

INSPECTION REPORT

BLANDFORD ST MARY C of E VA FIRST SCHOOL

Blandford Forum

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113795

Headteacher: Mrs Judith Baker

Lead inspector: Mr Martin Kerly

Dates of inspection: 13 – 15 January 2004

Inspection number: 260585

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	114
School address:	Birch Avenue Blandford St Mary Blandford Forum Dorset
Postcode:	DT11 9QD
Telephone number:	01258 453331
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Anthony Read
Date of previous inspection:	24 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Blandford St Mary C of E VA First School is a new purpose built modern building in Blandford St Mary, a growing residential village community on the fringe of the market town of Blandford Forum, in rural Dorset. The local housing, much of which is new, is a mixture of privately owned, local authority and housing association properties. Numbers on roll are growing significantly from 76 in 2000 to 114 at the time of the inspection, 63 boys and 51 girls. Children enter the school part-time in the September term of the year in which they are five, and attend full time from January. At the end of Year 4 children transfer to one of the two local middle schools. The local education authority (LEA) is currently reviewing school organisation across the district with the possibility of moving to a two-tier system. Under the current LEA proposals Blandford St Mary's School would become an all through primary school for pupils from four to 11 years old. Almost all the pupils are white with a tiny proportion from ethnic minorities. Employment rates are high in the community and very few of the pupils qualify for free school meals. However, the area is high on Dorset's index of social deprivation and nearly 35 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs; this is well above the national average. The majority of the pupils' attainment on entry is lower than that expected nationally. The majority of these have learning difficulties and or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. One is autistic and two have physical disabilities. Four pupils have formal Statements of Special Educational Needs. This is more than twice the number expected for a school of this size. There are only two pupils for whom English is not their first language; neither of these are at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are no travellers, asylum seekers or refugees. The school received Schools Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2002, Healthy School status in 2003 and is currently applying for the Arts Mark and the Basic Skills Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12783	Martin Kerly	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Information and communication technology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Blandford St Mary First School is a good school and provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well. They enter the school with standards below national expectations; by the time they leave standards are generally in line with national averages as a result of good teaching.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good overall; in the reception class and in Year 1 they are very good.
- Pupils achieve well in most aspects of the curriculum, particularly in writing and the performing arts of music and art.
- Not all of the information and communications technology (ICT) curriculum is taught and standards in ICT are below national expectations.
- The provision for special educational needs is very good and these pupils achieve very well.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- The inconsistent quality of teaching of reading is unsatisfactory in certain classes.
- The school has very good links with parents, partner schools and the community.
- Some more able pupils make insufficient progress in reading, mathematics, science and ICT.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils who behave well. It supports and guides them very well. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

The school has maintained the strengths from the last inspection and made good progress at improving nearly all the weaknesses; the teaching and learning policy has been developed helping to strengthen practice; there is now very good tracking of pupils' progress throughout their time in school; teaching in science and mathematics is carefully planned to ensure pupils' skills progress from year to year, and subject co-ordinators provide sound leadership for their subjects. Progression of skills in ICT is the only previous issue yet to be fully addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average. Similar schools refers to the proportion of pupils who qualify for free school meals.

Most pupils achieve well during their time in school from standards below national expectations on arrival. Whilst relatively few qualify for free school meals there is an unusually high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs; almost all of these pupils achieved well and many very well, attaining the national minimum expectations at the end of Year 2. Very few pupils exceeded these minimum expectations. Pupils in the reception year achieve very well from a low base on entry, making good gains in all aspects of the curriculum, and very good gains in personal, social development and mathematical development reaching the goals expected by the end of the year. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve well and standards in tests at the end of Year 4 in the summer of 2003 show standards for some pupils to be above the national average, particularly in writing. Inspection evidence confirms this good rate of overall achievement. Pupils' achievement in ICT is below expectations and some of the more able pupils could achieve more in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in music are well above expectations and in art they are above expectations. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls.

