skills in other subjects is sound, but it is dependent upon individual teachers rather than systematically planned. Evidence of the use of mathematics was found in several other subjects. For example,

- in history, pupils used a time line to plot historical events;
- in science, pupils used standard measures to prepare for experiments and to record results;
- in art and design, pupils used their knowledge of symmetry to design and create patterns;
- in information technology, older pupils were able to read numbers correctly from a database.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching and learning.
- A clear focus on teaching scientific enquiry skills.
- Not enough monitoring of teaching and learning.

### Commentary

58. In order to improve pupils' achievement in science, the school has focused on increasing the extent to which pupils learn about science through practical and investigative tasks. Pupils really enjoy this approach, and it motivates and challenges all ability levels, including the more able. Teaching and learning have benefited from this improvement, and are now good overall, with a range from satisfactory to very good. Inspection evidence indicates that the cumulative effect of these factors is beginning to increase achievement from its present satisfactory level. Standards, too, are improving, with pupils in Years 2 and 4 currently attaining in line with national expectations.

59. Examples of the impact of the school's new approach were particularly well illustrated in the one very good lesson in Year 1, on the subject of light and dark. This lesson was introduced very successfully by the teacher, who encouraged pupils to ask questions about their learning, such as *'What would you like to learn about light'* and *'What would you like me to teach you?'* She used a range of exciting activities, with an imaginative use of resources, and these factors motivated and interested pupils very well. This skilful preparation for subsequent discussion enabled pupils to hypothesise thoughtfully (and with excitement) about the likely outcome of planned experiments, where they would be using torches in the dark during a later visit to the school field.

60. Teaching in science is good overall. Good relationships with pupils give them the confidence to explore and try out ideas. This was true of a Year 4 lesson, where the teacher's good relationships with the pupils ensured that they responded to her questions enthusiastically. By the end of this lesson, pupils had gained a good understanding, through practical investigation, that the sense of touch is not a very accurate way of measuring temperature. This meant that they were consequently well primed for the follow-up lesson, planned to cover the use of appropriate equipment to measure accurately.

61. Adults work hard to ensure that those pupils with the highest level of special educational need are wholly included in all activities, and other pupils with special educational needs are also supported appropriately in lessons. The quality of support given by teaching assistants varies, but it is frequently good where the teacher provides clear guidance as to the role of the assistant. The subject-co-ordinator, although very new to the role, has written a development plan for the subject and has looked at the quality of pupils' work. She clearly understands the need to get into classrooms as soon as possible to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, but has not yet had this opportunity. No evidence was gained of the use of ICT in science lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Good levels of improvement to the subject since the school was last inspected.
- Too little systematic planning for the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Limited monitoring of teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

62. The judgement about provision is the same as that made at the time of the last inspection, namely that it is satisfactory. This position has been well maintained when account is taken of the significant advances in the subject since that time and the greater expectations of pupils' knowledge and skills. The school has successfully kept pace with these rapid national improvements in a number of ways. Firstly, a scheme of work recommended for national use has been adopted and staff have been re-trained to increase teaching expertise. Resources have also been considerably extended with the installation of a suite of computers, the availability of an interactive white board and the recent purchase of laptop computers for more flexible use in classrooms. Pupils therefore continue to achieve satisfactorily, and standards are likely to be broadly similar to expectations by the end of the school year for pupils in Years 2 and 4.

63. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons ranged from good to satisfactory, and was satisfactory overall. Most teachers demonstrate a good level of confidence and subject knowledge, which are a product of recent in-service training and support. The impact of this improvement was evident, for example, in a good Year 1 lesson, where pupils were selecting and changing the size and style of fonts. Key strengths of this lesson were:

- very good links to previous learning;
- effective strategies for gaining pupils' attention and interest;
- clear learning intentions and expectations of what pupils should be able to do, including the more able.

These features gave the lesson pace and direction, and pupils made good gains in learning.

64. The school's ICT room is a valuable resource, particularly as it allows all classes to have two sessions of direct 'hands-on' experience each week. One of these directly targets work in English and mathematics, and the other focuses on topics in other subjects. Pupils frequently make very good progress in the initial stages of activities during these lessons, but teachers are often then challenged to give immediate assistance, or confirmation that what pupils have done is correct, when several pupils need this help at the same time. A number of lessons were observed where pupils had to wait several minutes for assistance and thus made limited headway in their learning during this time.

65. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory; the co-ordinator has introduced half-termly assessment lessons and end-of-unit record-keeping across the school but has not yet had the opportunity to observe teaching in other classrooms.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

66. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in a small number of lessons during the inspection. For example, the mobile set of laptop computers was in use during a very good religious education lesson in Year 2. In most lessons, however, the computer was switched off or unused. As yet, there is not enough whole school planning for the use of ICT across the curriculum, and the effect is that its use in other subjects varies from class to class. This weakness is due in part to the school's recognised need to look further at the development of subjects other than the core ones of English, mathematics and science.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

The provision for history is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- A good range of resources, including visits and visitors.
- Limited use of computer skills.
- Underdeveloped leadership and management.

