

INSPECTION REPORT

ST STEPHENS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Saltash

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 111966

Headteacher: Mr W P Hewlett

Lead inspector: Mrs S J M Lacey

Dates of inspection: 6th – 8th October 2003

Inspection number: 257955

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	287
School address:	Long Park Road Saltash Cornwall
Postcode:	PL12 4AQ
Telephone number:	(01752) 843561
Fax number:	(01752) 849729
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss B Rosekilly
Date of previous inspection:	8 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is larger than most primary schools. Pupils come from a wide range of social, economic and academic backgrounds. About one per cent are from minority ethnic families. All pupils speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is below average. When children start school, their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide ranging, but in most years are a little below average for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Fifteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is below average. Ten of these pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is high. The majority of these pupils experience a range of learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the normal time is below average. In 2000, the school was given an ECO Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, science, geography, history, special educational needs
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30618	Paul Story	Team inspector	Mathematics, information communication technology, design and technology, physical education (PE)
31233	Liz Slater	Team inspector	English, religious education (RE)
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a very good school. Very clear leadership by the headteacher and senior staff helps staff to work together very well in the best interests of the pupils. Teaching is good, with some very good features, consequently pupils achieve well. Standards are rising and in most recent years have been well above average by the time pupils leave the school. **The school provides very good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Older pupils make very good progress and standards have been well above average in Year 6 national tests for several years.
- Excellent relationships between all members of the school community underpin pupils' success.
- Pupils are very positive about school and most behave very well.
- The headteacher and senior staff provide very clear leadership.
- The school is very well organised and runs very efficiently.
- Staff are committed to providing for the differing needs of all pupils.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of sporting activities.

The school has moved forward well since its last inspection in 1998, when it was found to be a good school. Standards have risen in Year 6 national tests and are now beginning to rise in Year 2 tests as well, because staff are expecting more of pupils. The quality of teaching has improved and the school has maintained and developed its overall provision for pupils' education. Two of the points for improvement from the last inspection have been tackled very successfully and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are rising as a consequence of very good attention to this area. An outside, enclosed area has been developed for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Satisfactory improvement has been made in developing the book provision, which was also an area highlighted for development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and do very well in Years 5 and 6. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most attain the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception in their personal, social, emotional, physical and creative development, as well as in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In recent years, some children have not done as well in the areas of communication, language, literacy and mathematics. This is related to their particular needs and not the school's provision. Currently, pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and standards are broadly average in all subjects. This has not been the case in the past and the school identified insufficient challenge as the reason for lower standards.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	B	B
mathematics	A	A*	A	A
science	B	B	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.*

This table indicates that standards have been well above average in most years in Year 6 national tests for English and mathematics, and above average in science. In 2001, standards in mathematics were very high and in the top five per cent of all schools. This reflects the very good

progress that pupils make, especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils at St Stephens do much better than their peers in similar schools. This year, the standards in 2003 tests are above average in English and well above average in mathematics. They are not as high in science because of the number of pupils with special educational needs in the year group, who find this subject difficult. In the current Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics and broadly average in science. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational need, make good progress because of the good support they are given. Their success reflects the school's attention to inclusion of all pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils' personal development is very good. Their social and moral qualities are particularly well developed, with their spiritual and cultural understanding good. Pupils are very positive about school and most behave very well. Attendance is broadly average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good education for pupils with some very good features. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6.

Teaching is at least good in all subjects, but pupils do better in English and mathematics because of the additional support provided in these areas. Consequently, pupils achieve well in all year groups and very well in Years 5 and 6. This has resulted in high standards by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils learn effectively because they trust and like their teachers, teaching assistants support them very effectively and work is challenging and interesting. Pupils' learning is supported well by good planning in all subjects, good personal and academic guidance, good support from home and good involvement with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Both the leadership and management of the school are very good.

The headteacher and senior staff have a very clear educational vision for the direction and work of the school and provide very good guidance for pupils, staff and governors. There are very good procedures underpinning the work of the school. The school is governed well, with some governors using their expertise very effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are positive about the school. Parents are happy with most areas of the school's work, with about a fifth raising concerns about information about their children's progress. The inspection found that the timing of the written report and subsequent discussions could be improved. A very small minority expressed concerns about homework and bullying. The inspection found no evidence to support these parents' worries. Staff do all they can to prevent bullying and deal with any incidents very carefully. Most pupils, particularly younger ones, enjoy school. All are very positive about the support they are given from staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no significant areas for development in the school. The school has in place a very sensible agenda for further improvement. This includes raising standards further in ICT and writing.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4. They achieve very well in Years 5 and 6. Standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science in most year groups and above average in English and mathematics in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been above and well above average in Year 6 national tests for several years.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make very good progress.
- Standards are rising in ICT and writing because of the school's efforts in these areas.
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs, higher attaining pupils and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well.

Commentary

Starting school

1. When children start school in the reception class, assessment data shows that their knowledge, skills and understanding are wide ranging. For the last few years, the overall profile has been a little below average, with some children having particular difficulties in the area of communication, language, literacy and numeracy. Last year, in the Foundation Stage, children made good progress and most reached the early learning goals in all areas of learning. This year, the group have settled into school well, with most set to reach the levels expected for their age by the end of the year.

School's results in national tests

2. Overall standards have risen in Year 2 and Year 6 national tests since the last inspection, with the improvement in Year 2 over the last two years. In Year 6, the improvement has been in line with the national trend. The tables below refer to the 2002 tests because national comparative data is not yet available for 2003 for individual schools.
3. The table below shows that in 2002 standards in Year 2 had improved but were below average in reading and mathematics and well below average in writing. Teacher assessments showed that standards in science were also below average. Standards improved in 2003 and are now average in writing and above average in reading and mathematics.
4. Standards are rising in Years 1 and 2 because:
 - Teachers are expecting more of pupils.
 - There is an increasing focus on helping pupils to work more independently.
 - Extra support is provided for pupils in the spring term.
 - The new co-ordinator provides a very clear lead to colleagues.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.4 (13.9)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.3 (11.4)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	16.0 (14.4)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The table below shows that in 2002 standards in Year 6 tests were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. There is every indication this year that standards are again above average in English, well above average in mathematics, but below average in science. This fall back is related to the proportion of pupils with special educational need in the year group.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 (28.7)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	28.8 (29.9)	26.7 (26.6)
science	30.1 (29.3)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. It is quite clear that, for several years, pupils have made very good progress between the Year 2 and Year 6 tests. The school's own analysis shows that pupils do particularly well in Years 5 and 6.

Inspection findings

The Foundation Stage

7. At the time of the inspection, children had been at school for just four weeks, some attending full-time and some for mornings only. They have settled happily into school life and achieve well in both classes. There is every indication that most will reach the goals expected for their age by the end of their reception year in all areas of learning because of the good provision for their learning. They are on line to exceed the expected goals in their physical development. A few children have difficulties in communicating clearly and are unlikely to meet the expected goals in communication, language, literacy and numeracy.

Years 1 and 2

8. Pupils achieve well because of the good and improving provision made for their development. This includes pupils with special educational needs, who are especially well supported by both teachers and teaching assistants. Higher attaining pupils also do well and Year 1 pupils respond especially well to the challenge of working with older pupils. Standards this year are currently broadly average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards were also broadly average in lessons seen in other subjects.

