

INSPECTION REPORT

TIDCOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tiverton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113339

Headteacher: Mr Steve Morgan

Lead inspector: Mr C R Phillips

Dates of inspection: 15th - 17th March 2004

Inspection number: 258209

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:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	217
School address:	Marina Way Tiverton Devon
Postcode:	EX16 4BP
Telephone number:	(01884) 252 973
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Cyprus-Slater
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a primary school of broadly average size, which occupies an attractive site on the outskirts of Tiverton. It draws pupils from a range of mixed housing, and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, with a range of learning and physical difficulties, is below average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational need is also below average. The pupils currently on roll are almost entirely White-British, and there are no pupils whose home language is not English. When they start at the school, children show a wide range of abilities, but a greater proportion than at the time of the last inspection are below average, particularly in their language and social skills. With the support of the local education authority, the school is involved in a number of initiatives aimed at raising standards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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10611	Martin James	Team inspector	Mathematics Foundation Stage Music Physical education Special educational needs
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 9
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	9 - 16
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16 - 18
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	19 - 30
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an improving school, which is **providing a good education for all of its pupils**. It is very well led by the headteacher, who is supported by a strong staff team. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and the standards pupils attain by the time they leave the school are now broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics. Most pupils are currently achieving at least satisfactorily in terms of their individual capabilities. The school offers a broad and interesting curriculum for all pupils and is fully inclusive. It provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards by the age of 11 are continuing to improve, and are now in line with the national picture in English and mathematics, although a little below that level in science.
- Standards by the time pupils are seven, which have been well below expectation in recent years, are now improving to a point where they are closer to national averages.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is supported by a strong team of teachers and assistants.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but arrangements for assessment are not sufficiently developed and governors and subject leaders have been insufficiently involved in monitoring standards and the progress pupils make.
- The school is fully inclusive, makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, and has a strong ethos of care, which encourages positive attitudes and ensures that pupils of all ages get on well together.
- The school has a broad and often stimulating curriculum, with many opportunities to enrich the pupils' experience within and beyond the school day, although its work is made more difficult by limitations in its accommodation.
- Parents and children are firmly positive about the school.

There has been considerable improvement in teaching, management, attitudes, curriculum, accommodation and standards since the appointment of the present headteacher. The last inspection identified a number of issues, which have generally been addressed well, leading to satisfactory improvement overall. Standards achieved in national tests for younger pupils have not reflected this sufficiently, however, partly because of staffing changes in recent years.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The pupils' **achievements are satisfactory** overall when compared with the levels at which they enter the school, which are a little below average, particularly in the key areas of language and social skills. By the time pupils are 11, standards are about the national average in English and mathematics, but are still below average in science. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE) are in line with the levels expected.

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E - very low. Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

The figures for 2001 shown in the table were exceptional, but standards at the age of 11 have otherwise been improving gradually, and there has been significant improvement this year. Standards for seven-year-olds were well below the national average in these core subjects, and very low when compared with similar schools. These results had declined significantly in the last two years because of changes and disruption in staffing, but standards are now showing clear indications of improvement, so that they are now in line with the national average in reading, and approaching that level in writing and the other subjects. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well against their own targets because of the careful support given.

The pupils' personal qualities are **good** overall, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils throughout the school show good attitudes and behaviour. They enjoy coming to school and clearly feel valued.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching is **good** overall. As a result, pupils of all attainment levels and groups are generally learning well. Arrangements for the assessment of the progress pupils make are insufficiently developed in most subjects.

The curriculum is interesting and often exciting, and makes very good use of the resources available in the community to enrich the pupils' learning. In spite of improvements, the school's accommodation continues to present difficulties, particularly for practical activities and for the under fives. The school cares well for its pupils and has an effective partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and of other key staff is good, and the role of subject leaders is developing well. The school is well managed and has a clear sense of direction. The governing body supports the school well, but many of its members are new to their roles and have only recently become more involved in the monitoring of standards. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have a positive opinion of the school and the job it is doing, recognising the opportunities it provides for their children. Pupils are very positive about school life, but, like their parents, a few have a concern about the behaviour of others. The inspection team believes that the school deals well with the occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour by a few pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

Continue to raise standards by:

- Ensuring the careful assessment and recording of pupils' progress in all subjects and the use of the information gained to track the progress of individuals and groups.
- Developing further the role of subject leaders and of the governing body in analysing, monitoring and evaluating standards and the quality of work.
- Seeking opportunities to resolve the various accommodation issues identified, particularly those for the Nursery and Reception classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily throughout the school. Standards in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school are broadly in line with the national average. Standards in science are below the national average. In each of these subjects, standards are improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English and mathematics by the time pupils are 11 are currently broadly in line with the average for all schools, indicating continuing improvement.
- Standards by the time pupils are seven, which have been well below average, are also now improving, so that reading is in line with the national average, and writing and mathematics are approaching that level.
- Some improvement has also taken place in science, but standards are still below the level expected in both key stages.
- Pupils throughout the school are generally doing at least satisfactorily in terms of their own capabilities.

Commentary

1. The figures below indicate that pupils at the age of seven in 2003 were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In science, teachers' assessments indicated that overall standards were also well below average. In each of the subjects, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grade of Level 3 was well below average. Comparisons with similar schools show standards that were very low. Standards at this age in each of the subjects had deteriorated significantly since the last inspection, particularly in the last two years. Inspection findings indicate current standards in Year 2 are broadly in line with national expectations in reading, and below that level in writing, mathematics and science, with better results expected in the higher grades in each of the subjects. This indicates clear recent improvement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.3 (14.3)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	11.8 (14.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	13.8 (14.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.0 (26.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.2 (25.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.4 (26.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 31 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The results for pupils who were 11 in 2003 indicate standards that were below the national average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. The pattern was the same when their results are compared with those of pupils in similar schools. The proportion

of pupils gaining the higher grade of Level 5 was above average in mathematics, but below average in English and science. Standards in the tests at this age were lower than at the time of the last inspection, and have varied considerably in the interim, but the school's overall trend for the last four years has been upward and broadly in line with the trend seen nationally. This is confirmed by the levels being attained currently in each of the subjects.

3. Inspection findings are that standards in English and mathematics for this age group have continued to improve as areas of underachievement have been dealt with, and are now broadly in line with the national average. Standards in science are now below average, rather than well below, and are improving as pupils gain more experience in the investigative element of the subject. The overall levels of pupils' attainment when they enter the school are below the national average, so the current improvement in standards indicates that pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants, and careful planning helps to ensure that they are achieving well in terms of their targets. Potentially higher-attaining pupils are now doing better because of the clearer provision made in the planning for all lessons for the different levels of capability in each class. Although there are variations year on year, there is no significant difference overall in the performance of girls and boys.
4. The improvements evident are related directly to the more settled staffing situation for younger pupils, better teaching, the improvement of pupils' attitudes and the way in which the school has identified and is addressing areas of underachievement. This is showing, for instance, in the way in which standards in reading have improved as a direct result of the emphasis being placed on guided reading sessions and the training teachers have received in their use.
5. The nature of the school's intake has changed since the time of the last inspection, and it now has a greater proportion of pupils whose language and social skills are limited when they first come. Each year group represents a wide range of capabilities, and also includes a proportion of potentially very able children. By the time they leave the Reception class, most children are in line with the levels expected for several of the areas of learning. They have generally made up the necessary ground in terms of their social skills, but a significant number are still below the levels indicated by the early learning goals in their knowledge and understanding of the world and for the key area of communication, language and literacy.
6. The school did not achieve its targets in English and mathematics for the Year 6 group in 2003, but the setting of meaningful targets is difficult with such small year groups, since results can be affected significantly by the performance of two or three pupils. The targets identified for this year in both subjects may also prove to be too much of a challenge, but the school is making a determined effort to get close to them. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are improving, and are now in line with the level expected nationally. Standards in religious education (RE) are in line with those expected by the local authority's agreed syllabus. There are many opportunities for pupils to achieve appropriately in other subjects, and the sampling of these during the inspection indicates standards that are broadly in line with the level expected in most of them, and that pupils are able to use and develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Their personal development is also good, and their social and spiritual development are strong features. Their attendance is satisfactory and punctuality good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The caring ethos of the school permeates all activities, and helps to promote pupils' good attitudes and personal development.
- Pupils' spiritual and social development are very good.
- Staff promote pupils' very good relationships with others.

