

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JAMES C of E (VC) FIRST SCHOOL

Alderholt, Fordingbridge

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113752

Headteacher: Mrs Clare Tickel

Lead inspector: Mrs Kay Cornish

Dates of inspection: 7 – 10 June 2004

Inspection number: 257681

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: First
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 - 9
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 131

School address: Park Lane
Alderholt
Fordingbridge
Hampshire

Postcode: SP6 3AJ

Telephone number: 01425 653063
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Andy Coates

Date of previous inspection: May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St James' C of E (VC) First School for 131 boys and girls aged four to nine years serves a wide range of socio-economic circumstances but with mainly private housing. Pupils are taught in five classes with an average class size of 26. There are more boys than girls. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 23 per cent, which is above the national average. There are two pupils with statements of special educational need, which is at the national level. The eligibility for free school meals is 12 per cent and in line with the national average. No pupil speaks English as a second language at home. In 2002 to 2003 there were three exclusions; currently there are none. The attendance rate is close to England's average. Children are admitted into school in the autumn term of the year they reach the age of five. Their standards on entry are in line with the expected levels, but a small proportion is above. Pupils are taught in single-age classes. The school gives sensitive respect to the Christian ethos.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21080	Kay Cornish	Lead inspector	Art and Design Design and Technology English Music Physical Education Citizenship English as an additional language Special Educational Needs
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector	
31801	Yvonne Bacchetta	Team inspector	Geography History Information and Communication Technology Mathematics Religious Education Science Foundation stage

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St James C of E (VC) First School is a **very good** school where the promotion of learning and values are nurtured strongly. It is viewed highly by parents and pupils. Teaching is very good. Good standards are above the average and expected levels nationally in all subjects by the end of Year 4. There are very good leadership and management to promote enlightened change. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher has inspired good teamwork and flexible, effective management systems.
- Pupils' achievement is high in the Foundation Stage, in speaking, listening, reading and music; it is above the expected levels in most subjects.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunities and concern for the needs of individuals is excellent and has ensured very good relationships and an excellent ethos.
- Very good, talented teaching and the dedication of all staff, including assistants, have stimulated in pupils an excellent desire for learning.
- The promotion of pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is excellent and empowering.
- Governors' very good strategies for bringing about improvements have underpinned an excellent environment for learning.
- There are safety risks already identified by the governors, staff and specialists, which need to be resolved urgently by the local education authority.
- The recording of pupils' performances in science and information and communication technology (ICT) is insufficiently detailed.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made very good progress. The quality of teaching has improved. Standards of pupils' work have risen. Curricular planning has improved. Schemes of work and policies are successfully implemented for all subjects and aspects of the school's provision. The school received a Schools' Achievement Award in 2003 and an Investor in People Award in 2004. The weaknesses in ICT and design and technology have been rectified and turned into strengths.

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	C	A	A*
writing	B	A	A	A*
mathematics	A	C	A	A

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.

The above table shows a clear rise in standards over three years. The school performed very well in 2003 – in the top 5 per cent nationally as A* in reading and writing when compared with

similar schools. In 2002, there was a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and some staff illness, which has since stabilised. This was reflected in pupils' lower scores in 2002.

Currently, standards and achievement are good in all subjects apart from design and technology in Years 1 and 2, which is satisfactory. The trend on entry to the Foundation Stage is for children to have below the expected level of skills in language, creative and physical development, but skills in line with nationally expected levels in all other areas of learning. Currently, children in reception achieve very well in all areas of learning and are likely to exceed all the early learning goals by the beginning of Year 1. By the end of Year 4, standards in all subjects are now at least above the average or expected levels nationally. By the end of Year 2, standards are equally high. In Years 1 and 2, standards in design and technology are satisfactory and in line with expectations nationally. Standards in religious education are above the requirements of Dorset's Locally Agreed Syllabus. There are high standards, well above expectations, in speaking and listening, reading, music and personal, social, emotional development. Pupils' achievement is predominantly good, it is very good in the Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs show good learning in their individual targets due to their very good provision. Provision for gifted, talented and higher achieving pupils is challenging, ensuring that pupils excel in their particular strengths of sport and academic work. Good standards are linked closely to very good teaching and leadership and management.

The school's nurturing of pupils' personal qualities is excellent. Pupils are keen to come to school and their relationships with others are very good. Their behaviour is very good and they undertake work willingly and independently. Attendance is satisfactory for the age group. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**, whilst pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **very good** quality of education underpins pupils' very good learning. Teaching and learning are mainly very good, with three excellent lessons observed. The quality of the curriculum is very good, with very good opportunities for enrichment. There are good, inclusive opportunities to ensure that all pupils are focused on reaching their potential. However, the recording of pupils' performance in science and ICT is underdeveloped and is in need of improving. The staffing and accommodation are very good. Resources are good and have improved. Outdoor facilities for learning are excellent and used fully to promote enrichment, particularly in sport and creativity. The school's formal procedures that cover health, safety, welfare and care are very good and the school works very hard to ensure a safe environment. Safety issues have been notified to the governing body because the school requires the support of the local education authority to rectify this matter. The high quality of care, guidance and support given to pupils is supported by the very good partnerships with parents and community links. All combine to ensure that the commitment and concern for the needs of all individuals are excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher's purposeful and imaginative vision has inspired very good teamwork. Talented and hardworking staff share her vision and have helped to manage change efficiently and well. The chair of governors is highly effective and totally committed to his role. The governors' very good strategic planning has ensured a positive momentum for enlightened change. This has been well supported through very good

management of finances and efficient administration, despite acute difficulties with falling rolls. The governors are fully aware of safety risks connected to the school. The local education authority plans for action this year. The school complies fully with statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents, guardians and pupils are very positive about the school. Parents' and pupils' views have been sought, valued and acted upon with a high degree of co-operation. Many parents describe the school as 'fabulous'. They particularly like the caring and excellent ethos of the school, the high standards of teaching and learning, and the school's approachability. Parents speak enthusiastically of the strong community links. A few parents voiced concerned over lunchtime eating arrangements. Inspectors support their views. Pupils like school very much, the interesting lessons, activities and supportive staff. They state that:

"People are friendly and helpful. We are encouraged to use our reasoning. We use our resilience, so we don't give up. Sometimes we fall out, but we always make it up. There are no bullies in this school. You have to earn "Golden Time" by being good. You earn 5 minutes a time. If you haven't earned enough then you do work in part of the 'Golden Time'.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Through the support of the local education authority, take prompt action to resolve matters of safety as indicated to the school and the authority, and already identified by the governing body.
- Record more precisely pupils' performances in science and ICT.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

There are good standards, above the average or expected levels, in nearly all subjects. Standards in speaking and listening, reading, music and personal, social and health education are well above average or national expectations. Pupils' achievement is predominantly good; it is very good in the Foundation Stage. Standards in religious education are above the expected level of Dorset's Agreed Syllabus.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage receive very good support.
- Very good teaching of speaking, listening, reading, music and personal, social and health education, impacts strongly on pupils' standards.
- By the end of Years 2 and 4, standards in all subjects are mainly good and above the expected levels nationally.