Years 3 to 6

9. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 and 4 and make very good strides in Years 5 and 6 because of very good teaching. All pupils are suitably challenged, including pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. Setting arrangements in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 enable all pupils to work to capacity, with more support available for pupils who need it. Standards are above average in English and mathematics and average in science and ICT. Standards were also broadly average in the few lessons seen in other subjects.

Whole school matters

10. The school is focusing on improving writing standards and these are beginning to rise. Overall pupils apply their literacy skills well in other subjects, especially the humanities. Sometimes the presentation of their work is not as good as it could be. Pupils also use their numeracy

skills to help them with work in science. ICT is another subject that the school is working hard and successfully to improve. Pupils' skills in ICT are sufficiently developed to enable them to use these in other subjects,

11. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational need, achieve well because of the good provision made for them. They receive good support in class, and a few pupils are given extra support in small, withdrawn groups, which is clearly focused on their assessed needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

This is a very strong area, which has been developed well since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' personal development is also very good overall. Their moral and social understanding and skills are very well developed and their spiritual and cultural development are good. Attendance is broadly average and satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have established an atmosphere of mutual trust, which underpins pupils' excellent relationships with other pupils and adults.
- Pupils' moral awareness is very good because staff provide very good role models and explain the difference between right from wrong clearly.
- Pupils' confidence, self-esteem, conduct and behaviour are very good because staff are encouraging and supportive.
- Pupils like coming to school and like learning because lessons are interesting.
- Pupils are very willing to take responsibility and show initiative because the school empowers them to do so in areas like 'peer mediation'.
- Pupils have a very good awareness of their social responsibility in the local community and the wider world and have developed a very high level of respect for others.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are fostered well.
- There is no significant weakness, but in a very few lessons, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop responsibility and independence, because work is unchallenging and they are not expected to contribute or talk to each other.

Attitudes, values and behaviour

12. Staff and pupils in the school work very well together. The school promotes good relationships and racial harmony very well indeed and has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour, with a clear behaviour policy and a good policy for promoting good race relations. The behaviour policy was developed in consultation with the whole school community, including pupils. These, together with the excellent role models provided by staff, form a very firm foundation for pupils' personal development.
13. Children settle very happily into school in the reception classes and this year most are well set to reach the goals for their personal, social and emotional development by the end of the year. Throughout the school, attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good. Pupils move with the minimum of disruption, responsibly and maturely, both within the classroom and around the school. Pupils enjoy break times and play well together. The introduction of peer mediators has been effective in providing support for pupils with disagreements. Pupils feel that this is a good arrangement. The dining hall is calm and orderly, with a civilised ambience, with pupils sitting where they wish. Even the youngest pupils pay for their lunches independently, giving them a practical, purposeful experience with money and an awareness of what it will buy. Although the pupils' questionnaire indicated that younger pupils were more positive about school than older ones, it is clear that all pupils are enthusiastic about school.

14. Some parents expressed concern about bullying. Although some younger pupils indicated worry about other pupils' behaviour in the pupils' questionnaire, the inspection team saw no aggressive or inappropriate behaviour. Discussions with pupils indicated that there was almost no bullying and the very few incidents that did occur were dealt with well. The school is almost entirely monocultural and takes sensible measures to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of a wide range of cultures. There have been two very minor racist incidents, which staff sorted out quickly. The table below shows that there have been no exclusions during the last year for any kind of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils who have identified emotional and behavioural difficulties are supported well by staff and this helps them to cope well in school.

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	288	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Personal development

15. The school puts the development of pupils' personal skills very high on the agenda. Activities are planned specifically to foster these skills. These are wide ranging and touch on aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These have a very positive impact on pupils' development.
16. Pupils' spiritual development is good and fostered by work in RE and assemblies particularly. Pupils' desire to learn and their interest in discovering the unknown, together with teachers' enthusiasm and interest, helps them to develop a sense of wonder.
17. Pupils' moral and social development is very good indeed. Work related to peer mediators and the School Council contribute very highly to both of these aspects. The 30 Year 5 and 6 peer mediators received three days' training and then presented the key aspects of the training to the staff. The School Council of six Year 6 pupils meets weekly, collecting issues for discussion from classes and suggestion boxes, and makes announcements in assembly, so that pupils are encouraged from an early age to consider issues that might be resolved or developed through discussion. The School Council discussions reflect a high level of awareness of the needs of others. The school is involved in a range of charitable activities, such as Red Nose Day, and a talent contest for Cancer Research. Clubs and activities are open to all and give pupils an opportunity to mix with pupils from a range of age groups. Pupils' responsibility and independence is strongly nurtured and encouraged by the school. For example, each class discusses and establishes its own class rules. New pupils starting school have a 'buddy' allocated as long as they need one for playtimes and lunchtime. The school is looking for ways to extend activities that carry and develop responsibility further for younger pupils. In some lessons they are not given enough independence.
18. Pupils' cultural development is good. The school has identified that the multicultural aspect is an area they wish to expand, and will shortly be taking part in a national pilot for developing multicultural education.

Attendance

19. Attendance is broadly average, but not as high as it was at the time of the last inspection. The Educational Welfare Officer keeps in close touch with the school to support them in improving this area. Parents and carers make good efforts to ensure the attendance of their children and that they are punctual.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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 school provides a good quality of education, with some very strong features. Teaching is good overall and ensures that pupils move forward well. The curriculum is interesting and enhanced by good links with the community and very good sporting provision. Pupils are well cared for and supported and the school works well in partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Good teaching throughout the school helps pupils to achieve well. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6 and this underpins older pupils' rapid progress. Good assessment procedures have been built on effectively since the time of the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good to excellent relationships between staff and pupils underpin learning.
- Very good support from teaching assistants helps all pupils achieve well, but especially those with special educational needs.
- Very strong teaching in Years 5 & 6 helps older pupils to make rapid progress.
- Senior staff lead the teaching and provide very good role models for colleagues.
- Interesting activities capture pupils' interest and imagination.
- Very good teamwork, especially in planning lessons.
- Very good use of specialist teachers to support staff and raise standards.
- In best lessons, good use of questioning, very good pace and very good subject knowledge helped pupils to move forward quickly.
- Teachers make good use of assessment when planning for needs of all pupils.
- There is lack of consistency in marking from class to class.
- Sometimes teachers spend too long talking and so time for pupils to be involved in active learning is limited.
- In a few classes pupils are not given enough independence.

Commentary

20. The table overleaf indicates the quality of teaching seen in lessons and marks good improvement since the last inspection, when there was a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching and not so many lessons of a good quality. The improvements have been most marked in Years 1 and 2, with stronger teaching beginning to drive up standards. Senior

teachers, who lead the work with pupils in reception to Year 2 and those in Years 3 to 6, provide very good role models for colleagues.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (9%)	6 (17%)	21 (62%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	0 (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.

Common strengths

21. There are some common strengths that underpin all of the teaching. These include excellent relationships between pupils and staff, which provide a very firm foundation for effective learning. Teaching assistants also make a very valuable contribution to the work in all classrooms. They provide particularly good support for pupils with special educational needs, who benefit from patient and focused encouragement. These pupils work on tasks modified to meet their particular needs and benefit from the school's inclusive approach. Good teamwork, especially in relation to planning lessons, means that pupils of the same age in parallel classes learn the same skills. Teachers also bring learning alive successfully by planning interesting activities that capture pupils' interest.