Pupils have good attitudes towards school, each other and themselves. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. They are positive about their work and enjoy participating in the wide range of curriculum activities. They fulfil additional responsibilities very well, for example membership of the school council or as peer mediators. Almost all behave well in lessons and throughout the day. Attendance is good and pupils arrive in school on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided across the school is good. Teaching is very good in the reception class and in Year 1, and good overall across the school so that the pupils learn well. The pupils respond well to the imaginative and carefully presented activities and this strengthens their learning. Teachers plan lessons well. Teaching assistants make a very good and skilled contribution to the learning, especially by the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers assess pupils' progress well and use the information to plan future work. Teachers have a secure understanding of ICT but pupils' learning in ICT is unsatisfactory as they currently have few first hand opportunities to use computers. Some of the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and could achieve more in reading, mathematics and science. **There is good curriculum provision overall**, with some very good features, especially the range of experiences in the performing arts, the mixed age cross curricular activities, the range and quality of extra curricular opportunities, and the well planned provision for pupils with special educational needs. Not all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements in ICT are currently included. The very good links with the community, other schools and parents strengthen the range of experiences. **The school has very good procedures for the care, support and guidance of all the pupils.** They are very well known by the staff team and all pupils benefit from trusting relationships.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and managed. Leadership by the headteacher is **very good**. Governance of the school is **sound**. The school is managed **effectively**. The headteacher provides very good leadership. Her vision for the school, energy, commitment and high aspirations have impacted very positively on the school since taking up post. In the absence of a senior management team she assumes many responsibilities but other members of staff support her in the various development projects and are actively involved in monitoring the quality of education in a recently established annual cycle of self-review. Governors are supportive, committed and well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are aware of the current limitations in ICT provision and their plans to address this are well advanced. Their annual report to parents does not include comment on the effectiveness of the SEN support.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have positive views about the school. Almost all parents feel pleased with their children's progress and most feel well informed. Around 20 per cent do not feel consulted about the work of the school. All the pupils report being well cared for and most enjoy their lessons. Nearly a quarter of them report that other children do not behave well. Inspectors find the information to parents is good and there have been opportunities to consult parents. Pupils behaviour overall is good although a small minority, mainly boys in Years 3 and 4, show challenging behaviour in a few lessons.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise the standards in ICT and its use by the pupils to support learning in other subjects.
- ensure there is consistently good quality teaching of reading, making the best use of the additional time given to this key skill.
- ensure all the more able pupils are fully challenged in reading, mathematics, science and ICT.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure all aspects of the ICT curriculum are fully covered in all year groups.
- ensure the governors' annual report to parents includes an evaluation on the effectiveness of special educational needs provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards of attainment are below national expectations on entry to the school. Achievement overall is good and by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Attainment in ICT is below national expectations. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is very good as it is in Year 1. Achievement by the less able pupils is particularly good. These pupils make up a large proportion of the school population. Some of the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they could in reading, mathematics, science and ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage as do the pupils in Year 1.
- Pupils achieve well in writing across the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and many attain the average expected for their age by the end of Years 2 and 4.
- Some of the more able pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 do not achieve their full potential, particularly in reading, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Standards in the performing arts, particularly in music are well above national expectations and the pupils' achievement is very good.

Commentary

1. Results from the most recent national tests in the summer of 2003 show standards attained in reading, writing, mathematics and science to be broadly in line with the national averages, with writing standards relatively strong and reading a little weaker. Almost all pupils attained the national minimum expectations, but very few exceeded them in reading, mathematics and science. A significant proportion of the pupils exceeded the national expectations in writing. The performance over time indicates an upward trend since 2000 in all three subjects, English, mathematics and science. However, results in 1999 were exceptionally high and so the overall trend over the four years since that time has been below the national trend. Tests at the end of Year 4 in the summer of 2003 using national materials also indicated above average standards in writing for the majority of pupils and average standards in reading, mathematics and science.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003¹

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.1 (14.7)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.0 (13.5)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.6 (16.8)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below national expectations, particularly in personal and social skills, communications, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. By the time they leave the school standards are overall in line with national averages indicating good overall achievement.
3. The pupils achieve very well during the Foundation Stage and attain standards near to national expectations by the end of the reception year in all six areas of learning. Their achievements in

¹ All levels of the National Curriculum are awarded a points score. The average score for all pupils taking the test is used to grade schools in each year. The expected average points at age seven is 15.5. Tables are adjusted to reflect the national average score before grading. The grades are shown in the summary.

personal and social development and in mathematics are particularly good and almost all pupils are on track to attain the Early Learning Goals at the end of the reception year for these areas of learning. Achievement in the other areas of learning is good and the majority of pupils are expected to be close to the Early Learning Goals in communications, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development.