Commentary

7. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good. The generally positive picture found at the last inspection has been maintained. The vast majority of pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous, and respond well to the caring ethos of the school. Some children in the Foundation Stage enter school with below average social skills, but they learn quickly, and respond positively to the clear routines and social situations they are encouraged to take part in, such as snack time and co-operative play. They enjoy the range of activities planned for them and are eager to learn. Pupils in the rest of the school also enjoy being there, and show a considerable pleasure in being members of the school community. They are interested and involved in the wide range of activities that the school provides, both in lessons and out of school hours. Parents support the school, and are happy with the values the school promotes. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall. Staff deal quickly and effectively with the few incidents of inappropriate behaviour that occur. No incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection, and as the table below shows, exclusions are rare. There have been no racist incidents.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
177	2	0
1	0	0

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

8. When given opportunities to work in groups, pupils work co-operatively, sharing and valuing ideas, and concentrating well on the task. Pupils with special educational needs generally have the same attitudes and values as their peers. All pupils are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants. The relationships pupils have with adults and each other are very good, and have a positive impact on their learning. Pupils support each other and their teachers. They are happy and secure, and enjoy school life in an atmosphere where all are valued. Pupils respond well to the help provided, and enjoy the praise that is often given. They enjoy receiving rewards such as 'stars of the week', and each pupil's strengths are recognised at special assemblies, one class at a time. These rewards, which include a special table at lunch, are strong motivators. Pupils of all ages mix well at playtime and lunchtime. The organisation of 'home groups' is an innovative way of helping pupils get to know and value friends from the whole age range. These groups meet together at one assembly a week and also meet to discuss issues to do with the school's organisation and personal relationships. This is a school that is willing to trial new ways of enhancing pupils' development and supporting positive relationships. A current example is that of peer massage. After the midday break, pupils in Year 3 take turns at giving calm and gentle head, neck, shoulder and arm massage to each other for ten to 15 minutes. Established elsewhere, peer massage is being piloted and evaluated initially for one year group.
9. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, which is promoted from an early age. They benefit from the very good role models set by the adults. There are pleasant relationships between staff and good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants in the classroom. When pupils show qualities such as honesty, politeness and helpfulness, these are rewarded alongside academic achievement. Values are promoted through the school's programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE), where a developing sense of citizenship is encouraged through the home group discussion periods. There are opportunities for pupils to enhance their social development by taking responsibility, which they do with

commitment and pride. The children's council meets regularly, and the elected members take their responsibilities seriously when making decisions on behalf of the whole school. Selected pupils, mostly in Year 5, act as play leaders - a role that they enjoy and for which they are well trained.

10. In classrooms, pupils are keen to act as monitors, helping the smooth running of the class. Year 6 pupils are offered several jobs around the school, such as helping at assemblies and helping the distribution of the weekly newsletters. This gives them satisfaction and encourages their self-esteem. Unusually, the school offers the opportunity of a residential visit for pupils from all of the older year groups, and these visits are greatly appreciated by pupils. They allow pupils to develop maturity and to broaden their experience. Pupils are encouraged, through all school activities, to be honest, trustworthy and well mannered. They are also given many opportunities to enjoy learning. Being at school is a pleasure for almost all. This is because staff take learning beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge and skills. They are willing to touch on spiritual elements wherever they may arise; during walks, art, sport and residential visits, for example. As a result of a walk to the source of the river, for instance, Year 6 pupils were excited and moved by what they saw and experienced, and were inspired to create significant artwork.
11. Pupils are provided with a curriculum that promotes a good understanding of Western culture in subjects such as history, art and design, music, and English. Pupils' understanding of different cultures is promoted through religious education, in which pupils learn about major world faiths. Multicultural displays give evidence of interest in a wide range of art, from African masks to German painting, which also encourages the pupils' awareness of other cultures.

Attendance

12. Attendance levels are broadly in line with the national averages. The great majority of pupils arrive punctually for the start of school. Registration practice is very efficient and a model of its kind. The school has tackled very effectively the previous problems of unsatisfactory punctuality. Supported by a teaching assistant, pupils register themselves as they enter the classroom. As a result, the first session of the day gets off to a very productive start, and the computerised registration system enables the school to identify and address any problems in close co-operation with the educational welfare officer.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	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 quality of education provided by the school is **good** and has some strong features. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes better. As a result, pupils of all attainment levels are generally learning well. Arrangements for assessment are underdeveloped in most subjects. The curriculum is relevant and interesting and makes good use of the resources available in the community to enhance the pupils' learning. The school provides good opportunities to enrich the curriculum through the use of visits and visitors and a good programme of extra-curricular activities. It cares well for pupils, listens to them well, and has established an effective partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, and pupils throughout the school are generally learning well.
- Pupils of all levels of attainment are now more interested and involved in their work and achieving satisfactorily or better, although progress has been inconsistent in the past.
- Teaching assistants provide very good support, enabling pupils to make good progress.
- Reading and writing skills and investigative skills in science have been under developed, but are now improving.
- The assessment and tracking of the pupils' progress in English and mathematics have improved, but remain under developed for writing, and little development has taken place in other subjects.
- Teaching and learning in the areas of art and design, music and physical education provide creative and imaginative opportunities for all pupils

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	8 (25%)	16 (53%)	5 (16%)	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.

13. These figures present a positive picture of the quality of teaching, with four out of every five lessons seen during the inspection judged to be good or better, and almost a third very good or excellent; an improvement on the last inspection. Almost all lessons were at least satisfactory. The teaching is currently stronger in Key Stage 2 and in the Foundation Stage. The figures confirm the positive opinions parents have of teaching, as well as the equally positive views the pupils have of their teachers.
14. The emphasis placed on the strong programme of staff development, which the school has recently embarked upon, is having a direct influence on standards and achievement. It is linked directly to the school's priorities, including the improvement of teaching and the way pupils learn. Pupils at all levels of attainment are discovering that learning can be exciting and are prepared to try hard, for longer. For a few, this is not easy, and the strong relationships between the pupils and the adults who support them, both teachers and assistants, are an important part of this achievement.
15. The skills of many pupils in language and literacy are a little below average when they enter the school and results by the time pupils are seven and 11 have previously shown a lack of progress and less than satisfactory achievement over the key stages. Since September, all classes have been involved in a programme to guide them to read more easily and effectively, and much progress is evident. In regular times each day spent in shared reading with pupils, each class teacher focuses on specific skills that pupils need to develop. Teaching is consistently good and identifies precisely where the pupils are in their learning and what they need to learn next in order to improve. The tracking of progress is well developed. The pupils are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy these times. They benefit greatly in their appreciation of literature, and are becoming skilled in using a variety of texts. Younger pupils particularly are becoming more fluent because of the ideas given by teachers about how to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils are guided to search for the meaning intended by an author and how he might let the reader know this, and are showing better critical awareness. The work to help pupils develop their skills in reading, and therefore in writing, is improving standards and encouraging pupils to speak, read and write more readily.
16. The pupils now take a full and active part in their learning in lessons. The teachers, particularly in Key Stage 2, use many strategies very successfully to keep attention and interest high and ensure a brisk pace throughout. Teaching in all classes is a mixture of teacher delivery that is

always clear, careful questioning that usually involves all pupils, and structured times of discussion in pairs or groups to encourage the sharing of pupils' contributions. Teachers use a range of methods well, such as the pupils' use of whiteboards to record their learning when, for example, playing phonic bingo in Year 2. Teachers usually share with pupils exactly where the lesson is going and what they will be expected to learn, and there are generally high expectations for attention and learning. More challenging work is now being provided for pupils in each class. There are some good examples of teachers breaking down learning into manageable chunks so that the pupils can learn more effectively, and all teachers consolidate work well. Time is now used more effectively in lessons. This can also be seen in the impressive start to the school day, where by 9.00am most pupils have settled independently to their own work and teachers are, for instance, able to spend time on quality reading with a group, much earlier than in the past when punctuality was a problem. Learning in the past has been affected adversely because of changes in staffing and a lack of a clear idea of how the experiences of each year group build on those that have gone before. The headteacher has provided clear leadership for the staff and now has a team who see the need to work closely together to ensure continuity, and do so with vision and diligence.