Commentary

1. Trends over recent years show that children in the Foundation Stage start school with standards similar to those expected nationally for the age range. Current children in Reception achieve very well in all areas of learning, with excellent achievement in personal, social and emotional development, and are likely to exceed all the early learning goals. This overall very good achievement is due to very good teaching and provision.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.7 (16.6)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.3 (16.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.8 (16.9)	16.3 (14.5)

There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In 2004, by the end of Years 2 and 4, standards in all subjects are mainly good and above the expected levels nationally. There has been very good improvement in standards in Years 2 and 4 since the previous inspection, when standards in ICT and design and technology were below the nationally expected levels. Standards in all subjects are now at least above the levels expected. The one exception is in Year 2 design and technology standards, which are in line with national expectation, but strongly improving. Standards in speaking, listening, reading, music and personal, social and health education in Years 2 and 4 are well above average and the levels expected for the age range. This positive picture is due to very good teaching in these subjects, very good leadership and management, resources and enrichment activities. Overall, standards are well above average in English by the end of Years 2 and 4. Standards in mathematics and science are above average by the end of Years 2 and 4.
3. Over a period of three years, average scores in the National Curriculum assessments of

pupils in Year two in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national median for their age group. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' performances. The upward trend for all core subjects is above the national trend. An average points comparison in 2003 with Year 2 National Benchmarks for schools of similar backgrounds, reflects well above average scores in reading and writing in the top 5 per cent nationally. Scores in mathematics were well above average in 2003.

4. By the end of Year 4, well above average standards are reached in English. They are above average in mathematics and science. Above average standards are reached in all other subjects. Standards in religious education are above the expected requirements of Dorset's Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Over the past three years, there have been changes in staffing and leadership. All current staff have worked very hard as a team to introduce change and successfully raise standards.
5. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Very good procedures are implemented in order to ensure that pupils are very strongly supported and monitored so that they make overall good progress, particularly in English. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The teaching assistants are confident and innovative in their approaches to supporting both pupils and teachers, keeping very good notes to monitor achievement. Provision for gifted, talented and higher achieving pupils is challenging and ensures that pupils excel in their particular strengths of sport and academic work. Overall, the school has used assessment and evaluation well to identify correctly where there are standards in need of improvement, and these have been rectified.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils have **very good** attitudes to school, to their learning and in lessons. Behaviour is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**. Their spiritual moral and cultural development is **very good**. Pupils' spiritual development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils really enjoy coming to school and very enthusiastically engage in everything that goes on.
- Very good relationships permeate the school and help create a calm and purposeful environment.
- The pupils have a very good understanding of how they are expected to behave and strive very hard to achieve their weekly 'Golden Time'.
- Measures to promote attendance are good.
- Pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness are excellent.

Commentary

6. The pupils come into school eagerly each day because they are enthusiastic and excited about what they are going to be doing. In lessons, from reception upwards, the pupils show their enthusiasm by high levels of interest and concentration. They say how much they like school and talk enthusiastically about their lessons and other activities, such as the enrichment weeks that take place. The most recent one, the termly environment week,

was particularly enjoyed and the sculptures they made from wood and other materials add to the already attractive outside environment. The pupils delight in showing their family their school and are very proud to take part in events and productions.

7. Very good relationships develop across the whole school community. The pupils are encouraged to treat everyone with respect. In lessons they work very well together in groups or pairs whilst outside the classroom they play very well together, offering friendship to anyone looking lonely. The pupils are very well motivated because they feel very well supported by the adults. They feel safe in taking risks with their learning, knowing that they will not in any way be belittled, because the school's ethos promotes learning and values highly every individual. As a result the school has a very calm, but very purposeful atmosphere where learning is taking place because the pupils want to get on.
8. The behaviour of the pupils in lessons and around school is very good. They are fully aware of the school's expectations and all are anxious to gain 'Golden Time' because they really appreciate the mixed age activities that are available. The teachers use this desire well to encourage good behaviour in lessons. There have been no exclusions from school this year. However, last year the school had to exclude pupils as a very last resort. In these cases, either more appropriate provision was made for the pupils' education, or they have moved to their next school.
9. There is excellent commitment to promote equality and concern for the needs of individuals. As a result, the development of pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is excellent. The school's caring ethos strongly supports pupils' very good personal development.
10. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent and significantly nurtured through art, music, literature and collective worship, where many opportunities are given for reflection and the growth of personal insight. 'WOW' boards around the school celebrate pupils' personal achievements, which results in the raising of self-esteem and emotional confidence.
11. Provision for moral and social development is very good, with pupils appreciating the values of working together closely as a team. Pupils perform for elderly people and help to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves. In class, they are confident to discuss with others during 'circle' time any issues or concerns about school life, which results in very good tolerance and respect for one another.
12. Provision for pupils' cultural development has improved significantly since the previous inspection and it is now very good. There is very good preparation for living in a multi-cultural society. Through their studies of religious education, literature, geography, dance and art, pupils' awareness of minority ethnic groups is carefully nurtured. During the Arts Week, there was a good mix of cultural experiences, through visits from African and Indian dancers, which enabled pupils to participate actively in the enrichment of the exchange. In Year 4, racism has been discussed, generally, during 'circle' time. Overall, the quality of the aspect of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is all-embracing and empowering.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	127	3	
White – any other White background	1		
No ethnic group recorded	1		

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

13. Attendance is just below the average for primary schools, reflecting the higher incidences of childhood sickness in the younger pupils in First Schools. Although most parents are good about letting the school know their child is absent and the reason, the school is tightening up on its procedures. It is especially vigilant in checking that those pupils in Year 4 who have permission to come to school on their own arrive safely.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6%	School data	0.5%
National data (primary)	5.4%	National data	0.4%

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The **very good** quality of education underpins pupils' very good learning. Teaching and learning are mainly very good. Assessment of pupils' progress and achievement is good. The quality of the curriculum enrichment opportunities is very good. The accommodation and resources are mainly good. The school provides very good levels of care, support and guidance. There are very good links with parents, the community and with other schools and colleges. The manner in which the school seeks and acts on pupils' views is excellent.

Teaching and learning

The quality of **teaching is very good** and has a significant impact on pupils' **very good learning** and achievement over time. **Good assessment** is used well to monitor pupils' progress closely.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong expertise of teachers and their assistants is used positively for the benefit of all.
- There is very good encouragement and challenge given to pupils.
- Staff use a variety of interesting teaching methods to maintain pupils' concentration.
- Staff insist on high standards of behaviour.
- There is good assessment of individual pupils' needs.
- All staff work very hard, and successfully, to create a cohesive teaching team.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	13	7	4	0	0	0

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

14. Very good teaching was observed in most classes, particularly in the Foundation Stage, in English, science, music and physical education. Some excellent teaching was seen in the Foundation Stage and in science and music. A large proportion of teaching in lessons was very good. No lessons were unsatisfactory. Three lessons were excellent. This is a very positive picture and a strong improvement since the previous inspection, when there was some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 1 and 2.