### **Commentary**

67. Work in history is well supported by visits and the use of interesting and good quality resources. For example, Year 4 pupils had visited an open-air museum where they could see Tudor style housing, and Year 3 classrooms have stimulating displays of World War II artefacts, many of which have been loaned by parents. These features of the history curriculum play a significant part in pupils' overall satisfactory achievement, because they bring the subject to life and arouse pupils' interest. As a result, pupils in Years 2 and 4 are likely to achieve standards similar to national expectations by the end of the year, and similar to those found at the time of the last inspection.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but enhanced when resources and first-hand experience are skilfully used as a focus for discussion. For example, in a well-taught lesson in Year 1, pupils were fascinated by photographs of Victorian life, and eager to express their ideas about them. Thoughtful and challenging questions drew out the differences between then and now, and how to recognise them, and the teacher put pupils through a quick 'drill' to illustrate school life at the time! There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use and develop literacy skills within the subject, but as yet this process relies too much on the initiative of individual teachers, and there is too little use of information technology to develop pupils' research and recording skills. A start has been made to developing the subject further; for example, a basic assessment system has been introduced, and will be used for the first time at the end of the current unit of work. However, the two members of staff jointly leading the subject are newly appointed to the responsibility and have not yet had the opportunity to monitor and evaluate standards and the quality of teaching.

## Geography

69. It was not possible to observe any lessons in geography. A small amount of pupils' work was looked at, together with displays in classrooms and school documentation. Discussions were held with one of the two subject leaders and with other teachers.

70. A nationally produced scheme of work is followed and an assessment system based on this scheme has been adopted. Assessment records and work produced by pupils indicate that standards achieved are close to national expectations. Teachers are using their own initiative to link work in geography with other subjects. In one class, for example, map-making of the school site was combined with work in science when the pupils were looking at different environments. However, the links with other areas of learning, and the use of computers to broaden and enrich pupils' learning, are underdeveloped. The subject is in the early stages of further development. Two members of staff have just taken on a shared responsibility for leading and managing the subject, and planned action to develop the subject further through training has yet to take place. Nor have the subject leaders had the chance to monitor and evaluate standards, achievement or the quality of teaching.

## Religious education

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A well planned multi-faith approach to the teaching of religious education.
- A good selection of resources that help pupils to learn.
- Too few opportunities to share good teaching practice.

## Commentary

71. By the end of the school year, it is likely that pupils in Years 2 and 4 will meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' achievement in this subject is satisfactory, including that of those pupils with special educational needs. Religious education is taught from a broad multi-faith perspective, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Consequently, by Year 4, pupils are beginning to understand the part that religion plays in the culture of different countries. They are also aware of the similarities between religions and the effect that people's beliefs have on the way they live. Future planning includes visits to places of worship that will further supplement pupils' understanding of religion.

72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but vary ; for example, one very good lesson was seen in Year 2, while others seen in Years 3 and 4 were satisfactory. In all lessons, pupils are well managed; relationships are good and adults value pupils' contributions. There are sometimes valuable links made with pupils' own experience. For example, in a lesson about the parable of the Prodigal Son, Year 3 pupils were encouraged to tell stories of their own misbehaviour, in order to grapple with the concept of forgiveness. However, few have a personal experience of religious practices that they can bring into class discussions and this sometimes inhibits their learning. Some Year 4 pupils had difficulty with reading information and therefore found it hard to absorb important facts about the five pillars of Islam. Discussion with a partner makes this process easier and more enjoyable, as does the good use of artefacts in other lessons. Resources have been greatly improved since the last inspection and they make a significant contribution to learning. In the one very good lesson, good use was made of new laptop resources to find information.

73. The subject is capably led. Lesson planning is monitored, but there are few observations of teaching, and good practice is not always shared. In some lessons, too much reliance is placed upon the written word and difficult concepts are not fully explained. Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory but it is not used consistently to help lesson planning.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

### **Art and design and design and technology**

Provision in art and design and design and technology is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

The role of the subject leader, which is underdeveloped.

#### **Commentary**

74. A small amount of teaching was seen in design and technology and this, together with evidence from pupils' work, indicates that pupils at Key Stage 1 achieve satisfactorily in this subject. By the end of the school year, pupils in Year 2 are likely to meet expected standards for their age. Because of timetabling arrangements, whereby units of work for design and technology and art and design are alternated, no teaching of art and design was seen and only a limited amount of completed work was available so close to the start of the school year. There was therefore not enough evidence to make judgements about standards or achievement for Year 4 pupils in design and technology, or for either Year 2 or Year 4 pupils in art and design.

75. Planning for both subjects is broadly based on nationally recommended schemes of work, and those lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 indicate that design and technology is satisfactorily taught overall in these year groups. Subject leaders are very new, both to the leadership role and to teaching. They have therefore yet to develop an informed view about standards or the quality of planning and teaching and to have an impact upon them.