17. The teaching assistants, the number of which has increased, provide valuable support in each classroom and work closely and effectively with teachers. There are very good relationships between the pupils and each adult, which is an important factor in the improved achievement. In addition to supporting pupils with special needs and others to develop their skills, the teaching assistants are helping to develop the imagination and creative responses of all pupils, and furthering their motivation and interest in learning.
18. The school is developing some effective systems to assess how well pupils are doing, including the use of the pupils themselves to monitor their own targets for learning and sometimes those of others. This has a positive impact on their attitudes and achievement. Most teachers use their knowledge of where the pupils are in their learning well to improve planned teaching. They check learning in lessons and intervene well to provide the specific teaching that is needed in order for progress to be made. Careful assessment by the adults of what is being learned during lessons is being used increasingly to ensure that all pupils know where they have reached in the required learning and how they can improve. The marking of work does this particularly well in some classes, and there are impressive examples of responses to pupils' work, but this is not consistent across the school. Useful tests are now being completed and others are planned, and results are now beginning to be analysed effectively by subject leaders and the management team. The use of writing progress books in English provides a useful way of identifying progress. A new and comprehensive system for recording and tracking progress in reading is now established through the school. There is some effective assessment in English and mathematics, but the actual tracking of how each individual pupil is making progress is under-developed in writing and in science, and is yet to be introduced in ICT and RE. Systems in mathematics have been adapted recently and provide a good picture of progress. In other subjects, some teachers have strategies for assessment and record the results of these, but no systems have been developed for consistent use across the school.
19. The quality of teaching and learning for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. The teachers have a secure understanding of the social, emotional and educational needs of the children, and they plan a very appropriate range of activities. They have suitably high expectations of both work and behaviour, and this contributes to the good progress the children make. The teachers have a pleasant, helpful and encouraging manner with the children, and give them much praise for their work. A suitable range of strategies is used in teaching the children, and very effective use is made of the limited classroom space available. Just occasionally, children are kept too long on the carpet during the introductory sessions, and sometimes they are not all fully involved when questions are being asked. Normally, however, the pace of lessons is brisk, and all children make a full contribution. Procedures for recording how well children are doing are thorough, and the teachers and teaching assistants

complement each other very well in ensuring that the children are provided with tasks that are suitable to their needs.

20. Since the arrival of the headteacher, teaching and learning in art and design, music and the physical areas of the curriculum have improved and more time has been given to these important elements. The pupils have developed confidence and competence, which have also affected their work in English, mathematics, science and other subjects. When working in art and design, the pupils often consolidate work they are doing elsewhere in the curriculum. For instance, after a local town trail for geography, Year 4 pupils studied the town crest in preparation for designing a modern day one in the style of the artist Paul Klee. They noticed language similar to Caribbean poetry they had written and performed and spotted hieroglyphics studied in history work on Egypt. There is improving creativity shown by pupils of all levels in their spoken contributions and in their art and design work. A specialist music teacher's regular visits have enhanced work in music throughout the school and provided a stimulus at concert times when all pupils are now fully involved in a range of performance experiences.
21. Speaking skills are developing as pupils become more aware of the structure of sentences, a wider vocabulary and the use of punctuation. The enjoyment and achievement of pupils at all levels of attainment has grown in both reading and writing. Similarly, the development of writing skills, including spelling and handwriting, is improving because of more focused teaching. The development of investigative skills in science has not been consistent through the school, but is improving.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is **satisfactory** with good features, and is improving. Extra-curricular provision is **very good**, but the accommodation, although much improved recently, still has many shortcomings. The resources available are **satisfactory** overall and are used well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is now well balanced and is much improved in terms of the guidance provided for teachers, but the overall structure of the curriculum is not yet fully developed.
- Excitement, imagination and considerable creativity are being brought to learning because of the improvements made to the curriculum.
- The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of educational visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities.
- Staff and pupils use the generally adequate and improved accommodation well, although its limitations create some difficulties for learning.
- Investigative skills in science, as well as those in writing and in design and technology are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

22. The curriculum is more balanced than at the time of the last inspection, when literacy and numeracy were predominant. National guidance, adapted to the school's own needs, is now followed for most subjects where required and the headteacher has recently introduced a useful structure for termly planning. The repetition of teaching and learning in the past is now disappearing, but further work is still necessary to complete the overall structure of the curriculum and for planning systems to be fully established and consistent in the school.
23. Much improvement has taken place, so that the pupils are now responding well to a more varied, interesting and relevant curriculum, which provides many exciting and stimulating opportunities. This provides strong motivation, and is leading them to enjoy learning and to try hard. The pupils say that they learn new things every day and older pupils refer to lessons as

'cool'. The school is developing the pupils as learners who see connections between different areas of the curriculum, which is helped particularly by the use of well-planned topics. There is still work to do in the development of pupils' skills, particularly their written skills and their use of scientific investigation, but there have been significant improvements. The introduction of guided reading is most successful and is helping pupils in each class to enjoy reading, develop their skills and read better than previously. Led impressively by the headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants together, are putting valuable and often innovative ideas into action. Children are being taught how to use their imagination and be creative in their learning, with art seen as central to this and music playing an important part. The atmosphere is set in assemblies, for instance, when pupils sit in their home groups and forge relationships to last beyond the primary phase. Much work develops the pupils' relationships positively with one another, such as the massage by one child on another in Year 3, and their work in home groups. Children's council meetings help to ensure that the pupils feel the school belongs to them, encouraging a sense of responsibility, and work on personal and social education is strong.

24. Provision for the large number of pupils with special educational needs is good. Two new co-ordinators work very closely together. Both are very experienced and know the school and its pupils well. A newly-appointed governor has responsibility for this area of work. Clear procedures are in place and the school follows the code of practice on the identification and assessment of pupils closely. The code is being implemented carefully and effectively. The individual educational plans provided for pupils are now of high quality, with sharper targets that are reviewed regularly and in which parents are involved. Staff training and additional resources have enabled teachers to attend more closely to the preparation of these plans using ICT skills. Considerable care is taken to ensure that work provided for these pupils is matched closely to their needs and all are fully involved in the life of the school. The level and quality of support and guidance for these, and for all pupils in the school, is high and their natural enthusiasm and creative ideas are harnessed well. At present, the school does not have the facility to accommodate older pupils with physical disabilities because access to two classrooms is by way of stairs.
25. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including art and book clubs, and those developing musical skills such as recorders, guitar, keyboard and clarinet. There are numerous PE activities and clubs, such as kwik cricket, tag rugby and circuit training. These are supported well by boys and girls of all age groups. The school welcomes many visitors, such as storytellers, theatre and other groups, and visitors to assemblies. A wide range of educational visits is arranged to places such as a National Trust stately home, a pantomime and to the beach. Visits to local places of worship include those to a synagogue, cathedral and local Anglican and Methodist churches. Good use is also made of the locality in canal, river and town trails. From Year 2 onwards, all pupils have the opportunity for an annual residential visit, and all of these activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development, as well as to their learning in various subjects.
26. The pupils show much appreciation of the improvements being made to the school building and grounds. Year 6 pupils say that their classroom is much bigger and they are less squashed, making it easier to work. The pupils are able to compare a poorly-lit corridor with the purpose-built ICT suite they now use. They explain how their old library has been superseded by a new purpose-built library area, which has imaginative shelving and can be used by all pupils. Pupils of all ages refer to new climbing equipment, their woodland track and safer areas in the numerous improvements outdoors. The accommodation has improved considerably and this is having a positive impact on the quality of the learning environment, teaching, achievement and attitudes, and is much appreciated by the pupils and the adults working in it. Much recent redecoration of internal accommodation provides lighter, brighter areas such as in the newly-decorated hall, but some areas, such as in classrooms and corridors, still look worn. Resources are improving and are broadly adequate overall, and the school makes very good use of loan systems to provide additional resources. However, in spite of the way teachers use space effectively, the classrooms and outside areas of the Foundation Stage are not big