15. Teachers have very good expertise for most of the subjects they teach. For example, expertise in music is used fully to improve the performance skills of a large number of pupils, with a skilled teacher teaching a wide range of year groups. Teachers with very good expertise, provide role-model lessons for the benefit of less confident teachers. The management of staff's professional development has focused on improving areas of uncertainty. Expertise from outside of the school has been bought in order to provide extra training for staff and pupils, as, for example, in physical education and design and technology. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and trained. Their skills are used extensively for the teaching of groups in literacy and numeracy lessons, and for special educational needs. This results in pupils' improving standards and their greater confidence.
16. Challenges given to pupils are mainly high. Teachers' targets for individual pupils are closely matched to their needs in literacy and numeracy. In enrichment activities, pupils are often challenged highly, as, for example, in dance, drama and solo performances for concerts. In music lessons, high challenges ensure that pupils reach high standards in musical appreciation and singing. Pupils in Year 4 pupils were challenged well in design and technology when they had to create imaginary eagles from wire, papier maché and innovative decoration. Teachers' high expectations result in improving pupils' skills and achievement in a range of subjects.
17. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches and methods to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. They ensure that there is sufficient time for the outcomes of lessons to be discussed during the feedback at the end of lessons. This gives pupils insight into their own progress and how they can improve. The very good encouragement of pupils is successful in promoting their very good attitudes to school and their enthusiasm for very good learning.
18. The very good management of behaviour has resulted in quiet concentration within lessons and sensible responses of pupils during sessions of exciting challenges. All staff have worked hard together to implement strategies for behaviour management consistently. This results in pupils being very clear about what is expected of them and which instances meet with their teachers' approval or not. Pupils respond with respect and consideration.
19. Assessment procedures are good and the information gathered is used comprehensively and well, in the main, to guide teachers' planning. The assessment calendar is well balanced for the year. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and targets for improvement are made and shared with pupils and parents or guardians. Pupils' own understanding of how they can improve is very good. Targets set for pupils with special educational needs are focused clearly on what pupils need to learn next and are fully supportive of their learning, particularly in reading and writing. The recording of the progress in reading and writing of pupils with special educational needs is very good, performed mainly by teaching assistants in close conjunction with teachers. All pupils' work is marked regularly. The best marking indicates clearly to pupils what they need to do next. Marking and the use of homework are generally good and help to improve pupils' accuracy and presentation of their recorded work.
20. The headteacher has taken an incisive lead in motivating and influencing all staff to work closely as a teaching team in order to provide good planning of the lessons, high quality teaching and very good support, overall.

21. The very good enrichment of the curriculum, as, for example, in teaching for performances of musical dramas, had led to pupils' improved speech and listening and an enthusiasm for the richness of the English language, as well as encouraging spiritual and emotional insight generally.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides a broad and relevant range of experiences and opportunities, and is **very good** overall. Provision for enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities are **very good**. Staffing and accommodation are **very good**. Resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A reflective and evaluative shared approach to planning has led to innovative curriculum development.
- Very good enrichment opportunities meet the needs of pupils very effectively.
- Planning for pupils' personal social and health education is comprehensive and good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- However, in one class the timetabling for religious education is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

22. The headteacher has inspired a whole-school approach to 'Excellence and Enjoyment' of the curriculum. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements and the breadth and quality has improved since the previous inspection.
23. The Foundation Stage curriculum is planned carefully to meet the needs of children so that it becomes more ordered with routines and includes their specific interests. Planning is reviewed effectively to meet the needs of individuals. Children, including those with special educational needs are very well prepared for the Year 1 National Curriculum subjects since they have every opportunity to progress and achieve beyond the Early Learning Goals.
24. Curriculum planning, in order to interrelate subjects, has managed to free up time for curriculum enrichment and to celebrate 'Golden Time'. Literacy and ICT time is used well to address other subjects. Links between history and geography, and religious education and geography and multicultural aspects in the arts and enrichment activities have improved the quality of the curriculum. The cohesive curriculum is planned well to ensure the progression of pupils' skills in each subject.
25. Curriculum planning is systematic and thorough. The headteacher monitors the quality of teachers' planning for progression in skills and purposeful learning to ensure consistency. There is whole-school involvement in identifying areas in need of improvement and evaluating the impact of planned actions for improvement in each subject which is raising standards in the school. Governors use their considerable expertise to help monitor the curriculum. Several contribute in practical ways to enrich pupils' opportunities.
26. The curriculum is enriched by inspiring pupils with wonder throughout subjects and by very good participation by all pupils in the arts and good variety of sporting activities. People in the school know they are valued by the leadership so work together as an effective team

which benefits pupils' learning. Teachers and support staff share teaching strengths for their professional development, which results in improved confidence and expertise. The curriculum has become more practical to appeal to different learning styles of boys and girls. Carefully selected educational visits and visitors and use of the school grounds raise pupils' standards in most subjects. Two environmental weeks each year are imaginative and exciting with very good links to minority and multi-ethnic communities in the UK and other countries. Timetabling for religious education in one class is unsatisfactory.

27. Teachers are well matched to their responsibilities. In classes where teaching is shared, there is good communication between teachers to ensure no loss of continuity in pupils' learning. There are good procedures for supporting new and qualified teachers. Numbers of support staff are sufficient and they are used efficiently to support pupils' learning. Gifted and talented pupils and pupils with special educational needs are identified early, and good additional provision is made for their needs. There are no pupils with English as an additional language in need of support at school.
28. The accommodation is very good and ensures the teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum. The office accommodation has been improved considerably, and an ICT suite is used extensively by all classes. The hall accommodates physical education lessons, assemblies and concerts adequately. However, inadequate storage in the hall limits the amount of dining tables which can be stored. This creates problems for dining arrangements and social development during lunchtimes. Outdoor facilities are excellent and used fully.
29. The school's resources are good and support the teaching and learning well. The school makes good use of the local education authority's hire facilities in literacy, history, geography and religious education.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **very good** provision, overall, to ensure the welfare, health, safety and care of its pupils. It provides **very good** support, advice and guidance. The systems to take the pupils' views into account are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils feel fully involved in school life because of its excellent systems that value very highly their views and opinions.
- Highly supportive relationships between the pupils and staff mean that individual needs are a very high priority.
- Formal health, safety, welfare and care procedures are very good; nevertheless, a concern has been notified to the governing body.
- The pupils settle into school quickly because of the very good induction they receive.

Commentary

30. The pupils love coming to school. This is due in part to the fact that they have a real say in what goes on. The school council meets weekly and involves all years, including reception. As the class representatives are changed every half term and there are discussions within classes about what should be and has been talked about at meetings, all the pupils are very effectively involved. This gives them a real and tangible feeling of

being part of the school. The decorating of the older pupils' toilets by parents over the Easter holidays was suggested by the council and the colour scheme decided by the pupils. The results are enthused about by them and they have written poems about the toilets which are to be mounted and hung there.

31. The pupils enjoy very good relationships with and the fullest support from the adults in school. The school uses the academic and pastoral information it has to ensure the pupils receive the support and guidance they need. For example, if some pupils all share a common need, but are in different classes, they will be drawn together to maximise the support they receive. Teaching assistants are well trained to target and support the needs of the pupils. Parents speak enthusiastically of the care their children receive, especially those who have specific medical needs.
32. The school works very hard to provide the pupils with a safe environment in which to learn and play. A concern within this has been notified to the governing body, because the school requires the help and support of the LEA to rectify this matter. Notwithstanding, the school's formal procedures that cover health, safety, welfare and care are very good. A very high priority is given, for example, to child protection and risk assessment. The welfare of the pupils is paramount and the first staff meeting of any year is dedicated to this issue. All first aid, risk assessment and drills together with appliance, equipment and apparatus checks are carried out as required.
33. New pupils settle into school very quickly. Those who start in reception make a number of visits and stays in the summer term at which the teachers are able to make assessments and find out about the children from their parents. Parents of pupils who started at other times are fulsome in their praise for how their children were helped to settle.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The parents are highly complimentary of the school.
- Very good links with parallel schools and the next schools help smooth the transition to the next stage of education.
- Expertise and support from the local and wider community is actively promoted by the school to the very good benefit of the pupils.