Features of the better lessons

22. In the very good and excellent lessons, several additional factors contributed to successful teaching and learning. Very effective questioning was often a feature of these lessons, with teachers challenging pupils to extend their thinking further. These sessions moved at a good pace, so that much was achieved and pupils made very good strides in their learning. Very good subject knowledge was also a characteristic of teachers' practice in these sessions. The school makes good use of teachers' strengths, with teachers of older pupils 'swapping' classes for ICT, music and RE, so that pupils' benefit from specialist expertise. This is especially so in music, where a specialist teacher is used to help develop staff confidence.

Example of outstanding practice

In order to raise all teachers' confidence in teaching music, the school buys in outside expertise so that staff benefit from observing excellent practice.

The wide variety of musical instruments on the carpet in front of the circle of eager pupils from Years 1 and 2 held out a promise of things to come. The exciting range of activities, subtly extending pupils' skills and understanding, quickly grabbed their attention. Simple demonstration on the violin of ostinato ensured rapid understanding of the term and clever questioning cleverly drew pupils' attention to the key points. 'Can you say which instrument plays this on the tape?' 'What number would it be best to count in?' 'Can you tell me what went wrong there?' There was excellent challenge for all pupils, with higher attaining pupils playing pitched instruments and the simple tune, while others played a steady beat with non-tuned percussion instruments. The combined result was taped so that pupils could evaluate their performance. All these factors combined to make an electric lesson where six year olds became a percussion band and learnt the art of working together.

Assessing pupils' progress

23. As at the time of the last inspection, there are good procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress. Teachers make good use of assessments to plan work for pupils of all abilities. Teachers in the Foundation Stage assess children in activities well and highlight any area of difficulty. In the rest of the school, pupils are regularly tested in English, mathematics

and science. These results and those of statutory tests are thoroughly analysed and recorded. The school has a clear view of how well pupils are doing and identifies areas of weakness. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked. This allows the school to compare the performance of individuals, cohorts and specific groups. On-going day-to-day assessments in all subjects are carefully recorded by teachers and used well by them to plan lessons. Various systems that involve pupils in target setting are being trialled in different classes. Indications are that when a consistent approach is adopted, pupils will have a clearer view of how they are doing and how to improve.

Consistency from class to class

24. There is some inconsistency in practice from class to class, especially in Years 1 and 2. The school is aware of this and has made improvements in this area during the last year. In some of the less successful lessons, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class and so pupils do not have sufficient time to spend on practical or written activities. In a few classes, pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to tackle tasks independently and so are quite reliant on adults for support. At times, it is essential that pupils do have an adult to guide them through a learning activity, but if this help is always a feature of the lesson, it means that pupils do not develop the capacity to think for themselves. There is a clear marking policy, but marking also varies from class to class. The most helpful marking seen was where teachers told pupils whether they had grasped what they had been taught in the lesson. A few parents felt that homework arrangements were inconsistent from class to class. This was not particularly evident during the inspection and the school is aware of the importance of ensuring that parents are clear about what is expected.

The curriculum

This school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that effectively supports pupils' intellectual, physical and personal growth. It has been developed well and improved since the last inspection, especially in relation to ensuring educational inclusion. A good range of visits, visitors, clubs and practical activities excite pupils' interest and bring the curriculum alive. Teachers and teaching assistants are deployed well to provide good, effective support for all pupils. Since the last inspection the attractive grounds and well-maintained building have been developed further. Resources have been supplemented and improved, especially in English, mathematics, science and ICT. In ICT they are now very good.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- A good curriculum relevant to pupils' needs and enlivened by visits, visitors and activities.
- A strong emphasis on numeracy and literacy.
- This is an inclusive school that works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity.
- There are a good range of clubs and a very strong competitive sports programme.
- There is continuing development and refinement of curricular planning with constructive links being made between subjects.
- There is good on-going development of the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

Planning for work in the Foundation Stage

25. National guidelines are used well to provide children in the Foundation Stage with an interesting and engaging range of learning activities that prepare them well for the next stage of learning. The creation of a secure outdoor area has widened the range of opportunities available and addressed a concern of the last inspection.

Planning for work in Years 1 to 6

26. The curriculum is firmly based on the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education. Collaborative planning and the use of a two-year cycle ensure pupils in the mixed age classes enjoy learning experiences suitable for their age. A strong programme of visits and visitors continues to be used well to make learning relevant. A wide range of clubs and success in sporting competitions extend this further. An annual residential visit in Year 6 provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development. Whole school theme weeks such as last summer's 'The Sea', provide good opportunities for the development of different subject skills in an interesting context. Parents are particularly positive about these weeks.
27. Good emphasis is placed on English and mathematics. Teachers make good use of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy as the basis for their planning. This, together with the use of catch-up programmes, ability grouping in lessons and setting in Years 5 and 6, effectively meets the needs of pupils of all abilities, including the gifted and talented, and those with special educational needs. The school's very strong commitment to ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all its pupils is an integral part of this approach and is evident throughout the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy skills are being effectively employed and developed in other subjects as pupils carry out tasks or read and record information. However, this not yet a consistent feature of the school's work.
28. In all other subjects, the school has successfully developed its own planning to suit the needs of its pupils. Teachers make good use of these plans when preparing their lessons. The school now plans to develop the creative aspect of its curriculum and increase links between subjects. It also hopes to strengthen and augment existing links with the local community school to better prepare older pupils for secondary education.

Development of accommodation

29. The school makes good use of its available space. The pleasant and extensive grounds have been imaginatively developed with a woodland walk, specialist play areas, sensory garden and ponds, all used well as part of pupils' learning experience. A number of specialist teaching areas, including two libraries and an ICT suite, have been created within the well-maintained buildings. Class book areas have been improved since the last inspection. However, space is restricted in some rooms and the school is considering how to improve this. The hall provides a pleasant environment for lunches and PE but is not large enough to accommodate the whole school comfortably for assemblies or other events.

Staffing

30. The school's experienced and dedicated teachers are deployed well to make best use of their relevant areas of expertise and deliver the planned curriculum. Teaching assistants all have sufficient skills and experience to undertake the roles they are assigned.

Resources

31. In all subjects, there are sufficient resources for pupils to learn effectively. Those for English, mathematics and science have all improved significantly since the last inspection. The suite, network and classroom computers mean that for ICT they are now very good.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for pupils very well and supports them effectively. It involves pupils very successfully in discussions about current provision and future developments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are safe and secure at school.
- Pupils are well supported in all areas of their personal, social and academic development.

- Pupils are involved in the work of the school, particularly through the School Council and peer mediation.

Commentary

Care and safety

32. This area has remained a strong one. St Stephens Community Primary School provides a very safe environment for its pupils. Staff are vigilant in their care for pupils' physical needs and safety. The school has effective procedures for child protection.

Personal and academic guidance

33. Staff give pupils good guidance in relation to both their personal and academic development. Pupils clearly feel that this is a particular strength and their questionnaire responses show that all feel there is an adult to turn to if they are worried at school. Staff know the pupils well and provide good informal guidance in the form of quiet encouragement and support through daily contact in the classroom. There are good structures in place to help pupils who need extra help to modify their behaviour. The school is trialling a range of procedures to help pupils move forward academically through the use of personal and group target setting. Support for pupils with special educational needs is particularly effective and a key factor in their good achievement. Staff prepare clear individual education plans for these pupils and review pupils' progress towards their targets regularly.