enough to allow teachers to develop the required activities sufficiently. Although the teachers of these two classes work well together, the co-ordination of the Foundation Stage is made more difficult because their two rooms are not located together. There are difficulties of space elsewhere. The size and shape of the Year 2 classroom, for example, makes it inappropriate for young children, while awkwardly placed pillars block vision in the Year 4 classroom, and several rooms are too small for practical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are **well cared for**. Governors and staff have satisfactory procedures for checking that pupils and staff work in a healthy and safe environment. Pupils have very good relationships with all adults in the school. They are given the support and advice they need and efforts to involve them in the work of the school are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children's council provides a very good forum for hearing pupils' opinions.
- Older pupils like to help the younger ones.
- Induction arrangements for pupils are very good.
- The school has recognised the need to tighten up formal health and safety monitoring.

Commentary

27. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of its pupils are satisfactory. This well-cared-for school received advice following a local authority audit in June 2003. It is putting procedures in place to involve governors, teaching and non-teaching staff closely in regular safety audits, to ensure that all areas of the school are checked consistently and frequently.
28. The staff are well aware of child protection procedures and the school exercises its responsibilities with vigilance and care. The school is also well prepared to help pupils who do not live with their families. First aid provision is satisfactory, with trained staff who provide assistance in the event of mishaps and are prepared to cope with emergencies. Records kept of such mishaps are limited in detail.
29. Staff visit enrolled Nursery children in their homes, and the children and their parents visit the school in the term before children join. When children start school, staff help them to develop good and trusting relationships. Adults know the pupils, and respond very well to their emotional needs, and encourage them to develop their self-esteem through a well-structured personal, social and health education programme.
30. Pupils are well cared for at lunchtime. Older pupils look after younger, and there is a 'friendship seat' for anyone who is lonely, which pupils say works well. They very much enjoy the new playground equipment. Pupils feel they are amongst friends and say that there is always support available from the adults and from each other. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good, although wider aspects of assessment and monitoring need further development. There is a regular item at each weekly staff meeting discussing the support that any pupils may require.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents confirm that staff are easily accessible.
- Annual reports on pupils' progress lack information about the levels pupils are working at, and do not provide sufficient guidance about what pupils need to do to progress.
- The provision of excellent weekly newsletters and other information about the school make the overall information for parents very good, but there are no evening meetings to help parents understand the curriculum.
- Parents are welcomed into school and several help regularly in class.
- The school has very good working relations with other primary schools, the local secondary school and a neighbouring independent school.
- The committee of the community association works hard to support the work of the school.

Commentary

31. Almost all parents have positive views about the school and the education it provides. They are sure that that any behavioural incidents are well dealt with. Inspectors agree. Pupils' views about the school are very positive. They say they like their teachers, the visits they make and the improved number of school clubs – which are very well supported.
32. The headteacher and other teachers make themselves accessible to parents, and informal consultations are easily arranged. Reading record books and homework diaries are available for communication between parents and staff, helping to strengthen relationships between families and teachers. A wealth of information about the school is available from the excellent weekly newsletters. These are very well designed to make them useful for busy parents. Parents receive information about the curriculum at the start of each term. At the end of each year, the pupils' 'special books' provide parents with a valued home record of their children's progress.
33. A very small minority of parents express some concerns about the information that parents receive about pupils' progress and some concerns about bullying. Reports inform parents about the work that pupils have completed and their attitudes, but are not always clear about the levels pupils have reached and do not always provide parents with clear targets or guidance about what their children need to do to progress to the next stage of their learning. Some subjects are grouped together under one heading and the information given is limited to a few words on what all the pupils in that class had covered. Inspectors support the positive views of parents, and found that, where occasional incidents of bullying or other inappropriate behaviour occur, they are addressed quickly and effectively.
34. Many parents support their children well at home by sharing books with them and helping them with their homework. A few help in school on a regular basis. They enjoy the experiences, are clear about their roles, and are appreciated by the staff. The school has satisfactory arrangements to gain parents' views, as in recent consultation about the school uniform. The school normally manages to resolve any parents' concerns informally.
35. The community association raises funds successfully to provide additional resources and learning opportunities for pupils. Through events such as the discos and summer barbecue they have been able to fund extra activities, books and equipment, and have helped to create a strong school community. They have also helped to organise charity fundraising by the pupils.
36. Links with the community and a wide range of visits and visitors provide very good enrichment of the curriculum and support pupils' personal and social development, as well as widening their experience and giving them opportunities to learn about the needs of others. Many pupils have benefited from the Tiverton Trust, which has supported many activities. The premises are used by several local groups.

37. Links with other schools are very good and the school plays an active part in the local academic council, which connects professionals from a number of local schools. Pupils get to visit other schools and the community on their 'town walks' and this helps them forge a sense of identity within the community. Some pupils have enjoyed linking with the secondary school on drama projects, and the school has used the neighbouring independent school's playing fields.
38. Links with secondary schools support appropriately the transfer of pupils at the age of 11 by providing opportunities to visit and gain an understanding of what secondary schooling will be like. Pupils are visited by teachers from the main secondary school, as well as by pupils in Year 7, who share their experiences with those who will be following in their footsteps.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and of other key staff is good. Management is good overall, and the governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very well led by the headteacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff work very well together as a team, and the role of the subject leaders is now developing well.
- The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The governors are fully committed to the school, although many are new to their roles, and the governing body has been insufficiently involved in monitoring standards.
- As the school tries to raise standards, it faces several difficulties, such as the nature of its accommodation, a limited budget and a lack of aspiration from some parents, but it is dealing well with these.

Commentary

39. The school is well managed. This stems particularly from the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, who, although he has only been in post for a short time, has developed a clear vision for the school and a firm commitment to improvement. His style of management encourages all members of the school community to know that they have an important contribution to make in the direction it takes. As a result of this leadership, the school has a clear educational direction, is thoroughly inclusive in its provision for all pupils, and has a strong ethos of care.
40. The headteacher is very well supported by the rest of the staff team. Some disruption in staffing has affected the past progress of some pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1, but a more settled staffing situation means that improvement is now taking place. The changes have brought together a group of teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff who have bonded well into a strong team. They are fully committed to providing a rich experience for all the pupils in their care and work hard to enable all pupils to learn. Several subject leaders were new to their responsibilities this year, and their role is continuing to develop. They are not yet fully involved in the monitoring of standards through the analysis of data or the evaluation of pupils' work, but all have clear ideas about the development of their subjects, and the school is becoming much more self-evaluative.
41. The headteacher and staff are supported well by all members of the governing body, who are firmly committed to the continuing development of the school. Almost all of the governors are new to their posts, as is the chair of governors to her role. They are generally well informed about school life, the standards being achieved and the progress made by pupils. With the support of the headteacher, they are now beginning to take a fuller part in the analysis and

understanding of the performance data available to the school. They discharge their duties effectively through a system of committees. Several governors have regular contact with the daily life of the school, and links with subject areas are being established. Governors have recognised the need for the inclusion in the school's overall improvement plan of an action plan that provides a useful framework for the continuing development of their role.