Commentary

34. Many parents describe the school as '*fabulous*'. Only two negative comments were made by parents about the school. One relates to a safety issue already covered. The other concerns the lunchtime arrangements, whereby pupils do not sit at tables, but on benches with their lunchboxes on their laps or more often on the floor next to them. The inspectors looked at this closely, and although on three of the days most pupils were able to use the picnic tables outside, the usual practice is seen as unsatisfactory on grounds of hygiene, as well as being a missed opportunity to extend further the pupils' social development and social etiquette. These apart, what comes across very strongly from parents is their regard for the caring and community ethos of the school, something which the inspection

team fully endorses. Very good teaching, good progress and the good personal development were some of the aspects identified by the parents as major strengths and all were confirmed by the team.

35. The parents find the school very approachable; the sharing of any concerns is encouraged so that any problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. The developed trust and good working relationship between home and school helps to promote good learning amongst the pupils because there is a consistent and informed approach. General information is very good and includes an attractive and easy to use web site. The quality of reports has improved since the previous inspection, but although they are now good overall, there is no indication in them on how a pupil is doing in relation to other pupils of the same age group nationally. Parents themselves help a lot at school, and the Friends of St James very actively support school through their frequent fund raising, which is much appreciated by the school.
36. Very good links with other schools within the local cluster have a very positive effect on the work of the school. Training days are organised for all the schools so that all pupils experience the same systems and methods. Curriculum links within the cluster help with sharing good practice and developing areas such as numeracy and literacy as well as sporting links. These very good links, together with specific activities and events, also help to smooth the transition to the middle school, an aspect which parents are very impressed and pleased about.
37. The parents speak enthusiastically of the strong community links that exist. These are very well illustrated by the way in which the whole community is working together to tackle the vandalism which the school sometimes has to endure. Members of the local community are actively encouraged to come into school to help; older people are often in school hearing the pupils read or talking about their experiences of life. A wide and varied range of visitors extend the pupils' learning opportunities. For example, local authors are invited to attend 'Arts Week', the police and nurse come and talk about health and safety as well as their jobs. The school is used by the local community for a number of activities, including recently by the church, for an Easter event attended by a large number of pupils from the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good** overall. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The leadership of other key staff is **good**. Governance of the school is **very good**. The effectiveness of management is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher has inspired very good teamwork.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunities and concern for the needs of individuals are excellent.
- Recording of pupils' progress in science and ICT is not precise enough.
- Governors' strategies for bringing about improvement are very good.
- There are safety issues already identified by the governors, staff and specialists, which need to be resolved urgently by the local education authority.
- The school's limited finances are, non-the-less, managed wisely.

Commentary

38. The headteacher has an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Her sense of purpose and imaginative vision are shared by all staff and governors. She has inspired strong teamwork and receives very good support from her dedicated deputy. There is good support from other key staff and subject leaders in their areas of responsibility. All subjects are led effectively. Monitoring is good, but the recording of pupils' performances in science and ICT is not as advanced as for other subjects, although it is at least satisfactory. Much hard work has been completed to improve the school's evaluation process, the whole curriculum, and assessment of pupils. In this, the school has been successful. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good through the very good training opportunities given to teaching assistants, resulting in their very good skills and record keeping.
39. There is excellent commitment to include all pupils in the school's activities. Governors and staff have ensured very good relationships and an excellent ethos. The promotion of pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is excellent and empowering. In such a climate for learning, all strive to maintain a positive momentum for enlightened change. The timescale since the formation of the school's team with its new leaders and governors has been short, barely three years, but much has been accomplished due to the collective vision to provide a high quality of education.
40. The school's self-evaluation procedures are very good and closely accurate. There is thorough monitoring of the school's whole performance and very good action taken to improve its effectiveness. Management systems are flexible and help to implement most effectively priorities made within the school's improvement plan. The chair of governors is highly effective and totally committed to his role. He ensures that all members of the governing body are provided with relevant information to become fully involved. New governors have received very good induction. Governors have close interest in the school and make very good contributions to monitoring the provision, visiting and supporting regularly. The key issues of the previous report have been rectified most successfully, with prior weaknesses now seen as strengths. The school complies fully with the Acts for Race Relations, Disability and Sexual Discrimination.
41. The governors are fully aware of safety risks connected to the school. They have gained the advice of appropriate specialists and notified their concerns to the local education authority. The local education authority plans for action by the end of 2004.
42. The financial management of the school is very good. There are clearly published terms of reference for the finance committee. There is regular monitoring and reporting of the school's budget planning. Expertise among governors and staff to manage financial delegation is good. Systems are closely linked to the local education authority's financial procedures. Accounts are audited regularly and there is correct reporting of the school fund's income and expenditure analysis.
43. However, due to the local education authority's county pattern of falling rolls, the school has suffered from an annual reducing budget over the recent years. Governors have taken the necessary decision to reduce staffing to match the numbers of pupils on roll and to protect the current pupil, teacher and adult ratios, which are good at present. The school has spent its budget totally on the pupils currently on roll, but there is capital balance left

for any likely building and premises costs and to protect the staff to pupil ratio. The school is hoping that, by newly locating the pre-school group on site, the main school numbers will rise again, which will impact on the school by raising the incoming budget. Parents and the community have been very successful in fund-raising. Very efficient school administration ensures that inventories are regularly updated and daily administration is secure. Issues from the previous audit have been rectified.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	354,964	Balance from previous year	NIL
Total expenditure	355,249	Balance carried forward to the next	-285
Expenditure per pupil	2,400		

NOTE – In addition to above, the school had a CAPITAL balance of £61,059 in 2002 to 2003 of which, Dorset Local Education Authority reclaimed £18,979 in the 2003/2004 financial year. Expenditure per pupil is well below the national average for First schools.

44. Improvements in leadership and management since the previous inspection are good. The quality of education now is very good. Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are very good. Pupils' overall achievement is good. The school's overall effectiveness is very good. There is an excellent ethos for learning. Value for money is very good.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and one of the strengths of the school. Children this year entered the reception class with average standards overall. Very good assessment of children's development is used sensitively to match activities to their needs through very effective planning. Children's progress is carefully monitored towards an end of year Foundation Stage Profile. Teachers emphasise the development of social and independence skills and create a very supportive, stimulating environment, which values all children and raises their confidence. High quality questioning challenges and extends all children's ideas and skills to enable them to achieve as well as they can. Standards are higher than those identified at the previous inspection and pupils' achievement is very good, with excellent achievement in personal, social and emotional development. They achieve very well in all the areas of learning because provision is managed most effectively. Overall the quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. There are 26 children in reception and 21 of them are boys. All make very good progress. Children with special educational needs are identified early. They make very good progress towards their individual targets.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- Children are very respectful of their teachers and recognise the feelings of others.
- They concentrate well and are very interested in activities offered.
- The well structured learning environment helps pupils gain in confidence.