Involvement of pupils in the school's work

34. Older pupils particularly are involved well in the day-to-day running of the school as well as in plans for the future. All pupils are involved in daily administrative tasks, like taking the register and notes to the office. Older pupils assist in the office at lunchtimes and take on responsibility for peer mediation in the playground, which is proving very effective. The School Council is increasingly involved and consulted about new initiatives and is currently working with staff on developing playground equipment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents. Links with the local community are strong and the school also works well with early years providers and local schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents are pleased with the education provided by the school.
- The school involves parents well in their children's learning.
- The Friends group provide very good support for the school.
- The local community works well with the school, sometimes on joint ventures.
- There are good links with the pre-school, local schools and colleges.
- Written reports are sent out very late in the summer term so that parents do not always have the opportunity to discuss them with staff.

Commentary

Parents' involvement in the school

35. This area has been developed well since the last inspection and the school has effective links with parents. This good partnership is established early by the good procedures established for the induction of children into the Foundation Stage. For example, home visits by the teachers and assistants, which take place in the autumn term, are a very positive way to help

families and staff develop a good working relationship. Information sent to parents is clear and helpful, with useful displays for them in school to explain the work for the term. From time to time, the school runs special evenings about particular subjects and recently held a computer club for parents. Parents are generally very supportive of all that the school does for their children. The only significant concern is the information provided about their children's progress. This is, in part, related to the issue of the written reports in the last week of the summer term. Parents find there is sometimes insufficient opportunity to discuss these with the teachers. There are two formal opportunities to discuss pupils' progress and staff make themselves available for informal discussions at other times. The Friends Association works hard to raise funds and organise social events for the school and several parents help in school on a regular basis.

Links with the local community

36. The school has good links with the local community. The Rotary Club is very involved with the school, for example. They have been instrumental in helping the school to develop part of the grounds, now called 'the Rotary Garden'. The school is working with the Rotary Club to raise money for mosquito nets for villagers in Tanzania. Visitors from the community, such as the local vicar, enhance the community links.

Links with early years providers and other schools

37. The school has good links with the pre-school facility on the school's site and this helps children to settle easily into school. There are good links, too, with the community school, where most pupils transfer at 11. St Stephens welcomes students from the local college on work experience and also provides good support for students training to be teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The very effective leadership and management of the school provide a very good foundation for work in classrooms. Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is very good and the school is managed very well. The governance of the school is good, with some very strong features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and senior staff provide a very clear lead.
- All staff work very well together.
- The leadership and management of the work with pupils who have special educational needs is very effective.
- There is a constant striving to improve provision.
- Financial planning and management is very good.
- There is very good use of the monitoring of teaching and learning to drive the school forwards.
- There is very good use of governor expertise.
- It is not clear how written strategic plans for school improvement are to be evaluated.

Commentary

38. It is very clear that the strengths listed above have been key in raising pupils' achievement.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff

39. The headteacher provides a very clear lead for staff and governors. There is a constant focus on raising standards, which goes hand in hand with providing a broad education that enables pupils to develop as well-rounded people. Key elements in the headteacher's successful leadership include:

- Years of experience as a headteacher.
- A very clear vision for the future and the ability to share this with staff and governors.
- The capacity to enable staff and governors to make best use of their expertise.

The headteacher is supported very well by the deputy headteacher and the co-ordinator for work with pupils in reception to Year 2. These staff lead the teaching and provide very good role models for colleagues. The deputy headteacher has considerable expertise and experience and shoulders an onerous workload very effectively.

Good teamwork

40. The deputy headteacher and infant co-ordinator lead the two teaching teams. These meet together to plan work and to assess how well pupils are doing. This works very well, with teachers in parallel classes sharing expertise and ideas. The longer-established team working with older pupils has been very successful in driving up standards. In the last year, the new infant co-ordinator has worked very effectively with colleagues to raise standards in Years 1 and 2 by expecting more of pupils. Teaching assistants make a particularly good contribution and are involved well in the staff teams.

An inclusive school

41. All pupils are valued at St Stephens and staff are mindful of the needs of all pupils, including higher attaining pupils and those from minority ethnic groups. Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for. A very experienced and well-qualified teacher is responsible for managing the provision and does so very well. The school has ten pupils with statements of special educational need and all statutory requirements related to this provision are met. The school allocates additional funding to supplement the local authority's contribution. This means that these pupils have more support and make good progress.

Planning for improvement

42. Staff and governors are very clear about the school's priorities for improvement. Raising standards further is always on the agenda, with work on writing and ICT highlighted for the current year. Exciting steps to broaden and extend the curriculum are planned for next year as well as improvements to the building. The school's written improvement plan is satisfactory, but does not fully reflect the thinking and discussion that has contributed to it. It is made up of an overview as well as detailed action plans put together by subject co-ordinators. The overview is clear, but lacks information about the ways in which staff and governors can evaluate the success of new initiatives. Subject co-ordinators' plans provide detailed agendas for work in the current year.

Management

43. The school is managed very effectively. There are very clear procedures in place for all aspects of the school's work and this helps the school to run very smoothly. The headteacher, particularly, is very well organised. He is able to lay his hands on necessary information very quickly and, because he is not bogged down by paper work, focuses his attention on what is happening in classrooms.

Monitoring how well the school is doing

44. The monitoring of how well pupils are doing is very good and used well to highlight areas for development. The headteacher undertakes rigorous assessment of pupils' performance in national tests, for example, in order to tease out what needs improving. The overall monitoring of teaching is very well structured and is an integral part of the school's on-going professional development. It dovetails very well with the school's priorities for improvement, with staff working to improve their practice in areas highlighted for whole school development.

Financial management

45. The headteacher has particular strengths in financial planning and the school's budget is planned very well. The information in the table below indicates a ten per cent carry forward, which is some way above the five per cent recommended. This is a sensible measure taken to cushion the school against possible staff cut backs as a result of a falling roll brought about by lowering the number of pupils that St Stephens is allowed to admit year by year. The headteacher, senior staff and governors are careful to apply the four principles of best value in their spending decisions. They have introduced a fifth factor and are working on 'collaborating' in spending choices so that, where possible, they will join with another school to place larger orders and so reduce the cost.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	627, 607	Balance from previous year	83,531
Total expenditure	642,993	Balance carried forward to the next	68,444
Expenditure per pupil	2,179.63		

46. The office staff provide very good support and administrative procedures are very good. The two staff work in fairly cramped conditions, but there are plans to extend the office space.