4. Achievement across Key Stage 1 and during the first two years of Key Stage 2 is good overall. In Year 1 it is very good. By the time the pupils reach the end of Year 4 they are attaining standards in reading, mathematics, science, geography, history and physical education which are broadly in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement recognising the below average attainment on entry to the school. Standards in writing are above the national average by the end of Year 4 reflecting very good achievement over time in the school. This is a strength of the school. The relatively large proportion of pupils with special educational needs achieves very well as a direct consequence of the very good provision these pupils receive. Standards in art and design are good and in music they are very good across the school reflecting the significant whole-school focus on the performing arts. Pupils achieve well in personal and social development from a low base on entry to the school and standards are at least in line with national expectations by the time they leave the school. There is no significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls. There is insufficient inspection evidence to make a judgement about standards in design and technology, geography and history.
5. Standards in ICT are below the national expectations at the end of Year 2 and when the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. Pupils' achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory overall, particularly in those aspects the school is unable to teach at present as a result of shortcomings in the ICT equipment. Weak areas include keyboard skills, using the Internet to research information, using electronic mail, and handling and interpreting data. Standards in reading are satisfactory for most pupils; however, fewer pupils exceed national expectations than is normal and the quality of teaching reading varies considerably from one class to another. Relatively few pupils exceed national expectations in mathematics, science and ICT: a proportion of the pupils of above average ability do not achieve as well as they could in these core subjects. The relatively modest standards in reading somewhat restrict the pupils' learning in other curriculum areas, however their well developed writing skills ensure satisfactory use of overall literacy skills to support their study in other curriculum areas. Their numeracy skills are secure although some pupils' limited skills in measurement and setting out data in tables impede some of their work, for example in science.

Pupils' attitudes, values, and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school, including those of the youngest pupils, are **good** because the provision for social and moral education is of a **very high** quality. Pupils feel valued and their opinions are respected. Behaviour is **good** overall with some very good behaviour noted. However, there were a few examples of inappropriate behaviour observed which were mainly well handled by the staff. Attendance rates are **good** and most pupils arrive on time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The School Council makes a very good contribution to pupils' attitudes to life and school, values and their personal development for all pupils.
- Pupils are very interested in all aspects of school life.
- When given responsibility they show confidence and enthusiasm.
- They have very positive relationships with each other and with the adults they meet. Very good provision for moral and social development promotes very good relationships.
- The peer mediation structure is very effective in helping pupils to resolve difficulties.
- Attitudes to school life and work by almost all pupils are good.
- Attendance rates and punctuality are good.
- Behaviour overall is good in lessons and throughout the day.

- Whilst overall spiritual development is good there is a lack of spirituality in assemblies.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

There have been no permanent or fixed period exclusions in the last three years. This is a positive feature.

Commentary

6. Pupils’ attendance and punctuality are good, influencing learning positively. Pupils’ work attitudes are very good and most try to do their best, usually achieving this aim. However, some lessons do not engage a few pupils, and this can lead to restlessness. Pupils work happily together, often sharing ideas or offering support to others. They comment positively about their own and others’ work.
7. By Year 4, pupils behave with considerable maturity, knowing the importance of their role in the school community. Responsibility is encouraged through the peer mediation system and through the school council that provides very good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities within the school. It makes a very good contribution to pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development, the whole-school assembly which follows the council meeting successfully enables all pupils to be involved in decision making and actions.
8. Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Provision for spiritual development is good. The very well managed personal social health education (PSHE) programme helps pupils to see themselves as responsible members of the school community and places a high priority on raising individual confidence and self-esteem, with very good results. All pupils are included and each individual is valued. Their achievements, whether academic, vocational, or personal, are always celebrated. Pupils’ self-esteem is raised through performing in assemblies, whole-school performances and concerts and through good use of praise by the staff in lessons. In a Year 1 PSHE lesson, pupils chose a ‘special person of the week’ and were encouraged to explain the special qualities of that pupil and this had a positive effect on all the pupils in the class. However, the inspection team found that there was a lack of spirituality in assemblies.
9. Provision for pupils’ social and moral development is very good. All pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong. Pupils generally behave very well in lessons and around the school. In a few lessons a small minority of pupils, mainly boys in Years 3 and 4, show challenging behaviour. This is well managed by the teaching assistants and class teachers. There are good structures for behaviour management and the pupils are aware of how their behaviour affects others. Older pupils train as peer mediators and are able to reflect on the effectiveness of the system. In their regular meeting with the organiser, they have modified the system so that it is more effective. Whole-school assembly time has been devoted to a role-play of the mediation system, using the story of ‘Jack and Jill’ to demonstrate to younger pupils. Also, during the build up towards the production of ‘The Jungle Book’ pupils in role as Mowgli and Shere Khan went through the mediation process in the Year 1 class: this enabled these pupils to observe the benefits of the system.
10. Collective worship meets statutory requirements and opportunities are planned for pupils to learn about, and have respect for, the celebrations and beliefs of other faiths in religious

education lessons. Pupils are encouraged to be proud of their own religious beliefs and feel confident in expressing their views.

11. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about their own cultures and an excellent range of opportunities to contribute and perform within the school and community in local festivals. Musical events include opportunities to take part in annual school performances and concerts. Pupils wrote and recorded their own song after a musical workshop and it was played on the local radio station. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to find out about other cultures however.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **good** and, as a result, pupils **learn well** in lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in the reception class and in Year 1 are very good and sometimes excellent.
- The deployment and contribution by the teaching assistant in the Foundation Stage are excellent.
- Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to the teaching and learning in a range of subjects across the school, particularly in support of pupils with special educational needs whose learning is good.
- The quality of teaching of reading is inconsistent and does not make best use of the additional time allocated in some classes.
- Learning in ICT is limited by the poor direct access for many pupils to reliable computers.
- Teaching and learning in the performing arts are very good and pupils respond very positively.
- Assessment procedures are well developed across the curriculum and teachers use them well to plan for whole classes and some specific groups of pupils.
- Some teachers' expectations and challenge of more able pupils are not high enough in reading, mathematics, science and ICT.

Commentary

12. The good teaching and learning reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained with some further overall improvements. The excellent teaching is within the Foundation Stage and in Year 1. Overall good teaching and learning are found across the school and in several curriculum areas, notably in writing lessons, mathematics, science, music and PSHE lessons. The occasional unsatisfactory lesson is related to low expectations by the teacher and insufficient challenge for the pupils. These are an exception to the usual high expectations found in lessons.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	3	14	8	2	0	0

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

13. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well and explain the learning intentions carefully to the pupils helping them to understand the context of the activities and what is expected of them. This planning frequently, although not always, takes account of different groups within the class. For example a Year 3 science lesson in which more able pupils were required to devise their own recording sheet for an experiment whilst less able pupils were given a proforma to complete. In some lessons whilst teachers set different levels of activities for each ability group,

that set for the more able is not challenging enough; for example in a Year 2 mathematics lesson the more able were working on pairing two digit numbers although several of them were able to demonstrate confidence in working in a similar way with three digit numbers; and in a Year 4 reading lesson whilst the teacher was working effectively with one group, other pupils were occupied on low grade activities limiting any learning.