Commentary

45. Children are warmly welcomed into school each day into a calm well prepared learning environment where they proudly show their parents their recent work on display. During 'circle time' and reflection time they readily take turns to speak. They show a high level of curiosity and interest about the natural world. Their behaviour is very good and they walk sensibly to assembly where they sit quietly showing sustained levels of concentration and behave very well. They take responsibility for their clothes when changing for physical activities and make choices during the imaginative and exciting activities offered during 'Let's Explore'. During a physical education lesson children could identify the feelings of characters from the tempo of the music.
46. Teachers provide many excellent opportunities for children to make independent choices within a carefully structured play environment. This results in excellent learning of personal and social skills. When playing in the courtyard children understand that activities take place in designated areas and try to stay there and collaborate well in independent activities such as in role play in the 'hospital' and when building with construction toys. When children entered the school they found it difficult to cope with choices of apparatus offered. The very well planned structured play and changes in planning in response to assessment of how pupils react has led to children's reaching standards above those

expected in their personal, social and emotional development. Their achievement from the time of entry to school is very good.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good emphasis is placed on speaking and listening and children's standards are above expected levels.
- Excellent reading procedures enable children to reach standards in reading above those expected.
- Very good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills result in children reaching standards that exceed the early learning goals.

Commentary

47. Half of the children enter the school as confident speakers. Most children are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the end of reception in speaking, listening and in reading. Emphasis is placed on speaking and listening with many opportunities for children to verbalise their thinking skills throughout all areas of learning. Activities are exciting and children develop their speaking and listening skills throughout all lessons when children are allowed time to reflect on and talk about their learning knowing their ideas are valued. In lessons children respond well to the high expectations of the teacher to explain clearly discoveries. Teachers encourage full sentences and this contributes positively to the above average standards.
48. The very good teaching of reading is imaginative and challenging, which results in very good learning. During guided reading sessions children recognise correctly words that rhyme and sometimes substitute another word which indicates how well they understand the text. They recognise the role of an author. They describe clearly the main characters, predict accurately what might happen next in a story and follow a text correctly when listening to a tape recorder. Effective use of Reading Logs, with detailed notes of children's next steps in learning and very good home learning activities, helps parents make a purposeful contribution to accelerate their child's progress.
49. Teachers ensure that there are many creative opportunities, which result in very confident mark making. The teaching of writing through role-play in a 'hospital' encourages writing in books, as do children's designs and instructions for brick building. A significant majority succeed in writing letters correctly and imitating sentences on a page. A quarter of the children are in line with level 1 of the National Curriculum. These children join their letters to write in sentences or when making long shopping lists. Very few children are below the early learning goals in reading and writing. Overall standards are above expectations in reading and writing and pupils' achievement is very good in all aspects of communication. Overall, the very good teaching of communication, language and literacy results in very good learning.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching makes learning exciting so that children are eager to learn.
- Children of all abilities are challenged well in order to develop their mathematical skills to reach their own potential.

Commentary

50. Teaching and learning are very good overall and excellent teaching was observed during inspection week. Clear explanations and very effective use of digit cards and different size and colour of pictures and shapes assist children to understand what they need to concentrate on. Sequential planning of activities that developed a specific idea over time and throughout a lesson accelerated children's learning. Effective links are made between the story 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' and ordinal numbers so that children order numbers correctly. Regular shapes of different colours have helped children recognise a repeating pattern. A very good balance of direct teaching and practical activities allows all children to achieve very well. Children confidently ask questions to ensure they understand tasks before they begin them.
51. A fifth of the children have reached the early stages of the national curriculum in their ability to add numbers and are beginning to recognise the place value of numbers beyond 20. Good opportunities are provided through creative work for pupils to understand ideas of shape by making caterpillars out of circles. The majority of children are likely to exceed the early learning goals well by the time they start in Year 1 and their achievement is very good.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-prepared structured first-hand experiences arouse pupils' curiosity about the natural world and as a result, they achieve very.
- Children respond well to high teaching expectations in technology.

Commentary

52. Children delight in recounting experiences of finding small animals in the school grounds and extend their understanding with very good support from a teaching assistant. They quickly learn about the natural world by setting off on forages around the school grounds armed with binoculars, collecting pots and sketch pads. Their own questions indicate what they wonder about such as 'Why do flowers have pollen?' after noticing a bee with a pollen sac, and these are written and displayed and discussed to extend their understanding of how they might use books to find out more. They remark sensitively on how the colour of leaves change in different seasons. All their comments and drawings reflect very good understanding about nature.
53. Children draw innovative designs, which they follow when building with a variety of bricks. They competently use computers in the suite to write sentences and know how to save their work into an on screen folder. Standards on entry were average and are set to exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning. Their achievement is very good as a result of very high teaching expectations.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children control the quality of their movements and use space confidently.
- They recognise that their heart beats faster after exercise.

Commentary

54. The teaching of physical development is very good and results in very good learning. Teaching challenges children to slow movement as much as possible so that they recognise the need to control their balance and 'step carefully into a space'. The few pupils who find difficulty with this are supported well by a teaching assistant. They respond well to the changes in the tempo of music when travelling in the hall, showing a good awareness of space and themselves. After exercise, they respond well to questioning explaining, their movements and how the music made them feel. They describe clearly how they feel hotter, and that their hearts beat faster. When these children entered school many would not engage in activities in the hall, but now they are much more confident.
55. Children use small tools, such as scissors, correctly to cut and shape card and other materials. Half of the pupils on entry found difficulty in using scissors. When playing in the courtyard they confine themselves well to the small spaces allocated for different play activities.
56. Children's achievement is very good and they are likely to exceed the early learning goals.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

- Adults frequently ask challenging questions and plan time carefully for children's to communicate ideas gained from practical activities.
- Children use a wide range of media and materials.

Commentary

57. Teaching of creative development is very good. This results in good, imaginative learning. Children explain clearly how their imaginative constructions of a 'sausage machine' works. They have very good recall, from a recent visit, of the features of a church. They engage well in imaginative role-play in the 'hospital', vigilantly overseen by a parent helper. Time is planned well during dance to allow children reflect on the mood of music which helps them match their movements to the music. They sing songs from memory during assembly and when accompanied by a guitar in class.
58. Work on display covers a wide range of media such as textured 2D and 3D models of houses displayed as a village, clay models of animals and their homes. Children's paintings are clear bold and expressive. They carefully colour pictures and select their own materials to make interesting patterns on butterfly wings. When exploring the school ground they use their sketch pads well to note observations. On entry to the school

children's creative development was considered to be below average and now it is above those described in the early learning goals. Their achievement is very good.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good teaching of speaking and listening skills.
- The teaching of reading is of a high quality.
- Writing tasks are challenging and interesting.
- There is very good leadership and management of the subject.