Governance

47. The school is governed effectively. Governors are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide both suitable challenge and support for the headteacher and staff. There is a good range of expertise on the governing body, which the chair channels well in the best interest of the school. The chair of the finance committee, for example, uses her financial background very effectively to support the school. The governing body is very well managed by the chair, who has a background in education. A very good handbook, for example, sets out important information for governors very clearly. All statutory requirements are met.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children in the Foundation Stage start school in the September after their fourth birthday. Older children attend full-time and are in a class with Year 1 pupils. Younger ones are together in one class and attend mornings only until Christmas. This means that the staffing ratios are very good for the afternoons of the autumn term and provide some flexibility. Teachers use this well. They undertake home visits, for example, so that they can build good relationships with children and their carers. They also split the Year 1 and reception class so that the younger children work in a small group. Overall teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good and ensure that children achieve well. Children's skills, understanding and knowledge are wide ranging when they begin school, with a few pupils having particular difficulties in the area of communication, language, literacy and numeracy. They make good progress during their reception year and by the time that they begin in Year 1 most reach the goals expected for their age in all areas of learning, with a few children still a little behind in their early reading, writing and numeracy skills. There is every indication that this will be the case for children currently in the reception classes, with children doing better than expected in their physical development. Staff take care to identify pupils with special educational needs early and are already discussing the progress of a few pupils' with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). Staff in the Foundation Stage, including very effective teaching assistants, are part of the larger reception to Year 2 team. A member of the senior staff leads this very effectively. This area has moved forward well since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and there is now an enclosed outside area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Home visits contribute towards the good partnership between home and school.
- Clear routines help children to settle into school quickly.
- Staff are friendly and encouraging and this helps children feel secure.
- Staff have high expectations of children's good behaviour.
- Staff are very sensitive to children's individual needs.
- Older children are not always given enough opportunities to work independently.

Commentary

49. Children in both classes have already settled very quickly into school life and are happy and secure in their new environment. In conversation with staff, it is clear that these children have made good strides in this area since they started school. They behave very sensibly in the classrooms. They respond well to staff's requests and follow school conventions, such as putting up their hands to ask a question and 'lining up' to go to activities outside the classroom. They are beginning to work well together, co-operating when listening to tapes on headphones, for example, and sharing toys and equipment. They are interested in learning and are very positive about tasks that they undertake. Children achieve well because staff are very supportive and make it clear to children what is expected of them. Staff expect children to behave sensibly and give them timely reminders when it is necessary. They support very well, children who find mixing with others difficult and gently encourage them to take part in group activities. The good links formed during the home visits also help children to appreciate that their parents and teachers want them to do well. Teaching in this area is good overall, but currently staff do not provide sufficient opportunities for the older children to plan and work more independently.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills in pairs and class groups, especially in the younger children's class.
- Children are encouraged to enjoy books.
- Children take books home regularly to share with parents and carers.
- Phonic skills are taught systematically.
- Good attention is paid to helping children to form letters correctly.
- There are some opportunities to write for a purpose.

Commentary

50. Teaching and learning in this area are both good and children achieve well. There is a very wide range of ability, with a few children who find it hard to communicate. Overall standards are a little below average in this area. There is good attention paid to helping children to express themselves clearly. In one session seen, for example, children had to tell their partner and then the teacher what activity they had chosen to do. Sometimes the sessions on the carpet, listening to the teacher, are a little long and limit the time available for children to engage in practical activities and play. There is a good emphasis on encouraging children to enjoy books and stories. All are expected to take a book home to share with parents or carers, for example. The inside role-play area, shared by the two classes, is resourced to complement work on the class book 'Handa's Surprise' and provides good opportunities for children to 'act out' the story, which they do with enthusiasm. Teachers put a suitable emphasis on helping pupils to develop their phonic skills and children are building up their knowledge of initial sounds. Similarly, they are learning to form letters. Work from last year shows that children do have opportunities to write independently, but this was not observed during the inspection. There are materials available for children to use, but no designated writing areas for children to use during their 'choice' activities.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good concentration on number work.
- Good emphasis on language of mathematics.
- Good links with ICT.

Commentary

50. Only one mathematics session was seen during the inspection and in this children moved forward well because of good teaching. Older children worked with Year 1 pupils to programme a 'Roamer' (a programmable moving toy) to move forwards and turn. Most of these older children worked at levels expected for their age. They developed their skills in estimating distance and consolidated their awareness of directional language. Very good levels of adult support in this session helped all children to achieve well. Evidence from children's work last year indicates that most children understand numbers to ten, with some working beyond this by the end of the reception year. Most work seen was completed on worksheets, not always dated, which makes it more difficult for children to look back at what they have learnt. Overall attainment was slightly below average. In the classrooms, there are

displays and charts to help children to count and sequence numbers. During the inspection, children were not involved in singing or action number rhymes.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Interesting activities planned, including good use made of local area.
- Good use of ICT.

Commentary

51. Apart from work with the 'Roamer', no direct teaching and learning was observed in this area during the inspection. However, it is quite clear that interesting activities are planned and that teaching and learning are at least good. Very good use is made of the local area. A group of children visited the local shops during the inspection, for example, in order to find out more about buying and selling food. This very good concentration on first hand experiences helps children to be excited and interested about learning. Children are developing good ICT skills because opportunities are very well planned in all areas of the curriculum. Older children, using the 'Roamer', all successfully programmed in directions, for example and achieved well. Children learn how to operate the tape recorder in conjunction with the headphones and have the opportunity to work on the class computer. One boy observed confidently put together a complicated symmetrical pattern using a 'paint' programme.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high expectations of children's achievement.
- Good support from teaching assistants and helpers.

Commentary

52. Provision has improved in this area with the development of an enclosed outside area, shared with the pre-school facility on the school site. Staff also make very good use of the school playground and new climbing equipment for the younger children in whole class sessions. Teaching in these whole class sessions is very good overall, children achieve very well and do better than expected for their age. In one lesson seen, for example, children worked with bean bags and by the end of the session almost all pupils threw bean bags over their partner's head, about a third throwing over arm. They made very good strides because the teacher constantly challenged and encouraged them to do better. Children also have opportunities in free play to use wheeled toys and the climbing apparatus, which they do confidently with a good awareness of others. Within the classrooms, there is provision for children to develop their fine motor skills by using construction toys, scissors and other small tools. This was not observed during the inspection.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with stories.
- Good resources available for role-play.

Commentary

53. In the area of creative development, children were observed in role-play. Provision for this has improved since the last inspection. This is well structured and the teaching and learning in this area are good, with children reaching the levels expected for their age. There is a good balance between adult-directed role-play and independent activity. This is a key factor in their good achievement. In one outside session, for example, a teaching assistant worked with children on role-play related to 'Handa's Surprise'. She was very supportive and encouraged children to share their ideas well. Later in the week, the same children acted out the story independently in the inside role-play area. Children were not observed using paint or other materials imaginatively, or in any musical activity.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good** overall. The quality of the teaching and planning is good in Years 1 and 2 and, as a result, pupils achieve well, particularly in Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve very well overall because the quality of the teaching is very good and work is very well planned, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Standards are currently average in reading and writing in Year 2 and above average in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 6.
- Standards in writing and reading have improved in Year 2.
- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Planning is good and is regularly evaluated.
- Assessment is good and the school is continuing to develop this even further.
- Leadership and management of English are good and includes good monitoring procedures.
- Teachers are developing drama well to support pupils' confidence, and to develop speaking and listening further.
- There is currently a lack of consistency in teachers' approaches to marking pupils' written work and in presentation of work, which the school is working on.
- There is no clear handwriting programme with links to spelling patterns.
- Literacy skills are not taught explicitly in other subjects, for example, report writing or explanation writing.

Commentary

54. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced the National Literacy Strategy, and teaching approaches reflect this. Standards in writing are rising in Year 2 because the school identified particular areas that needed improvement and worked hard to tackle these. Improvement is evident in the national test results for Year 2 for 2003 in both writing and reading. This represents good progress from entry, when children did not do as well as their peers. Over the last few years, pupils have made very good progress in Years 5 and 6.