42. The school improvement plan identifies an appropriate range of priorities, and is focused clearly on the raising of standards. It provides useful detail about these priorities, with indications of costing and criteria by which success can be measured. It is beginning to prove effective in helping the school to meet its goals. Responsibility for the approval of the plan lies clearly with the governing body, and governors and staff have become increasingly involved in monitoring its progress.
43. The management, by the special educational needs co-ordinators, of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties, is good. The new code of practice has been introduced successfully. Pupils are identified at an early stage through appropriate procedures, and placed on the special needs register, which the school has chosen to retain. Pupils are provided with individual education plans that set clear targets for improvement. These plans are reviewed each term, with new targets being set if appropriate, and parents and pupils are involved suitably in this process. The special needs co-ordinators keep extensive and detailed records, and the progress made by the pupils is checked carefully. The governor appointed to monitor the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs has only recently taken on her role, but has already been in contact with the co-ordinators and initial support has been provided.
44. The school faces several difficulties as it tries to raise standards. Parents are positive about what the school is doing, appreciating the fact that their children are happy. However, they are not always clear about how well pupils are performing against national standards, and the school has identified the need to communicate such information more effectively, in order to encourage all parents to share its aspirations for their children to achieve higher standards. The school building also affects its work, since space is very limited in many teaching areas, particularly for practical activities, and the shape of several rooms is not conducive to effective working. The Nursery and Reception classes are not located together. Many recent improvements have been made, and all staff work very hard to make the best use of the accommodation, often creatively. This ensures the successful teaching of the National Curriculum, but at the cost of considerable extra effort. The support received from the local education authority since the appointment of the present headteacher is now helping the school to tackle the issues it faces.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	520,295	Balance from previous year	4,395
Total expenditure	511,466	Balance carried forward to the next	8,829
Expenditure per pupil	2,263		

45. The quality of financial planning is good. Careful records of expenditure are maintained, and the issues raised at the time of the last audit have been addressed. The school manages its budget well, and spending is related clearly to the raising of educational standards. The governors and headteacher monitor the school's financial position carefully, and are supported well by the school administrator. They are well aware of the need to ensure best value and to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of spending decisions. The budget is very tight, however, and the governors and headteacher are giving very careful thought to how they will manage the

financial and other implications of there being a smaller than usual year group for next year's Reception class.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**. The induction processes for new children are very good, and the curriculum provided is good. The leadership and management are good. Children's behaviour is good, as is teaching, and as a result children achieve well. Provision is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. Close links are established between the Nursery and Reception classes, but are made difficult by their physical separation and the rooms provide inadequate space. The outdoor areas for both classes are unsatisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are on course to achieve the expected level by the end of their time in Reception.
- Children are polite and well behaved, taking turns readily and sharing resources.
- Children show some independence in their work.
- Teaching is good, encouraging the children to achieve well.

Commentary

46. A significant proportion of children come with limited social skills, but soon learn how to behave in school and to be part of a social group. In the Nursery class, for instance, children learn to eat their snack and drink their juice in a very civilised way. Those in Reception share items readily, taking turns and playing together. Children move confidently around their classrooms, and the rest of the school when necessary, and they relate well to older pupils. Teachers, and other adult helpers, provide the children with a mix of directed activities and independence, to which they respond well.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are on course to be below the expected level by the end of the Reception class, but their achievement is satisfactory.
- Many children have limited speaking skills when they first come to school.
- Although their reading ability is limited, they enjoy handling books and developing their early reading skills.
- Children use pencils happily to produce simple writing.
- Teaching is satisfactory, although introductory sessions are sometimes too long.

Commentary

47. Children enjoy listening to stories, and teachers make good use of large storybooks to encourage this. Occasionally, these sessions are rather long, however, and some children lose concentration. Children's speaking skills are generally not well developed. A small number speak clearly, whilst others speak in single words, not possessing the vocabulary or the confidence to make longer contributions. However, teachers regularly encourage the children to talk. Children enjoy looking at books, and in the Reception class many are able to recognise

a number of words that they read to others. Teachers provide children with suitable opportunities to write, and whilst those in the Nursery class develop their emergent writing skills when writing out prescriptions in the 'Tidcombe Hospital', those in Reception write their names and other simple words.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well, and are likely to reach the expected level by the time they leave the Reception class.
- Children know a range of songs and rhymes that help to develop their understanding of number.
- Some higher-attaining children in Reception are able to add two numbers.
- Many older children know a suitable range of simple mathematical vocabulary.
- Teaching is good, with, for example, a range of counting and shape activities provided for the children.

Commentary

48. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to count and use counting rhymes. In the Nursery, children count different snack items before they eat them. Children also attempt to identify the correct number of items to match a numeral. Children in Reception add 'one more', and find 'one less' successfully, with some children able to add two numbers. Many children also have an appropriate vocabulary that allows them to talk about various concepts such as 'big', 'small', 'long' and 'short', as well as to name basic two-dimensional shapes. Teachers provide children with a variety of mathematical tasks and games that help them to develop their knowledge of number, shape and measure.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve satisfactorily overall, but are likely to be below the expected level when they enter Year 1.
- Children are beginning to develop their understanding of people and animals, as well as different places, although some have difficulties explaining their understanding.
- Children carry out practical activities successfully, such as making food items.
- Teaching is satisfactory, with, on occasions, limited use being made of questioning to check the children's understanding.

Commentary

49. Teachers give children very suitable activities and experiences that enable them to learn about the world. Children in the Nursery learn, for example, about the parts of the body, whilst those in Reception learn about the senses. Similarly, the children learn about different places, and, while those in Nursery learn about the local area, those in Reception study maps and learn about 'hot' and 'cold' places. A number of children are able to explain their knowledge with some confidence, whilst others, with more limited language skills, sometimes find understanding and explaining more difficult. Children are not always confident to talk about this work, and this limits the learning they are able to make. Teachers provide the children with a wide variety of learning experiences, but in discussion they sometimes accept answers from

the same children, and others are less able to contribute. Practical activities, such as preparing food, are a regular feature in both classes, and children in Reception particularly enjoyed making and tasting porridge!

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are generally on course to achieve the expected level by the time they leave the Reception class, and are achieving well.
- They use a range of tools and equipment with increasing dexterity and confidence.
- They have sound control of their bodies in physical education lessons.
- Teaching is good, with many opportunities provided for children to develop their physical skills.

Commentary

50. Children benefit from the range of activities provided daily. Pencils, crayons, scissors, playdough and a variety of construction toys are readily available, and children use them with enthusiasm. In the Nursery, children use playdough successfully to produce various shapes, such as animals, and in Reception they cut and stick shapes and thread beads onto a string successfully. The outdoor facilities available for both classes are unsatisfactory, but staff do well with what is available, and make good use of the variety of equipment in the hall, to allow the children to climb and jump. Teachers and teaching assistants support them well, providing clear demonstrations and much encouragement. They are also very careful to ensure the children's safety at all times.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children are on course to reach the expected level by the end of Reception.
- They are presented with a wide variety of activities in music, painting, model making and using their imagination, to which they respond well.
- Children are particularly keen to tackle role play activities.
- The good teaching provided by all adults stimulates children's imagination, allowing them to achieve well.

Commentary

51. In both classes, a wide range of activities is provided, which the children undertake with enthusiasm. They play instruments, sing songs and produce suitable paintings and models. They show appropriate skills in all activities. Children are especially happy to take part in activities in both the 'Tidcombe Hospital' and the 'jungle', and they show good levels of imagination when working with others. Teachers and teaching assistants complement each other very well in supporting, encouraging and stimulating the children. Whilst the teaching space available is limited, especially in the Nursery, the adults keep a smile on their faces, relate well to the children and provide them with an interesting and often stimulating curriculum.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory** overall and is improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in speaking and listening are broadly in line with the national average at seven and by the time pupils leave the school. In reading, standards are in line with the average for seven-year-olds nationally and broadly so for 11-year-olds. This is a picture of improvement.
- Standards in writing for pupils who are seven are improving, and by the time pupils leave the school this year are likely to be in line with average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some teaching that is very good or excellent, and pupils' attitudes are improving.
- There is a whole-school commitment to improving achievement in English.
- The progress that individual pupils make is assessed and tracked in reading but not fully in writing.
- Pupils' write regularly in a wide range of subjects.