Commentary

59. Standards in English are a strength of the school and well above the national average overall by the end of Years 2 and 4. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. When current Year 4 pupils entered school as reception children, their language and communication skills were closely in line with the expected levels for the age range. Their achievement over time has been very good to reach the high standards they have now.
60. A similar picture exists in Year 2. National assessments of the school's Year 2 pupils in 2003 reflect well above average scores in reading and writing, both nationally and when compared with schools in similar areas. Taking the three years 2001 to 2003 together, the figures show that performances in reading and writing are well above the national median for the age range. The extra focus on improving reading since a dip in 2002, has been beneficial. Overall, standards are continuing to rise.
61. Speaking and listening skills are well above the national averages in each year group, due to very good teaching of this aspect of English. Pupils listen carefully to the teachers, adults and each other. They develop clear enunciation and understanding of conversations as, for example, when younger pupils discuss the School's Council matters whilst seated in a circle, or when older pupils reflect what creates a clear sense of place from a printed text and its illustrations. Many pupils are articulate, confident speakers, whether in a small group or in front of a larger audience. By the end of Year 4, pupils discuss many areas of learning with very good vocabulary and fluency of ideas, demonstrating a clearly expressed interchange of understanding.
62. Reading standards are very good. By the end of Years 2 and 4, they are well above the national averages for the age range, due to very good teaching and very good support from teaching assistants. Pupils' achievement from the point of entry is very good. Pupils read aloud enthusiastically with very good expression and full understanding of the printed word. A significant majority of pupils analyse the plot, characterisation and features of narration in stories with very good insight and vocabulary. Their prediction of events and awareness of recurrent themes by individual authors are very secure. Pupils have very good research skills, using content and index pages of books very confidently. Their skills using dictionaries by the end of Year 4 are quick and they are familiar with the layout of the school's library, using a simplified Dewey library classification most competently. Although pupils' ordering of the alphabet is very good, their knowledge about encyclopaedias is less advanced, which might be due to the location of encyclopaedias in

the school's central library, in an awkward position, behind a door held open at a thoroughfare between the hall and the ICT suite. This needs improvement. Pupils' knowledge of the sounds and combinations of letters is very good, as is the building of syllables and secure awareness of rhyming. In Years 3 and 4, the good reading skills of skimming and scanning help pupils significantly in their research of other subjects, such as science, geography and history.

63. As a result of good teaching of writing in each year group, pupils' writing standards are above the national average, and are rising. There is good teaching of handwriting, through a recently introduced scheme, resulting in pupils' improved joining of letters in a cursive style. Spelling standards are good for the age range and there is strong evidence of writing using complex sentence structures and very good vocabulary. The writing repertoire is broad, with good challenges for pupils to write expressively in their own full thoughts, using appropriate, correct connectives. Story writing reflects good understanding of a story's structure, good development of plot and interesting characterisation.
64. Higher achieving pupils in English achieve much higher levels of the National Curriculum than the age range requires, reflecting very good challenges. For example, in a discussion in Year 4 about a grandpa's views about God, gleaned from evidence of a text in a West Indian story 'My Grandpa and the Sea' by Katherine Orr, pupils show clearly their understanding of how a text can support ideas about a character. In addition, pupils demonstrate very good understanding of how metaphors can enrich pictures in the mind when they thoughtfully discuss excerpts from the book's text, such as 'sunshine pouring like a river of gold on the sea's surface'.
65. Pupils' use of grammar and punctuation is generally accurate and there is confident paragraphing emerging in Year 4. Poetry writing is developing well. Presentation of pupils' work for display is good, although its quality in workbooks is variable.
66. Leadership and management of English are very good. Data is analysed well to assess pupils' general performance in relation to strengths and weaknesses. This information is used effectively and progress is monitored on a regular basis so that teachers' setting of targets for individual pupils is challenging and exact. Whole-school planning is carefully monitored to ensure that coverage is according to statutory requirements. Well-balanced lesson plans ensure parity of opportunity and continuity and progression of pupils' skills from one year group to the next. Teachers' marking gives good guidance on how pupils can improve. Teaching assistants carry out the high quality of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs most efficiently. Their record keeping on pupils' progress is very good. There is good use of ICT to help pupils create text on screen and to modify their writing. In some lessons, the very good use of an interactive whiteboard and of computers in the ICT suite, improves pupils' reading strategies.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. Pupils are provided with a good range of activities in other subjects that help them to practise their language and literacy skills. Very good examples of evaluative writing are found in pupils' recorded work, such as in design and technology to explain how they created their imaginary eagles. Very good standards in reading help pupils to research other subjects through ICT. Targets written in all year groups consistently remind pupils to concentrate on improving their use of English in other subjects. Teachers take good care

to correct pupils' use of English in a range of subjects, helping them to improve their style and accuracy.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in their learning by the age of seven.
- The expertise and enthusiasm of teachers are very good.
- The good monitoring and evaluation by leaders correctly identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

Commentary

68. Standards are above the national average by the end of Years 2 and 4. They have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement by the age of seven is very good from the level which pupils were at when they began their schooling. Pupils' achievement is good for the current pupils in Year 4. The difference is due to changes in teachers and greater emphasis in recent years to raise standards, particularly in the practical experiences pupils in Years 1 and 2 receive. Therefore, pupils with better mathematical standards are moving through school and are likely to be performing at a well above average level by the time they leave in Year 4, if the momentum maintains due to the very good teaching.
69. The National Curriculum test results in 2003 show the school's standards as well above the national average. This reflects high challenges given by teachers to higher achieving pupils. Teachers have very good expertise and impart their knowledge with enthusiasm and patient, clear explanations. Teachers use practical resources well so that pupils' learning is secure before they attempt the higher levels of recording their calculations. Questioning is used to good effect so that pupils are encouraged to think creatively and to be confident when solving problems.
70. Teachers' planning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. All teachers have been fully trained in the National Numeracy Strategy and plans are closely linked to the strategy. As a result, teachers take good care to plan for the use of different strategies in solving problems. Teachers insist that pupils use precise mathematical language, which improves the clarity of pupils' thinking and explanations of processes. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils make good progress towards their targets, due to their good support.
71. There is good evaluation of the subject's strengths and weaknesses by the co-ordinator, supported by the headteacher. Although the co-ordinator is comparatively new to the role, she evaluates clearly the actions taken to improve the subject of mathematics. There is good monitoring of performance data, overall, and reviewing patterns of pupils' test results within year groups. This has resulted in greater emphasis on asking pupils to explain their thinking when they solve problems, and to look for patterns in graphs when handling data. Prior to the co-ordinator taking on the role, there have been good observations of lessons by the headteacher and advisers from the local education authority. Currently, there is a good initiative to put all the mathematical analyses on to a computer programme, but this

is still to be completely finalised ready for the next autumn term. Overall, leadership and management of the subject are good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. The use of numeracy across the curriculum is good. There are examples of mathematical skills being used effectively in science and in communicating information. During environment week pupils looked for mathematical shapes in the school grounds. In geography, they use computers to graph information on traffic surveys and of the most popular places for holidays as part of geography.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in their learning of science.
- Teachers plan constructive opportunities for pupils to plan investigations and look for patterns in their recordings of measurement.
- Teaching and learning create a sense of wonder and anticipation.
- Although monitoring of the subject's development is satisfactory, it could be better recorded.