55. All groups of pupils, including boys, girls, pupils from minority ethnic groups, pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, achieve well in Years 1 to 4 and very well in Years 5 and 6. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, and every effort is made by staff to raise their attainment by carefully planned work, good support and encouragement. Good planning and careful deployment of teaching assistants support pupils very effectively in their mixed age groups and good arrangements for setting in Years 5 and 6 help pupils to achieve very well. Teaching assistants are also deployed well to teach additional National Literacy teaching programmes.
56. Overall standards in speaking and listening are above average throughout the school, with pupils of all ages explaining their work clearly to adults. By Year 6, pupils talk very confidently indeed to adults about aspects of the school. The recent developments in drama teaching also help pupils to develop as confident, effective communicators.
57. Pupils are enthusiastic about books and achieve well in reading. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 work through a published scheme, reading individually and in groups, and also have access to other books. Year 2 pupils' favourite authors include Roald Dahl and Dick King Smith, and Year 6 pupils talk knowledgeably about authors such as Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo. Teachers strongly encourage pupils throughout the school to read with parents and carers at home and this continual practice supports pupils' reading development very well. Pupils use a range of strategies to work out how to read words and sentences and most tackle new reading material confidently. Year 2 pupils understand how to use an information book, and pupils from Years 3 to 6 regularly use the Internet for research as well. The school has improved classroom reading areas since the last inspection, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The fiction books in Years 5 and 6 are well worn, but books in the two libraries are newer and more attractive.
58. The school has worked hard to raise standards in writing, particularly at Year 2. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching. Factors that have been instrumental in raising standards are:
- Support and advice from the Local Education Authority.
 - Identification of needs through monitoring of pupils' work, and lessons.
 - Use of drama as a basis for writing.
 - Time for pupils to reflect, plan, and discuss their work together.
 - Interesting writing tasks set, often linked to books pupils have been reading.
 - Opportunities to publish work in a form that others can share, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
 - Introduction of group and individual writing targets.
 - Opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own writing and identify how they can improve, for example, using writing 'toolkits'.
 - Using the plenary to evaluate what pupils have learnt.
 - Discussing with pupils the purpose of the lesson and asking them to record this.
 - Imaginative use of resources, such as the school grounds.
 - Routine use of ICT and whiteboards as tools for writing.
59. The school is continuing to focus on writing, particularly on the development of consistency in marking and target-setting. This is to help pupils to know what they have to do next to improve their writing. At the moment there are inconsistent approaches to the teaching of handwriting and this has a negative impact on the presentation of pupils' work. Younger pupils do not have enough opportunity to share their finished work with others. Writing skills are developed through other subjects, but this tends to be on an 'ad hoc' basis. There is no overall plan to outline how different aspects of writing can be developed in science, history, geography and RE.
60. In the lessons seen, teaching ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory. It is good overall in Years 1 to 4 and very good in Years 5 and 6. The very good teaching in the school typically includes the following strengths in addition to those mentioned above:

- Very good questioning techniques to support and encourage pupils.
- Very good links with pupils' own experience and other subjects.
- What pupils are intended to learn in lessons is clear and written on their work.
- Lively lessons move at a good pace.
- Homework is well-prepared and relevant.

In one excellent lesson in Years 1 and 2, the teacher used some reading scheme software imaginatively and followed it with paired drama work to lead into purposeful writing. In another excellent session in Year 5, the school pond was used as a stimulus for expressive imagery, leading to poetry writing.

Example of outstanding practice

The use of the pond in the school grounds provides a very good starting point for imaginative writing involving metaphor.

This excellent lesson had a pacy, focused introduction. The teacher started by reminding her Year 5 class about metaphor and imagery. For two minutes, they closed their eyes and imagined the moon. Then they wrote extended metaphors on their whiteboards, which they shared with a partner. After this, the class walked out to school ponds, armed with clipboards. The teacher asked them to look carefully first to see what they could see – reeds, reflections, a small frog, late tadpoles, waterweed, ripples and so on. She asked them to write their ideas down as metaphors. The teacher circulated, assessing and supporting pupils' in their work. Pupils were given plenty of time to look and think, and were fully engaged and caught up in the work. By this stage, all understood the metaphor structure and almost all extended their metaphors well. After 20 minutes, they returned to the classroom carpet and fed back their ideas enthusiastically to their partners for two minutes, before sharing ideas as a whole class. This work was to be continued the next day and published for Poetry Day.

61. Within a very strong overall picture, the relative weaknesses in one or two lessons include limited opportunities for pupils to work together, over-dependence on work sheets, little difference made in the tasks given to individual pupils, unchallenging work and limited opportunities for purposeful writing.
62. The newly-appointed subject co-ordinator worked with the previous co-ordinator to monitor lessons and work. She has a clear view of what needs to be improved further and has already worked well with staff to put identified aspects into practice, such as writing targets across the school, and inclusion of more drama and role-play opportunities. She has identified handwriting as an area for improvement, and the consistency of marking and its relation to assessment across the school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. Pupils use their language and literacy skills well in other subjects, but currently the explicit teaching of literacy skills, for example, the use of different writing types, is not planned using other areas of the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved standards.
- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and learning.
- There is a strong focus on developing pupils' numeracy skills.

- There are well developed arrangements for assessing pupils' work and monitoring teaching and learning.
- There is good leadership and management of the subject.
- The use of ICT to support learning in the subject is developing well.

Commentary

64. Standards in mathematics have been steadily rising over the past few years in Year 2 and have been consistently high in Year 6 because of very clear leadership and very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. 2003 results show a similar picture, with Year 2 above average and Year 6 well above average. This pattern represents good progress over time. Although most pupils enter school with below average mathematical ability, the good teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 means they achieve well and most reach average or better standards by the end of Year 2. By Year 6, standards are higher and in recent years around a third of pupils have regularly achieved the higher level 5. This is partly because of the stronger teaching in Years 5 and 6 and partly because of the setting arrangements in these year groups.
65. The school supports all its pupils well. Ability grouping and the targeted use of teaching assistants means pupils of all abilities are suitably supported and challenged. They make good progress and achieve well. Boys and girls are currently making similar progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do well and pupils with special educational needs are equally well supported by their teachers and the teaching assistants.
66. Overall standards are currently average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy as the basis for planning has ensured a strong focus on the teaching of numeracy skills. Teachers make good use of quick fire sessions with younger pupils to increase their understanding of number sequences and patterns and enable them to recognise and recall basic number facts. These skills are well developed and reinforced through practical activities, for example, in a Year 1/2 class pupils used plastic money to solve addition and subtraction problems. Most Year 2 pupils mentally solve problems by using recall of basic number facts and record the process accurately in their books. Pupils make similar progress in learning to recognise shapes and measure.
67. Good use is often made of pupils' own experience as a starting point for mathematical work. In a Year 3/4 lesson, for example, pupils collected and recorded data about holidays on a tally chart in order to produce a bar graph. In Years 3 to 6, teachers continue to make good use of oral starter sessions to sharpen pupils' mental processes, increase their speed of calculation and broaden the range of strategies used. By Year 6, more able pupils quickly estimated the numbers needed to match a specific answer in a lesson seen. Imaginative use of games stimulates and captures pupils' enthusiasm. Particularly good examples of this were seen in a Year 5 lower ability set, where pupils accurately recalled and applied geometrical terms to the space around them, recognised the properties of more complex 2D shapes and recalled their six times table.
68. In the lessons seen, teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall. This is because teachers work hard to plan and develop interesting activities that will motivate their pupils and help them achieve well. In the very good lessons seen in Years 5 and 6, the brisk pace, high expectations and clear explanation ensured that pupils gained maximum benefit from the lesson. However, in the one satisfactory lesson seen pupils did well initially, but the recording task was long and unnecessarily repetitive, so learning was slower.
69. The subject co-ordinator provides strong leadership, and makes good use of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching and learning to identify areas for development, and works hard to address these. Since the last inspection, the school has developed planning well and supported and developed teachers' expertise.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. Mathematics is used in other subjects when pupils record data, make calculations or measure materials. Opportunities often occur incidentally but are not always systematically planned.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good opportunities to engage in practical activities and investigational work.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations.
- Teachers in parallel classes plan together and share ideas.
- All pupils work on the same task and this does not always provide sufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- Pupils make good use of their numeracy skills, especially in older pupils' classes.
- Presentation of work needs attention.
- Resources, including the school grounds, are good.
- Strong leadership and management of the subject.