Commentary

52. Standards in the 2003 national tests at the age of seven, including the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3, were well below average. At 11, standards were below average, including those for the higher grade. Standards for the seven-year-olds had declined since the last inspection, but are now showing improvement. Standards at 11 are showing improvement on last year's results, and are now broadly average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Higher-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs are achieving satisfactorily.
53. The pupils' skills in speaking and in listening are developing well in lessons and in other aspects of school life, such as assemblies, where pupils are most attentive. Pupils use the opportunities provided by circle times, home groups and the children's council to show their skills. In some classes, the teachers develop the pupils' speaking and listening well by careful questioning and by seeking clarification where necessary. In Year 3, for instance, time is provided for pupils to respond thoughtfully while everyone else listens, having had time to share ideas with a partner. Standards are at the level expected nationally, with a significant number above that at 11. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are becoming clear when giving their opinions in lessons. The words, phrases and style of language used by pupils of all levels have improved, with some using a varied vocabulary and able to develop their ideas well; a few pose questions to develop debates. The confidence of all pupils to speak relevantly, with sufficient volume and clarity, to communicate their ideas is improving now that they are fully involved in learning and their structured oral responses are valued.
54. There is impressive improvement in teaching and learning in reading, because of staff training that has led to pupils reading together regularly in groups guided by the teachers. This year most pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily, with many achieving well. Each teacher monitors and records the specific achievement of each pupil closely, tracking their progress well, and noting clear targets for improvement. Because of this, the Year 6 pupils are showing a greater interest in reading a range of literature, including plays and poetry. Most are fluent, accurate, give expression to their reading and generally show good understanding. They can see how the author develops the characters, and an increasing number are able to refer to the text confidently to discuss how an author achieves particular effects in the stories written. Most of the Year 2 pupils read fluently and expressively, and are confident and enthusiastic about books. They know about non-fiction and can use both index and contents. They have a bank of strategies they use to read difficult words. A few are already showing a real love of literature, and are beginning to predict and know how the author develops plot and character. These pupils can be seen using their knowledge and understanding of writing in their reading. All Year 3 pupils are making good progress and enjoy and are keen to read instructional texts that tell them, for example, how to make pancakes. They are able to spot compound words such as 'tablespoon' in the text. This is a substantial improvement on last year. They are reading

fluently, with understanding, using punctuation to help them and several strategies to help with unknown words. They use the text to show how a particular character is feeling. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well by teachers in the reading groups and all pupils benefit from the support of their peers as they read and from the high quality planning and assessment in the structured reading programme followed in each class.

55. Most pupils are now achieving at least satisfactorily in writing, and standards that were below average are much improved, with more pupils reaching the higher levels. The standards of pupils by the age of seven are still likely to be below those expected but vastly improved. The standards of most pupils aged 11 are likely to be broadly in line with those expected by the end of the year, and an improvement on the previous year.
56. Current progress for Year 6 pupils is satisfactory overall, with some making good progress. There are, however, indications that the work of a significant number of pupils throughout the school has been affected in the past by changes of teachers and by a lack of structure and progression in teaching important skills such as phonics, spelling, story structure and punctuation, and in not insisting on the use of these skills consistently in each class. To address these needs, phonic and spelling programmes have been introduced for younger pupils at Key Stage 1 and earlier, and are beginning to have the required effect. The handwriting programme teaches word groups and so supports spelling at the same time. Pupils in each class are now using joined legible writing earlier and more often in their work, and presentation generally has improved. Good work habits are being encouraged, as is the requirement for pupils to check their work. The handwriting of younger pupils is usually well formed, although many do not find it easy to space their words appropriately. Teachers work hard at this. By Year 2, the writing of most pupils is joined and legible. By Year 6, most pupils usually write in a fluent, joined style when writing final drafts. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are already establishing good work habits in their written work, but some older pupils are having to re-establish these to remember, for instance, to use simple punctuation correctly. Many pupils in Key Stage 2 find spelling difficult, particularly words based on regular patterns, and there has been insufficient work earlier in their school life on which they can base their knowledge. Roughly a quarter of Year 6 pupils develop their ideas thoughtfully and in detail and use words precisely and creatively to achieve a desired effect. They show confidence and independence in writing descriptions of 'Freddy', a character they have been studying, and can use quite complex sentences. Their work shows they have understood the implications of the character and used ideas that are compatible with it. All the pupils use similes, such as 'he leaped like a bullfrog and was as fast as a cheetah'. Work is carefully written and punctuated, but spelling, though improved, still shows some lack of structure, and for many there is little evidence of the use of complex sentences. Special needs and other less-able pupils are supported impressively in Year 6, and in other classes. They are gaining in confidence and enjoyment in their work, able to work well unsupported when asked to and showing both good ideas and improved English skills.
57. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some that is very good and excellent at Key Stage 2. All teachers are committed to improving standards, and work hard to motivate and challenge their pupils, which is often done with enthusiasm. The pupils are becoming more confident in their work. At Key Stage 1, the work is varied and interesting and usually matched successfully to the needs of individual pupils so that each achieves. Year 1 pupils, for instance, explain how to make jam sandwiches and Year 2 pupils write about Florence Nightingale, a few showing considerable sensitivity. However, by Year 2, the writing of many, although factually correct, shows the use of only a few interesting words and is not always clear. There is evidence of extended writing in both year groups. Current achievement by most pupils in the school is often good. The attitudes of pupils are improving, and older pupils, for instance, who were formerly less interested in literature and in writing are now better motivated. They enjoy the work and respond to the high expectations set by their teachers in lessons, which usually show both pace and quality. The teachers share their expectations about what will be learned with the pupils and check on it well. Their questioning is usually challenging and develops learning. Many intervene well in lessons and use the information

gained to develop learning further. All use a range of methods effectively and in some lessons short bursts of different activities involve pupils constantly in their learning. Younger pupils do not always listen and pay attention and the pace of the lesson slows, as does learning, when this happens. All teachers respond to the pupils' work positively and some show clearly how they can improve it, with good use made of targets, but this is not yet fully consistent. Work at home provides good support for work in school, and parents are generally happy with this.

58. Several initiatives, some with local education authority support, have been introduced to raise standards. These are co-ordinated effectively by a leadership group that includes the headteacher. Many strategies are not yet well established, nor the full impact felt, because of their recent introduction, but there is a strong commitment by the whole staff team to improve the teaching and learning of English. The initiative to improve reading is playing an important role in raising achievement in English overall. The monitoring of teaching and learning, planning and work is under developed, but plans to do so are realistic and achievable. Guidelines for teachers have improved since the previous inspection, as has the planning of work. However, the objectives for some lessons in Key Stage 1 are not sufficiently specific and the activities planned are not always matched closely to them. Aspects of the assessment of pupils' learning have improved, such as the use of targets and assessments in progress books. Some use is being made of information gained from assessments, and of the analysis of results, to improve teaching, learning and standards. Although showing signs of improvement, these are still under developed. Further development is also needed to ensure the careful tracking of individual progress in all elements of the subject. Though leading the subject satisfactorily, the current team will shortly make way for one subject leader, who already has a clear vision for the further development of the subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Pupils in all classes write for a variety of purposes and for different audiences and use their writing skills well in many subjects such as science, religious education, geography and history, design and technology and art and design. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. There has been no effective library provision in school until recently to provide regular opportunities for pupils to use books to develop research skills, for instance, in geography and history. However, it is clear that pupils have used non-fiction books from an early age to find information. In Year 1, for example, they found out about cats and kittens, and in Year 4 collected information about India, which they presented in attractive leaflets for a geography topic. Pupils also have regular opportunities to retrieve information using the Internet, and use their word-processing skills to aid their writing. The newly-created library area is now in use and book stock is improving, as a result of support from parents and non-teaching staff and the involvement of pupils and the community.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and broadly average by the end of Year 6. Whilst standards at Year 2 are lower than at the time of the previous inspection, they are better than those achieved in the national tests last year.
- Based on their prior attainment, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 to 6.
- Some pupils in Year 2 are less confident in tackling work in subtraction and multiplication.
- Teaching is good in Key Stage 2, with teachers making particularly good use of mental sessions to develop pupils' skills and understanding; it is satisfactory in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils generally show good attitudes towards the subject.
- The role played by the subject leader, especially in relation to recent improvements, is good.