14. Much of the good, very good and excellent learning is a direct result of the imaginatively planned and presented activities which capture the pupils' interest. Examples of this: include the excellent use of puppets in the reception year and again in Year 1 with the pupils having to listen carefully to the puppet's interpretation and enjoying correcting its mistakes; the use of role play by a guest giant in the reception class; the hands on experiments in science; for example investigating insulation in Year 4; cross curricular links, for example art and science in a Year 1 lesson, in which pupils considered a range of manufactured and natural materials, used them to weave patterns and then evaluated their work. In creative arts, especially music and drama the pupils respond very positively indeed to the very good expertise, subject knowledge and demonstrations by the teachers; they learn quickly and enjoy their own success and the thrill from performing to an appreciative audience in routine lessons, whole-school assemblies and special performances such as the recent Jungle Book production.
15. A strong feature of the teaching and learning is related to the deployment of teaching assistants and the skilled contributions they make. This is excellent in the reception class and very good elsewhere in the school. Teachers produce helpful plans for the teaching assistants when working with small groups of pupils. The assistants work effectively alongside individual pupils who have learning difficulties, particularly those with emotional difficulties resulting in challenging behaviour, so that these pupils can be included in the whole-class sessions, they can respond and contribute to question and answer sessions and feel valued. During small group times, the teaching assistants frequently work with pupils of below average ability within the classroom. They show good questioning skills and are sensitive to the learning needs of individual pupils and adopt good behaviour management strategies in line with the school behaviour policy. This additional support is a key factor in the very good achievement by so many of the pupils with special educational needs in the core subjects and across the curriculum.
16. Rarely do the teaching assistants or class teachers work with the more able groups of pupils who frequently are left to work independently. These pupils could make more gains if they were challenged more and had more frequent direct teaching in-put from either the teacher or the teaching assistant in reading, mathematics, science and ICT. In Year 2 the teaching assistant regularly works with pupils of below average ability in an area outside the classroom for the whole lesson. This is not appropriate and is contrary to the schools inclusion policy and otherwise very good inclusion practice.
17. Personal, social and health education teaching is an important feature within the school. Discrete lessons are well taught, and the recent introduction of a parachute provides an imaginative way of demonstrating mutual dependence and working together. However, the teachers consistently work hard to establish very good relationships with the pupils and between pupils and in many lessons personal and social development are continually strengthened, behaviour management is good and a learning ethos is successfully maintained in lessons.
18. Teachers assess pupils' progress well during lessons and at the end of units of work. They use these assessments well in planning subsequent lessons. In the reception class there is very thorough and regular on-going assessment through careful observation and intervention. In the infant and junior classes assessment in English and mathematics is particularly strong. Teachers regularly test their pupils; results are carefully recorded and the progress by individual pupils and whole-year groups is carefully monitored. This information is used to set targets for the end of the year, and longer-term provisional targets for the end of Year 6 in the partner middle schools. It is also used in English to set short-term curriculum targets; for example "I need to use paragraphs in my writing". These targets are shared with the pupils and parents helping the pupils to take responsibility for their learning.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good**. The range and quality of learning experiences for all pupils are **very good** and provision includes many very good features. However the current ICT curriculum **does not meet statutory requirements**. **Good** extra-curricular provision enriches the curriculum. The accommodation, quality and range of learning resources are **good**. Provision for pupils with special education needs is **very good** and the equality of access and opportunities for all pupils are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The creative arts are a strength of the school and impact positively on the pupils' attitudes.
- The Foundation Stage curriculum is well constructed and presented.
- The cross-phase cross-curricular 'golden time' sessions are an innovative feature.
- The statutory requirements of the ICT curriculum are not yet met and ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning across all subjects.
- The new system of curriculum planning successfully supports a cross-curricular approach.
- There is good accommodation, both inside and outside the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning.
- The use of first-hand experiences of visits enables pupils to relate classroom learning to real life.
- The match of support staff to the curriculum is very good.

Commentary

19. The school provides a broad, balanced and rich curriculum in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4. It meets statutory requirements for all its pupils except in ICT where the shortage of reliable computers limits the pupils' opportunities at present. Religious education is based on the Salisbury Diocese scheme of work and national guidance for religious education.
20. There has been good improvement since the last inspection related to the development of schemes of work in order to strengthen the progressive development of skills in mathematics and science; in ICT there have been improvements and ICT is systematically planned but in the absence of regular access many of the pupils' skills are yet to be fully developed.
21. The curriculum is inclusive and is a strength of the school with a strong focus on the creative arts curriculum involving all pupils. This strength was acknowledged by a recent LEA review of the school. There is a curriculum web demonstrating key skills, problem solving and investigative enquiry approaches. The creative curriculum is very strong and participation in the arts is excellent. It gives pupils of all abilities the opportunity to take part in many high quality curriculum enrichment experiences. These have included the Jungle Book production in school, an annual arts week involving professional artists and performers working with the pupils, the Greatest Puppet Show on Earth, involvement in the National Gallery 'Take One Picture' initiative where the pupils worked with an artist to create a three dimensional interpretation of Canaletto's 'The Stonemason's Yard'. In addition the school has close links with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and has had the benefit of a double bassist and a harpist visiting the school and playing to the pupils. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have been well implemented resulting in literacy and numeracy being evident in most subjects. The week of the inspection was designated Story Week in school with a deliberate focus on reading helping to address the recognised area in need of development. All the pupils had contributed to a collage of favourite writers and authors and shared story activities were planned for the week.
22. Information and communication technology provision is at present unsatisfactory. The weaknesses relate to too few opportunities to practise key board skills and mouse control, the use of the Internet for research, using electronic mail, data management and modelling.

Information and communication technology as a tool to support learning in all subjects is also unsatisfactory. The school has highlighted ICT as an area for development and a new ICT suite has just been built. New computers have been delivered but at the time of the inspection they were not in operation. Once the ICT suite is set up with these computers the school should be in a position to meet all the statutory requirements.