Commentary

73. Standards are above the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 and there has been a significant improvement in pupils' enquiry skills since the previous inspection. Pupils' with special educational needs achieve well towards their individual targets. Higher achieving pupils are highly challenged and their success in the National Curriculum test results, with higher scores, reflects this. Pupils in each year group make good progress in understanding the importance of measurement in science when making comparisons. By the end of Year 4, pupils have good computer skills in reading data of their experiments about the effect of force on movement of an object. They make clear conclusions of changes in materials, and they classify animals correctly.
74. Overall, teaching observed during the inspection was very good. In one lesson, excellent teaching was seen. Teachers ensure a very good emphasis on planning practical and investigative activities. Very good links are made between poetry and of the wonder of creation and scientific findings. This stimulates pupils to appreciate the natural world, an appreciation which is further reinforced through collective worship. Teachers encourage pupils to raise their own questions in ways that can be investigated. Very good teaching encourages a sense of anticipation, which results in highly focused pupils, concentrating well through the lessons.
75. Teachers deploy their teaching assistants most effectively. They are skilled in asking relevant, changing questions and they record pupils' responses in detail. There is very good use of homework tasks to reinforce and extend learning. There is very good use of the beautiful, natural environment surrounding the school in order to raise pupils' awareness of nature. The wood surrounding the school is used well by pupils armed with magnifying glasses and sketchbooks, in search of fauna and flora, bugs and birds.

76. Staff work as a cohesive team, thinking through their evaluations of lessons and pupils' learning in order to plan further support and challenge. Monitoring of performance data of pupils' results, although satisfactory, could be better recorded. Effective plans are made to improve this aspect of monitoring and in the timetable of management, this is due for more detailed action in the autumn term 2004.
77. Overall, the leadership and management of the subject are good and have ensured a positive management of change over the past two years. There have been improved links with the Middle School. In-service training has helped to improve staff's expertise. There has been good enrichment of pupils' opportunities through visits to such places as Hengisbury Head, to experience pond-dipping. The headteacher and advisers from the local education authority have monitored teaching and learning well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of the good quality of teaching.
- Good use is made of the resources available.
- There is very good leadership of the subject.
- The recording of pupils' progress could be better.

Commentary

78. Standards are above national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 4 and pupils achieve well. An effective programme of staff training, the good use made of support staff and the development of the computer suite, have all made a major contribution to their good achievement and improvement in provision since the previous inspection. The suite is used extensively for whole class lessons. Lessons are well managed and teaching assistants focus carefully on noting how, for example, specific groups co-operate. The pace of lessons is sometimes hindered by the lack of a projected on-screen demonstration with time spent on the computer being reduced. Pupils make joint decisions in pairs, amicably when sharing a computer.
79. Most pupils have a computer at home, which contributes to their word processing skills. Pupils in Year 1 enjoy how quickly they can select a different on-screen book to read and how the spoken text helps them understand the story. Those in Year 2 explain how much easier it is to correct punctuation on the computer than with pencil and paper. They successfully write a simple program to control a programmable toy and research information about animals.
80. Pupils in Year 4 are quick to learn new programs since they concentrate and listen well, and teaching explains clearly and demonstrates procedures carefully. They transfer skills of raising 'Yes and No' questions in science to construct a branching key that would help another identify an animal. They display very good word processing skills when writing directly on to the screen and self correct their spelling. All classes have their own email address and send and or receive emails within the school and with a school in America. Working on a computer stimulates pupils with special educational needs since it improves the presentation of their work and raises their self-esteem.

81. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Emphasis is correctly placed on the development of pupils' communication skills. The co-ordinator has used her expertise to train colleagues in the use of an inter-active whiteboard. She has a clear action plan, which recognises the need to record more closely pupils' progress in all aspects of the subject. The governor for the subject shares in the school's awareness of how updated resources could further enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. Word processing is used well to write in most subjects. Good examples were seen in pupils' descriptive responses to a musical afternoon. Data handling programs are used effectively in science and geography. They generate imaginative designs in art and use a digital camera to capture their school day. Greater use could be made of computers for individual research in humanities and religious education.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported below. History and geography were sampled.

No lessons were observed in history or geography. From the overview of the curriculum, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils they have a good understanding of the relationship between history and geography. They clearly explain how conditions in the past affected how people lived and have a clear understanding of change and chronology. They have good research skills and have a secure understanding of how places develop and the inter-relationship between communities and how physical conditions affect people. Evidence suggests that standards are above national expectations in **history** and **geography**. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards were average by Year 2 and above in Year 4.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assemblies are mainly Christian and enhance pupils' spiritual development in an ethos of wonder and respect.
- Pupils' learning from Christian principles is evident throughout the school.
- Work is well presented with effective use of writing and drawing skills.
- There is very good leadership.

Commentary

83. Standards are above the requirements of the *Dorset Agreed Syllabus*, which is an improvement in standards by Year 2 that were judged average at the time of the last inspection. Achievement is good. As pupils become older they take greater responsibility in making choices. Pupils in Year 4 explain their positive thinking clearly. They suggest that caring attitudes are rules for life because 'God asks you to love others'. They say that their school is a Christian school but they respect people from other religions and appreciate that different religions can learn from each other. They have a good understanding of Jewish traditions and correctly describe the beliefs represented by symbols and recognise that several religions use light as a symbol for celebrations. By Year 2, pupils' think of God as someone who cares for and helps them with, for example, their fears. Previous work in Year 2 shows good understanding of Judaism and Christianity.
84. Pupils in Year 2 use good skills in writing, ICT and drawing to communicate events and their meaning. They use computers to draw a Jewish home and synagogue where 'prayer takes place.' Pupils in Year 4 use computers to write detailed recounts of parables which indicate a high level of interest and respect for the subject.
85. Teaching overall is good. Very good teaching observed was knowledgeable and created a reflective environment. As a result of effective use of visual resources, artefacts and practical activity pupils responded very well to the high challenge of recognising the purpose of 'mezuzah' for Jewish people and recorded what is important to them by making one. Pupils confidently share special moments that are celebrated in class on a 'WOW' board as well as in their own 'mezuzah'.
86. Spiritual awareness in assemblies is promoted equally by different members of staff and by the visits of representatives from the local churches . All contribute effectively in helping pupils gain a sense of the wonder of creation and to care for' St. James Wonderful Environment'. The leadership of the co-ordinator is very good. Her enthusiasm and search for different approaches in how to improve the multi-cultural celebration of faith and in raising staff knowledge of other main faiths have contributed strongly to whole-school development and raised standards in the school. However, in one class the timetabling for religious education is unsatisfactory. The school plans to change this. Resources have improved since the previous inspection. Displays, which include prayers and Christian symbols, reflect how inspirational the school is.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

During the inspection there was not sufficient evidence of teaching to report and evaluate fully on these subjects individually. Samples of pupils' work on display and in workbooks were scrutinised. Videos of musical performances of song practice were analysed. One music lesson and three physical education lessons were observed. In addition, discussions took place with subject leaders and pupils.

87. Evidence suggests that by the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils' standards in **art and design** are good and above the expected level. There are strengths in experimenting with line and colour. There has been good use made of the school's beautiful environment with its many varied trees on the campus, in order to enrich pupils' direct observations of nature. In Years 3 and 4, pupils use tone and shade maturely when printing with paint to give impressionist effects of flowers against undergrowth, and in painting landscapes of the school's wood. In each year group, pupils' close observational drawings are successfully

representational. In Year 2, there are particularly fine pictures of irises produced in the style of van Gogh, using paint, pastels and spatulas. Samples of work reflect the higher standards of talented pupils receiving good challenges. Pupils with special educational needs receive full opportunities to participate in a wide range of artistic activities and show good achievement. At the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils' work shows good improvement in art and design from the time of the previous inspection, when it was satisfactory.