Commentary

60. Although results in 2003 were below average by the time pupils left the school and well below average for younger pupils, standards overall are continuing to rise. Standards this year, which are now broadly in line with the national average, show significant improvement on the levels at which pupils enter the school. Most pupils, including higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs, are achieving well in mathematics. By Year 2, pupils are confident in handling numbers in relation to addition, but a minority are less secure in tackling subtraction exercises. Similarly, whilst many know the multiplication facts relating to 2, 5 and 10, others find this more difficult. Pupils identify halves and quarters successfully, and most can name a range of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Many measure successfully using standard units. Pupils collect information readily, as for example on eye colour, and they display their findings successfully in pictograms. By Year 6, most pupils undertake work confidently in all four aspects of number, including those involving decimals. They have a clear knowledge of place value to six figures, and, although some find it difficult, most pupils are able to recall individual multiplication and division facts to 10×10 . Many pupils have a clear understanding of fractions, identifying equivalent fractions readily and finding a fraction or percentage part of a whole number. Higher attainers can measure angles accurately in different shapes. A small number of pupils currently have difficulties in tackling problem solving activities, especially where more than one step is required.
61. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is good, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons are planned carefully, based on the pattern of the National Numeracy framework. Lessons start with lively mental sessions, and teachers are most careful to involve all pupils. This develops pupils' enthusiasm for the lessons. Teachers make careful allowance for the provision of problem solving activities, being aware that this is an area of weakness for some older pupils, and this clearly benefits their learning. Suitable assessment procedures are in place, and teachers use the information gained to provide work that suits pupils' different needs very adequately, especially those of the higher attainers. These challenging activities, together with the good support provided by teachers and teaching assistants, allow pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to achieve well. In Years 1 and 2, where the pace of the lessons tends to be less brisk, and the work sometimes less demanding, pupils make satisfactory progress.
62. Pupils clearly enjoy the work, especially those in Years 3 to 6. They settle to their written tasks with interest and enthusiasm, work well with other pupils, when required, and make suitable efforts to complete their tasks. They are generally well behaved, and this enables them to concentrate well and make suitable progress. Just occasionally, when they are not fully involved in the lesson, a small number of younger pupils become inattentive. Most pupils take care with the appearance of their books, and indeed some take considerable pride in their work. Whilst some teachers provide detailed comments of encouragement and advice in their marking, others provide little more than ticks. Opportunities are then missed to help pupils improve their work further.
63. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues well when required, and her leadership is good. She monitors regularly the work being produced, and a close eye has been kept on the standards being achieved and the overall provision being made. She has contributed well to the improving standards. She has some opportunities to observe lessons in other classes, so has been able to help identify the shortcomings in pupils' work and suggest ways of tackling them. She is fully aware of pupils' current skills, knowledge and understanding, and is putting in place strategies to help deal with the weaknesses shown by some pupils in relation to subtraction and multiplication.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. The basic skills of numeracy are taught appropriately in mathematics lessons. These skills are also developed suitably in subjects such as geography and science. Some use is also made

of ICT to enhance work in mathematics, such as in data-handling in Year 2 and in work on measuring angles in Year 6. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory** overall, and is improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at present are below the national average by the time pupils leave the school, mainly because the investigative element of the subject has been insufficiently developed.
- There is little formal recording of the progress being made by individual pupils, although some developments in assessment are now being introduced.
- There is now a stronger sense of staff commitment to the subject's development, and a determination to raise its status in the school.

Commentary

65. The most recent results in national tests at the age of 11 were well below average when compared with both national figures and those for similar schools. Standards had declined significantly after the last inspection, but have been improving steadily overall since then. They have improved to a point where, although they are currently below average, there are clear indications that the school is on course to reach a level that is in line with national expectations before long. Standards at the age of seven have also been well below average. Although still below average, there is also improvement at this age. The school has already identified that the main area for development to reach its targets for the subject is in the pupils' familiarity with investigative work, and this is where the improvement is taking place. Since standards on entry are below average, pupils of all attainment levels are achieving at least satisfactorily to reach the levels they are. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and, in common with the rest of their year groups, are currently achieving appropriately. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils was below average last year, but is greater this year.
66. The pupils generally make at least satisfactory progress in most aspects of the science curriculum as they go through the school. Pupils in Year 5, for instance, showed good understanding of the relationships between the sun, earth and moon, and how this affects day and night, the seasons and how we perceive the shape of the moon. Pupils throughout the school, however, are more limited in their ability to conduct scientific investigations. Although they show developing understanding of the principles of fair testing, they have not been introduced to a sufficiently thorough approach to how to conduct investigations. Their response to a very useful formalised structure for this work introduced recently in Year 6 shows that they can cope well with the concepts of fairness, variables, predictions and hypotheses, but their introduction to this approach has been insufficiently systematic as they have gone through the school. The size and nature of some of the classrooms mean that practical work can be difficult, but the intention is now to make this the basis for all work in science, making increasing use of opportunities for the more open-ended investigative approaches that are important for success in the subject. As their language skills develop, pupils enjoy the opportunity to use specific scientific language and to discuss their findings with others. They record their findings in a variety of ways and usually with care, although some continue to have difficulty with spelling. The collaborative skills pupils need for the subject are now developing well because of the school's overall approach to personal and social development, encouraging much use of group working.
67. The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is good overall. In lessons seen during the inspection, interesting activities ensured the involvement of all pupils, who made appropriate gains in knowledge and understanding. For instance, pupils in Year 2 were thrilled by their ice balloon investigation, gaining useful experience in making predictions and recording their

findings in a well-planned lesson. Pupils in Year 6 were equally excited by the way in which the appearance of the materials they were studying had changed by being frozen and heated. They enjoyed the practical observations and took care in recording them, with very good questioning and other prompts by the teacher.

68. As the school has understandably concentrated on raising standards in numeracy and literacy, as well as improving the pupils' attitudes to learning, science has not been seen as first priority. However, improvements in these areas should now benefit this subject. The subject is well led, but the co-ordinator has not yet been able to monitor work in other classes. There is no formal action plan for the subject, but the school is clear that this needs to be focused particularly on the development of the investigative element, supported by a clear scheme of work that incorporates the specific development, assessment and recording of pupils' scientific skills. There is a commitment among the staff to make this happen and to ensure that the subject has a higher profile.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection, and is now **satisfactory**, enabling standards to rise.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the last report and are now broadly in line with national expectations throughout the school.
- Pupils now have regular and frequent access to computers, so that they are able to develop their skills progressively.
- ICT is used well in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils do not always know what they should do to improve.

Commentary

69. There have been many improvements since the last report, when standards and progress were deemed to be unsatisfactory. Teachers are now benefiting from using the new and more reliable computer system available in the ICT suite. As a consequence, they are more confident in teaching the subject, and pupils not only have more opportunities to practise their skills, but also appreciate the reliability of the new network. Teachers plan their lessons well, using structured guidelines to ensure that pupils develop their skills progressively. All staff, including teaching assistants, have been well trained, and all have sufficient expertise to extend pupils' learning. Teaching assistants are used well, and in one lesson observed the assistant encouraged the pupils to explain the consequences of their choices when using a simulation program to make a duck fly. Her quality questioning helped the pupils make appropriate choices and eventually succeed. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a firm judgement on teaching, but examination of pupils' work shows that they are working at appropriate levels and that skills are developing well.
70. Information and communication technology is used well to support other areas of the curriculum, which, in turn, provide the opportunities for pupils to use, develop and refine their ICT skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 combine information gathered from a geography field trip with their ICT skills to produce an effective 'PowerPoint' presentation about rivers. Pupils are adept at creating their own multimedia presentations, changing backgrounds and fonts, and adding appropriate animation and graphics to digital images taken in the field. During this session, these pupils used a range of effects confidently to enhance their presentations, showing that their skills are developing well.
71. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader, the headteacher, has a very clear overview of the subject and its strengths and weaknesses. Although there has been no direct monitoring of teaching, he has worked alongside staff, providing a good role

model by supporting and training colleagues. He also examines pupils' work, and is very aware of the areas that have been covered and the overall standards. He has encouraged teachers to plan work so that ICT is used regularly to support other subjects, thus ensuring that pupils appreciate how useful these skills are. This approach also maximises the use of curriculum time and the pupils' personal development, as they make their own choices when applying their skills. He is aware that the 'monitoring' strand of the curriculum is at present underdeveloped, but he has plans to address this with the acquisition of new resources. Pupils use e-mail and the Internet for research, and the subject leader has plans for the pupils to update and service the school's website. There has been considerable improvement in provision since the last inspection, with the result that standards have risen and the requirements of the National Curriculum are met.