Commentary

71. Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average, with pupils working at levels expected for their age throughout the school. Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 to 4 and very good in Years 5 and 6. This positive picture has been maintained since the last inspection. Standards are not as high as they have been in the most recent Year 6 national tests. This is directly related to the proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
72. During the inspection, pupils in all year groups were involved in investigational work. This emphasis on providing interesting and engaging tasks is a strength of the work in this subject. Teachers in parallel classes plan together and this means that good ideas are shared. In all classes, the activities planned were challenging. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, were finding out how wind moves objects. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were making electrical circuits and pupils in Years 5 and 6 were measuring heart rates. All pupils worked at similar tasks, with more adult support provided for lower attaining pupils, who would otherwise have struggled. At the moment, there is no expectation that older, higher attaining pupils should extend their investigations so that they achieve at an even higher level. In all classes the teachers had firm control over the investigations and successfully moved pupils forward by timely interventions and questions. There is more scope now to extend this work by enabling pupils to plan their own investigations and carry them through.
73. The quality of the teaching seen was consistently good and very good in Years 5 and 6. Particular strengths include very good subject knowledge, clear explanations, the use of challenging questioning and good support for pupils who need it. This ensures that pupils develop scientific understanding and a questioning approach to their work. In the very good lesson seen pupils used their numeracy skills well to interpret the information that they had collected. In this lesson, too, the teacher made very good use of ICT to explain the investigation to the pupils who were having difficulties. Pupils' science books shows that sometimes expectations of the presentation of work are not high enough, with untidy work detracting from the quality of the work undertaken. Lower attaining pupils, particularly, sometimes struggle to complete the recording activity in time because they are expected to complete the same amount as their higher attaining peers. Teachers' planning shows good coverage of all aspects of the subject on a two-year rolling programme.

74. The resources for the subject are good and include the school's very well developed grounds. In some lessons, teachers' own equipment supplements the school's very effectively. In one lesson, for example, there was sufficient electrical equipment for all pupils to make their own circuit. The new subject co-ordinator is very clear about the strengths in this area and what needs improving.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in resources and staff expertise since last inspection.
- Good direct teaching of ICT skills.
- Increasing use of ICT to support work in other subjects.
- Strong leadership and management of subject.

Commentary

75. Examples of pupils' work seen and the lessons observed show that in Years 2 and 6 standards in ICT are average. Pupils are developing the expected range of skills and learning to use ICT for word processing, handling and presenting data, graphics and the Internet, as well as control, monitoring and modelling.
76. Since the last inspection, the school has used national funding and its own resources to improve facilities and develop staff confidence and expertise through training. A new ICT suite means that pupils are now taught ICT skills in whole class groups. Existing and new classroom computers provide opportunities for the use of ICT skills in other subjects during lessons. The recent acquisition of a digital projector, interactive whiteboard and Internet link will enable the school to extend this further. Conversations with pupils confirm that the classroom computers are regularly used for research and to present work, although there were very few examples of this during the inspection.
77. Overall, the teaching of ICT is good. This is an improved position since the last inspection. Lessons seen in the ICT suite were well planned and prepared. Teachers confidently introduced the tasks and encouraged pupils in the use of the correct subject-specific terminology. Pupils receive good support from their teacher, teaching assistants and their classmates. This ensures all achieve equally well and make good progress, including those pupils with special educational needs. In two sessions with older pupils the digital projector was well used to demonstrate how to insert information into spreadsheet cells and create fades between Power Point slides. This enabled most pupils to replicate the process without help. In the most successful lessons, pupils were given a brief explanation of how to successfully complete the task and there were opportunities to revisit and reinforce the learning objectives at the end. In all the lessons seen, teachers made good use of questions and answers to identify the elements of the task, for example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 quickly grasped how to enter text and select and incorporate pictures into the columns of their newspaper articles. Pupils clearly enjoy ICT lessons, maintaining concentration for lengthy periods.
78. Very capable leadership of the subject has ensured that, despite a period of instability, the subject is moving forward well. There is a well-constructed action plan to support this process and interesting recent initiatives, such as the link with a local firm to demonstrate computer-aided design, raise the profile of the subject. Assessment procedures are fully in place and national guidance has been used well as the basis for planning in the subject. A portfolio of pupils' work is being assembled and will provide clear examples of expectation for each age group. Teachers support and share expertise with one another. Overall, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is developing well. The school has created an overview of possible links and teachers are beginning to structure this into their planning. ICT skills are used to support work in science, literacy and numeracy as, for example, Year 5 pupils' work on symmetry in a mathematics session. ICT was very well used as a visual tool for learning in a Year 1/2 lesson, where pupils followed a reading comprehension program on the interactive whiteboard.

HUMANITIES

80. The inspection sampled work in **history** and **geography**, with only one lesson seen in these subjects. It is not therefore possible to make a firm judgement about provision, although limited evidence indicates that it is good and has been maintained well since the last inspection. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to co-ordinators about their work, spoke to pupils about what they had learnt and looked at pupils' work from last year.
81. A lively and interesting approach is evident in both subjects. There are good cross-curricular links, especially with art and literacy. In Years 1 and 2, for example, teachers organised a 'Katie Morag Day' to consolidate work in geography about the imaginary island of Struay. All the children worked in groups on activities ranging from drama, cooking, Scottish dancing and singing to making presents for an islander. In work on both the Egyptians and Tudors, pupils have used their work in history as a basis for work in art. The local area is used well, particularly in geography. Older pupils have undertaken work on Saltash, for example. In history, good use is made of original artefacts. In the lesson seen, for example, pupils worked with old toys to see how the use of materials has changed over time. Teachers bring their own enthusiasms to the work. This is particularly evident in the work planned in Years 3 and 4 on Canada and Africa. Planning is thorough overall and based on a two-year rolling programme.
82. Pupils' work indicates that they are developing appropriate geographical and historical skills, knowledge and understanding. It is clear that all pupils in the class work on the same task, with more support provided for pupils with special educational needs. Sometimes these pupils do not complete their work because too much is expected of them. Generally, presentation of work is satisfactory, but sometimes it is untidy because of a lack of consistent expectations.
83. Both subject areas are led and managed well by co-ordinators, who have a clear agenda for developing their subject year on year.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **good**, as at the time of last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good.
- RE makes a good contribution to spiritual, cultural and moral development.
- The school does not have access to a wide range of places of worship.
- Presentation of pupils' work is sometimes untidy.