88. The management of visitors to the school and visits out related to art and design has been good. Good leadership has ensured that art and design is successful in improving pupils' perception of the natural and artificially made world. Displays of pupils' work are imaginative and engaging. When the school held an arts week with a multi-cultural link, an Aboriginal artist visited to enrich pupils' experiences. In addition, the visits to Hengisbury Head stimulate pupils' artistic endeavours. Teachers plan for the use of a full range of different media. There are good links with other subjects, as demonstrated in pupils' own book illustrations and by their computer generated repeat patterns. From discussions with pupils, it is evident that art and design, as a subject, has contributed strongly to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Throughout the school, art and design is valued as an enlightening activity to communicate ideas and emotions in their visual form.
89. From an examination of teachers' planning of **design and technology**, pupils' designs, prototypes and evaluations of the objects they have made, there is good coverage of the National 'Curriculum and mainly good development of pupils' skills throughout each year group. Pupils' standards, by the end of Year 2, have been maintained as satisfactory since the time of the previous inspection and currently, they are in line with standards expected nationally. By the end of Year 4, pupils' standards are above the nationally expected levels. Designing skills, overall, are good, and have been reinforced in art and design lessons. Higher achieving pupils have produced items of high quality. Pupils with special educational needs produce articles of good quality which are mainly difficult to distinguish from the majority of work shown.
90. All year groups have benefited from the visit of a landscape sculptor. Pupils' work in the school's grounds demonstrates a good understanding of landscape sculpture using natural materials from the environment. Their efforts are aesthetically attractive and respected fully by all pupils when playing on the school's field. Teachers have planned the curriculum carefully to include a wide range of materials. Strengths of design and technology can be found in large-scale collages, such as of the 'Wonderful Environment of St James School', and of animals, reptiles, birds and seaside scenes. In the creation of collages, pupils show a good understanding of how different materials can be combined and joined together.
91. By the end of Year 2, pupils have been given opportunities to cut out materials from their designs and stitch them together when making hand puppets, or a coloured coat for 'Joseph'. They have made their own name panels from cross stitches on Binca. All these examples demonstrate satisfactory making skills, carefully planned for by teachers, to ensure steady progression of skills.
92. By the end of Year 4, pupils' achievement is good, with greater strengths in designing and evaluating emerging, as shown in pupils' analysis of different types of purses, their materials and properties. When creating their own designs for making a purse, pupils ask themselves what colour, sort, shape it will have and what materials would be needed to

make it. They have taken care to draw where a gusset would have been and what type of clasp, or pockets (transparent and other), the purse would have. There has been good use of clay for modelling, as well as wire and papier maché used skilfully in pupils' imaginative eagles. The eagles made by Year 4, under the guidance of the artist Peter Rush, are innovative and beautiful.

93. There are good resources for design and technology, with a well-equipped kitchen used by staff and visitors to support pupils' learning. The keen interest shown by pupils when they talk about their work reflects the good leadership and management of the subject and the pride pupils have over their completed objects.
94. From the analysis of teachers' planning in **music**, of pupils' singing, and evidence from videos of concerts and a lesson, there is very good coverage of the National Curriculum and very good enrichment. Pupils' achievement is very good and, by the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils are likely to reach standards well above the expected levels. This means that standards have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' confidence reflects very good teaching. Standards in singing are well above expected levels in each year group. Pupils bring colourful dynamics and texture to their singing. Singing is correctly pitched with very clear diction and pupils learn songs quickly, memorising a new melody easily. Rhythmic work is successfully developed. Pupils have a very good appreciation of how pitch, dynamics and tempo alter the mood of music.
95. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The planning is broad and balanced ensuring a clear progression of skills for all aspects of music in each year group. The use of visiting specialist teachers for teaching instrumentalists in brass and woodwind lifts standards. There is very good use of musical expertise of teachers and assistants to ensure standards and achievement are raised in each year group. Resources are particularly good and clearly help raise levels of achievement.
96. Visiting orchestras, such as those from Cranborne Middle School, Dorset Music Service and Queen Elizabeth College, have visited to enrich pupils' musical appreciation and encourage a lasting interest and continued expertise in music. The school is part of the local schools' 'Arts Alliance', which has enabled it to participate in a Wimborne Theatre as part of a combined concert in front of a live audience. A full range of religious festivals are celebrated at churches and schools. The school's concerts, such as 'The Peace Child' and 'Joseph' further enrich and extend pupils' very good equal opportunities. The activities on offer contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. St James School's lively provision ensures that music has a high profile and contributes strongly to pupils' very good achievement and to the very good links between the school and the community.
97. In **physical education**, only games lessons were observed during the inspection, and the quality teaching in these was very good. Evidence from planning shows a balanced coverage of all aspects of pupils' physical development. It is likely that pupils will reach standards above the expected levels by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils' good achievement and higher standards than expected, nationally, have been maintained since the previous inspection.
98. Gymnastics and dance take place regularly in a full-sized hall with very good facilities, which help to raise pupils' achievement. An arts week, with a multi-cultural link, provided input from an Aboriginal dancer and Indian dancers, which enriched pupils' experiences.

The excellent outdoor sports provision ensures a full range of team games for football, tag rugby, basketball, as well as for orienteering. There is safe, low apparatus for climbing and exploring. Due to the younger age range of the school and the distances in travel that would be required, swimming is not on the timetable. Athletics takes place during the fine weather which includes a Sports Day, in early September, on the large, flat sportsfield. All pupils have very good opportunities to participate fully in sporting activities. The provision is significantly enriched through very good links with local schools, with Fordingbridge Rugby Club and Bournemouth and Southampton Football Clubs, whose representatives have helped to coach pupils' skills. The full range of activities for physical development promotes strongly pupils' independence and personal and social skills. Good standards and very good enrichment are largely due to very good leadership and management of the subject, in addition to its very good overall resources.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school is a harmonious community in which all pupils are given equal status and show tolerance and respect for one another. Staff know pupils very well and through 'Circle Times' provide regular opportunities to discuss any concerns or school issues. Pupils speak highly about the support they receive from staff, and of the opportunities they have to show their sense of responsibility for others. Standards in personal, social and health education are well above the expected levels. From the lessons and assemblies observed, there has been insightful discussion about local and global events. Pupils are confident to give voice to their opinions and have learnt very well how to take turns in listening to others' viewpoints. The School's Council is well established and pupils regard it as a serious platform to air views and influence whole-school decisions. Minutes are kept and are available to all, whilst a School's Council Noticeboard serves to inform all pupils about matters discussed, or to invite pupils' concerns and suggestions.

Leadership and management for personal, social and health education and citizenship are very good. There is a very good scheme of work, arrived at after much discussion and hard work. It ensures a clear progression of ideas and tasks to develop pupils socially and emotionally, whilst heightening their awareness of healthy life-styles. There is a good multi-cultural link to ensure a lack of racism through the story 'Journey to Jo'burg'. 'Friendship Steps' and 'Buddy' partnerships across year groups increase pupils' sense of security and confidence at playtimes. 'Wow' Boards around the school celebrate pupils' personal achievements and do much to raise their self-esteem and spiritual and emotional insight. All pupils have been introduced to the page of 'Pupils' Rights' printed in the personal, social and health education policy, which includes such statements as:

I have a right to be safe in this room. This means that no one will hit me, push me, taunt me with words or hurt me in any way.

All other statutory requirements are met fully.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
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	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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