72. Assessment is being developed. It is inconsistent at present, and, although teachers record the areas that pupils have covered, there is no direct link between these and the National Curriculum expected levels. Pupils are, therefore, sometimes unsure of what they need to do to improve.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. All opportunities are explored to use ICT skills to support other areas of the curriculum. They are used well, for instance, to support pupils' literacy work, as when pupils in Year 4 combine text and graphics imaginatively to illustrate their seasonal poems. In mathematics, Year 2 pupils process data confidently to produce a graph on varying eye colours of the members of the class. Pupils in Year 5 use spreadsheets as well as drawing two-dimensional shapes using accurate instructions, thus reinforcing their work on angles.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected individually and is reported below. One lesson was seen in history, in which pupils in Year 3 compared Roman soldiers and Celtic warriors, using the evidence provided by contemporary sources. The lesson was taught very well and pupils of all capabilities showed good understanding. Pupils in Year 1 (and their parents) were also clearly enjoying current work on their toy museum. No lesson observations were made of geography, but interesting current work on a local environmental issue was seen in Year 5. The evidence gathered from samples of pupils' previous work and from displays around the school, such as the impressive river study by Year 6, confirmed that pupils enjoy both subjects and are achieving well in them.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards throughout the school are broadly in line with those expected by the locally-agreed syllabus.
- Pupils are encouraged continually to relate what they are learning to their own experience, and their work in religious education makes a good contribution to their personal and social development.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good, but there is no formal assessment or recording of the progress pupils make.

Commentary

74. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject by the time they leave the school are generally in line with the level required by the locally-agreed syllabus for religious education. This means that most are beginning to develop a useful understanding of key features of Christianity and of aspects of some of the other main religions in this country, and are making an increasingly thoughtful response to the ideas and practices they encounter. Since levels of attainment on entry to the school are below average and many of the pupils have little background knowledge of religion to draw on, they are achieving well to reach the standards they do. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by the teachers and teaching assistants and their achievement is in line with that of other groups.
75. It was only possible to see one lesson during the inspection, but the evidence available of work completed previously by pupils in books and on display indicates that the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The pupils are introduced to topics in interesting and relevant ways. Pupils in Year 3, for instance, consider the meaning of Christian symbols such as the dove and the fish, and relate these well to everyday signs and symbols with which they are familiar. They show good knowledge of appropriate bible stories. Specific links are sometimes made with the pupils' learning in other subjects, as when pupils in Year 4 undertake their work on Hinduism while studying India in geography. Some use is made of visits to places of worship such as the cathedral and the synagogue in Exeter, but the co-ordinator is keen to extend the possibilities for first-hand experience through greater use of visits and visitors and the purchase of a more representative collection of artefacts. The subject is making a useful contribution to the development of the pupils' multicultural awareness through their study of aspects of Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, helping to encourage the pupils' respect for other people's beliefs.
76. Pupils are encouraged in all the topics they study to see the relevance of what they are learning to their own feelings and experiences. For instance, when considering how worship might take place in a Hindu home, pupils in Year 4 are encouraged to write thoughtfully about their own 'special place'. Pupils are prepared to share their thoughts and feelings because of the positive atmosphere created by the teachers, who know their pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. This sort of sharing helps pupils of all ages to develop awareness of and respect for each other's views and opinions, and is handled by the teachers with care. This approach links well with the school's general programme of PSHE, so the subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development. The teachers are aware of how well pupils are getting on, but at present there is no formal assessment or recording of the progress they make. The subject is well led, although the co-ordinator has not yet had the opportunity to see work in other classes. It has an appropriate place in the curriculum, as at the time of the last inspection, and opportunities are being sought to extend its links with art and design and music.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. Two lessons were seen in art and design during the inspection. From these and the work displayed around the school both teaching and learning appear to be at least good. Work is completed with skill and care, showing good use of a variety of teaching techniques and considerable creativity. For instance, excellent links were made with visits pupils had undertaken and their designs for a new town crest in the style of Paul Klee, and the making of a panel to reflect the views of a river walk. In both of the lessons seen, the pupils were genuinely inspired by the experiences. Examination of the work on display indicates that the work planned in art and design is varied and interesting. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. This lively approach is certainly evident in the display of 'wacky art' in the style of Hundertwasser. In this activity, very effective use was made of ICT skills to create digital images of different textures. Pupils combined these with repeated patterns created on the computer to produce very pleasing results. Sketchbooks have recently been introduced, and should enable teachers to track that pupils are developing their artistic skills progressively. Pupils enjoy a wide breadth of activities during arts week, and learn a range of

skills, including weaving, sculpture, and textiles. The work on display that was done during this week is of high quality, showing that pupils benefit greatly from this initiative.

78. During the inspection, one Year 5 lesson was seen in design and technology, and no overall judgement can be made on teaching and learning. However, in the lesson seen pupils showed only the beginnings of understanding of the design implications. The teacher had clear learning objectives, questioned well and had good resources for the pupils to handle. The plenary session was particularly effective in reinforcing the objectives of the lesson. The pupils learned about environmental and safety issues and about the world of commerce. The quality of teaching and learning was good, as were the attitudes of the pupils. The school acknowledges that standards are below those expected because of coverage in the past. Work available in the school showed that provision is clearly improving, as are resources, and a new co-ordinator is undergoing in-depth training, which will be passed on to staff.
79. No lessons were seen in music during the inspection, and no overall judgement is made. However, in the acts of worship and singing practices, pupils sang with enthusiasm and good skill, showing very appropriate control of rhythm and pitch. The older pupils also sang with clear diction, and they kept together well, both when performing accompanied and unaccompanied. Their singing was of a standard higher than expected. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were very good, and they clearly enjoy 'making music'. A study of teachers' plans shows that appropriate coverage is now made for the subject during the year, with planning having improved since the last inspection. The overall provision for music is enhanced by instrumental tuition, the extra-curricular recorders group and the very popular choir.
80. During the inspection, only one Year 1 lesson was seen in physical education, and no overall judgement is made. However, in the lesson seen, pupils showed suitable control and co-ordination in carrying out various games activities. In particular, they worked successfully both in small groups and as a whole class. The quality of teaching was good, as was the pupils' behaviour. The teaching was undertaken by teaching assistants, and this is a particularly good initiative in using and developing staff expertise. The standard of the work seen was broadly as expected. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 attend swimming lessons during the year, and, by the end of Year 4, at least 60 percent can swim 25 metres, with some swimming significantly further. Planning for the subject has improved, and it shows that all areas of work are tackled during the year. Provision is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, including opportunities for competitive sport.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81. Much work takes place in the school to support the pupils' personal and social development. All classes, for instance, have regular sessions when they are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings in a sensitive and supportive atmosphere while seated in a circle. This is made possible by the careful and thoughtful approach of the teachers and teaching assistants, which is typical of the school's caring ethos. Values are promoted through the school's daily acts of collective worship and through the overall programme for personal, social and health education. This provision is good, and there is clear evidence throughout this report that the school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop positive and responsible attitudes. All pupils derive much benefit from their involvement with pupils of all ages in the home groups and the discussions that take place there. The pupils' sense of citizenship is encouraged through the organisation of the children's council, in which elected pupils run meetings and make decisions that have an impact on their lives at school. The council meets regularly under the care of a teacher. These responsibilities are taken very seriously by all pupils. As a result, pupils of all ages are encouraged to develop a sense of ownership and of pride in their school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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