Commentary

84. From the work seen, it is evident that standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils study the Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh faiths, which helps pupils

to develop further understanding of the cultures with which these faiths are associated. There are recurring opportunities for reflection and empathy, which contribute well to spiritual development. Links are made with the assembly themes when possible. In one lesson, the teacher made good links with pupils' writing targets, though there is no evidence that this practice is widespread. Pupils' work shows that the standards of presentation are variable.

85. It is difficult to arrange visits to the places of worship of different faiths, in spite of the school's efforts. The school makes visits to local Christian churches; a Jewish cantor has visited the school; and where pupils have experience of different faiths they share this. This helps to bring the work alive. Resources are satisfactory and useful information sheets are used from time to time to summarise quickly the main features of different faiths.
86. Overall teaching is good. In the lessons seen on the Christian festival of harvest, work was matched well to pupils' ability. A video was used effectively to extend pupils' understanding and in one lesson the plenary was used successfully to draw out the main points of the lesson. Consequently, pupils achieved well.
87. The recently-appointed subject leader has attended training to prepare her for subject leadership and has already devised an adjusted long-term plan to improve areas identified by staff. She keeps a good record of work pupils have undertaken. Monitoring is used well to identify what needs improving. This includes the development of speaking and listening opportunities for pupils, making the purpose of the lesson clear to pupils and marking work to give pupils clear information about whether they had learnt what was intended.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

88. The inspection sampled work in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education with a total of five lessons seen in these subjects. It is not therefore possible to make a firm judgement about provision, although limited evidence indicates that it is good in art and design and design and technology, and very good in music. This positive picture has been maintained and developed since the last inspection. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to co-ordinators about their work, spoke to pupils about what they had learnt in design and technology, and looked at pupils' work from last year and teachers' planning.
89. **Art and design** has a high profile in the school and this is reflected in attractive and stimulating displays. The contribution of local artists and craftspeople to the development and enrichment of the art curriculum is significant. The school aims to provide as wide a range of experiences and activities as possible. An 'arts week' and opportunities to work at National Trust properties also help to widen pupils' artistic horizons.
90. The curriculum is based on national guidelines but has been considerably adapted to ensure that the main strands of drawing, painting, printmaking, collage and three-dimensional work are all regularly covered. The main visual elements are also systematically built into teachers' planning. The curriculum strikes an effective balance between the systematic development of specific skills and support for learning in other curriculum areas. Good cross-curricular links put art into context. For example, a geography project on St Lucia resulted in a vibrant rain forest collage of textured papers and paint. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning.
91. Teaching was good in the lesson seen and pupils' work indicates that this is the case through the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. A recent audit of teachers' skills resulted in additional training.
92. It is not possible to make a firm judgement about provision in **design and technology** as it was not being taught during the inspection. Talking to pupils and teachers, viewing planning and displays, and discussing pupils' work reveals that pupils are gaining good experience of the expected subject skills. They work with a broad range of materials and techniques to

design and produce a wide variety of products, including different working mechanisms. ICT is being used for design and control.

93. Work on display showed younger pupils' puppets made during the summer's arts week. Year 3/4 pupils had made well-finished textile money containers and used pneumatics to create moving toys. Pupils in Years 3/4 had created very well finished Egyptian style jewellery and Year 5/6 pupils used cams to make moving toys. They described and demonstrated how they had used ICT to control motorised fairground attractions and some had had opportunities to work with computer-aided design. All enjoy regular opportunities for food technology. Pupils' work and discussions show a strong emphasis is placed on safety and on the process of design and evaluation. The subject is well led and managed by the deputy headteacher.
94. The school's provision in **music** is very good. Pupils' attainment is above average by the end of Year 6, reflecting a similar picture to the last inspection. Although there is some musical expertise on the staff, there is a general lack of confidence in teaching the subject. As a result, the school has bought in part-time teaching by a peripatetic music teacher, whose expertise is rapidly raising standards. He plans with the staff, all of whom receive considerable professional development from taking part in his lessons. Their increasing confidence enables them to reinforce and build on material from his lessons.
95. Pupils are very enthusiastic and benefit considerably from the wide range of activities and opportunities in lessons. Pupils with particular talents are suitably extended. Pupils respond well to skilled questioning, which extends their understanding of musical structures, and to regular opportunities for composition and performance. Assessment opportunities are carefully built into lessons so that prior learning is systematically built on and new aspects are mastered within a structured context. Resources are good and there are good opportunities to appreciate and perform music from a wide range of cultures and genres.
96. As at the time of the last inspection, all strands of **physical education** including outdoor and adventurous activities are planned and taught. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 benefit from regular sessions at the local swimming baths and by Year 6, standards in swimming are good, with many going well beyond the expected 25 metres.
97. Teaching was good in the two lessons seen. In one Year 5/6 class, pupils working in pairs and groups refined their dance sequences well in response to the mood of the music. In the other Year 5/6 class, pupils practised the skills of controlling and passing a ball and used them in a game of unihoc. In both lessons, the teachers' choice of activity and selective coaching of skills enabled pupils to improve their technique and evaluate their performance. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress and achieved well in both sessions.
98. The subject leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Since the last inspection, there has been good development of the subject, including the introduction of supportive guidance for non-specialist teachers and on-going assessment records. A good range of after-school clubs extends games skills. In competitive sport, school teams have performed extremely well, winning competitions in netball, football and athletics. The well-maintained grounds and hall enhance learning in the subject.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

99. Provision for PSHE is well-integrated into other subjects, making it relevant to pupils. Although there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching and learning from specific PSHE taught sessions or work, the results of the school's policy, plans and practice are evident in the attitudes and behaviour of pupils observed throughout the school. Discussions with pupils and staff confirm the observations and pupils achieve very well. There was no separate subject report at the last inspection, but the indications were that personal social and health education were good.
100. The school promotes independence and responsibility well and most pupils demonstrate self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. The climate of mutual respect in the school is very evident in lessons, where pupils demonstrate very good attitudes and behaviour, and are involved and interested. Where pair and group work is planned, pupils work together very well indeed. Pupils offer their own views and opinions readily. In a mixed class of Year 2 and 3 pupils, for example, pupils talked readily about what they knew about keeping safe on the road, on bikes and in cars. Pupils are taught about other safety aspects, including personal safety and water safety, which resonates with these pupils as the town is on the River Tamar and near the sea.
101. The school has created a strong, safe context for the discussion of personal and health issues. Health aspects, including drugs education, is taught through science. There is a sex and relationships education programme in place, meeting statutory requirements.
102. By Year 6, pupils attain very well with a highly developed attitude of social responsibility and awareness of others. This is also in evidence in links with the local and wider community. Harvest gifts were collected for the cooks at the local Salvation Army hostel, for example, and pupils have raised money for mosquito nets in Tanzania. Pupils' personal development is very good with most pupils demonstrating a quiet self-confidence.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
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	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
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	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).