### **Music**

The provision for music is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- The positive response of pupils.
- An enthusiastic and accomplished choir.
- The subject's good contribution to pupils' personal and cultural development.
- Not enough emphasis on some aspects of the subject, particularly composition.
- Too little assessment of pupils' progress to guide lesson planning.
- The lack of co-ordination for the subject.

#### **Commentary**

76. By the end of the school year it is likely that the attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 4 will match that expected nationally of pupils of a similar age. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and take a full part in all lessons and after-school activities. Extra activities enrich classroom experiences, and pupils who sing in the school choir, or play in the recorder groups, achieve well.

77. Music contributes much to the pupils' personal development, as it gives them opportunities to work closely and perform together. It also allows them to listen to music from different parts of the world and, in doing so, contributes to their cultural knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy music, and particularly singing. The merest hint of a rhythm sets feet tapping and they are particularly at home with action songs. Once they understand that making music is an activity in which they can all take part, pupils are imaginative, inventive and hardworking. For example, pupils in Year 3 sang increasingly complex rhythms in a wide range of differently pitched voices and took great pleasure in singing high and low and in a variety of accents, including that of a Dorset yokel. Year 4 pupils sang a spiritual song about freedom from slavery called 'Freedom over me', and accompanied their singing with percussion instruments. As there is no shortage of volunteers for the impromptu choir, the singing improved over the course of this lesson, so that the final performance properly conveyed the meaning of the song.

78. Overall, achievement in music is satisfactory. This is because less emphasis is placed on other aspects of the subject, such as composition. However, when pupils are given the opportunity to compose for themselves within the context of particularly stimulating and engaging teaching, they rise to the challenge. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils composed and played music for fireworks, ably and enthusiastically assisted by the teacher and four helpers, and achieved well above the expected standard.

79. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In all lessons, however, relationships are good and provide a relaxed climate for learning. Teachers join in and this gives the pupils confidence. Teachers are aware of what pupils know, understand and can do, but there is no formal record of pupils' progress to assist in planning future lessons. Pupils do not do enough written work to support their learning in the subject, although their compositions are kept for future use. At present, the co-ordination of music is in its early stages, so teachers have to rely upon a published scheme in combination with their own ingenuity.

## **Physical education**

The provision for physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Pupils' enjoyment of the subject.
- Good teaching and learning.
- The good range of after-school activities and sports fixtures.
- Too little monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

## **Commentary**

80. Physical education is enthusiastically led. As a result, the subject has a firm and popular place in the school's curriculum. A good range of after-school activities, including competitive games, very effectively supports pupils' work in lessons, and boys and girls alike eagerly take up these opportunities. The school has a strong local reputation for sportsmanship and good performance, and holds the Football Association Charter Mark and the Active Mark Sports Award.

81. Pupils really enjoy the subject and the challenge of physical exercise. This level of enthusiasm helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress and achieve well; standards are likely to meet those expected of pupils by the end of Years 2 and 4. All year groups have regular swimming sessions in the school's swimming pool and, as a result, most develop good confidence in the water. School records show that most pupils learn to swim by the end of Year 4.

82. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. All lessons begin with a rigorous warm-up and pupils are asked to talk about the benefits of exercise. Activities are imaginative and stimulating. For example, pupils in Year 1 looked at a painting by Kandinsky before their dance lesson. They were asked to imagine they were paintbrushes and invited to simulate the paintbrush as it moved over the canvas. In Year 4, pupils copied the movement of machines. One pupil performed a series of balletic movements to simulate a motor cycle running out of petrol. Teachers demonstrate what they want pupils to do and this gives the pupils the confidence to test their own skills. Pupils' behaviour and response are managed well, and there is a good balance between creativity and control. Lessons are safely conducted and pupils are praised for their best efforts. However, teaching is not monitored frequently enough for good practice to be identified and shared with other staff so that the subject is consistently well taught. Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, the potential of imaginative activities is not always used to the full, or pupils are not given enough opportunities to evaluate their performance in order to understand how they can improve.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

The provision for pupils' PSHE and citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Creative approaches are used to explore pupils' concerns.
- Planning does not yet fully support the exploration of difficult or specific issues or the systematic development of pupils' knowledge and understanding.

### **Commentary**

83. The school's caring and inclusive ethos forms an effective foundation for this area of its work. Specific time is allocated for teaching this aspect of learning, although teachers use it in different ways. The school has a deliberately flexible approach to the content of specific PSHE sessions so that teachers are able to deal with pupils' current concerns. There are occasions when such issues are dealt with creatively, particularly when pupils are encouraged to think about choices and responsibilities. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils were acting out the part of teachers dealing with imaginary quarrels in the playground. In another lesson, this time in Year 3, photographs of unknown people were used effectively to stimulate discussion about factors that influence our choice of friends. However, available resources and current planning do not fully support the teaching of such sensitive and difficult issues. Neither does planning ensure a systematic growth in pupils' personal and social skills, or their understanding and knowledge of specific issues such as drugs awareness. The co-ordinator for this curriculum area is new. She has made a start on developing the subject further, but has yet to carry out an audit to identify strengths and what needs to be tackled next.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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