23. Curriculum policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects. Sex, drugs and alcohol education, health and safety, racial equality and action plan and special educational needs disability and action plan are all in place with PSHE as a strong focus in the school. Visits are conducted for Healthy schools and Life education. Good links are maintained with outside agencies, such as Social Services, educational welfare and the drop in service run by the school nurse for parents. The special educational needs curriculum provision is very good. Effective planning and sensitive support, frequently by skilled teaching assistants, enables all these pupils to access the full curriculum.
24. Teachers planning and assessment throughout the school are good. Tracking and forecasting procedures are in place and test data are used to provide targets for English and mathematics. However, the curriculum provision for a few of the more able pupils is not always secure in the core subjects. Talented pupils are well supported and challenged in creative subjects. Circle time is used well, as is time for pupils to contribute to the school council. The all-age cross-curricular projects are an innovative approach; in addition to the overt strengthening of National Curriculum coverage they contribute well to the personal and social development of the pupils promoting a family ethos within the school.
25. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision throughout the year in the form of clubs and very good rates of participation by the pupils in such activities as French, recorders, chess, singing, samba, athletics, gymnastics, computers, football, craft and nature study. The pupils' participation in the arts is excellent, with all of them being involved in regular whole-school productions and many representing the school in local festivals. These experiences are a key element in the school's commitment to include and value the contributions of all pupils. The very good links with other schools and organisations in the community significantly enhance and enrich the overall curriculum provision.
26. Teaching staff have the necessary qualifications and experience to meet current curriculum needs. The match of the support staff to the curriculum is very good. The teaching assistants work most effectively as a co-ordinated team with the class teachers. Accommodation is good both inside and outside. For example, there is a tactile trail that is used by pupils in the spring and summer for nature studies, sports pitches and a recently developed 'peaceful patch'. Resource provision overall is satisfactory but the library stock is limited and some geography resources need up-dating. The current access to computers is unsatisfactory but new equipment is ready to be installed which has the potential for transforming the provision.

Care, guidance and support

The schools' provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance are **very good**. The school provides **very good** opportunities to seek and value pupils' views to enable the school to be a happier and better place. This is a major strength of the school and an area of improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good levels of care for pupils' well being.
- There are very good procedures for child protection, health and safety and first aid.
- The provision of support, advice and guidance based on the monitoring of pupils' achievement is good.
- The pupils' induction to the school is very good.

- The school effectively seeks and values pupils' views and involvement in its work and development.

Commentary

27. The pupils are very well cared for throughout the school day and flourish within an enabling and supportive ethos. All of the adults who work in the school have formed close trusting relationships with the pupils. As a result pupils report they feel safe, secure, know whom to turn to should they need help, comfort or advice and they like their school.
28. The school has very good arrangements for child protection. The headteacher has shared her recent training with all the staff. She works closely with outside agencies and a member of the governing body to ensure children who may be at risk are well supported and cared for.
29. Provision for health and safety and first aid is very good. Detailed risk assessment for the school and school trips are carried out and monitored. Twelve members of staff have been trained in first aid. The school ensures classroom safety, for example a parent helper supported a science lesson when boiling water was used. The school is aware and prepared for the needs of pupils with medical conditions and there are arrangements to ensure the safety of pupils when using the Internet.
30. The school makes good use of assessment information about pupils' academic progress and their personal development to raise standards. For example performance data is used carefully in order to set targets for the end of the year and end of the pupils' time in the school. For pupils with special educational needs the school makes very good use of information, using teaching assistants, parent helpers and outside agencies to raise achievement to very good effect. The complex needs of some pupils are well supported. For example an autistic pupil is skilfully supported by a teaching assistant enabling him full access to the curriculum and participation in all activities. His self-esteem is boosted by carefully celebrating his skills in drawing which are used as a way into other learning. Lesson objectives are clear and pupils are aware of the targets they are set to help them to improve. The school celebrates pupils' achievement through classroom praise and achievement assemblies encouraging all pupils to do their best.
31. Induction arrangements for reception pupils are very good. There are links with pre-school groups and home visits, helping pupils to feel secure and settle well. Parents appreciate the information they receive and the opportunity to settle their children each morning. The very good relationships between parents and the class teacher ensure a very happy start to the pupils' learning.
32. The school seeks and values the pupils' views. The pupils are seen as individuals with thoughts, views and ideas of their own. The school council is active in seeking pupils' views and ideas and the whole-school assemblies ensure all pupils feel fully informed and involved. Previous years' activities and future plans, for example more playground games for the very young and to design and fundraise to provide a school pond, show the very good impact pupils have on their learning and the life of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, other schools and the community are **very good**.

Main strengths and weakness

- The school has the confidence of the parents.
- Parental involvement is very good.
- The parents are happy with the way the school deals with concerns and complaints.
- Letters and general information to parents are very good.

- The school provides parents with good information about the curriculum and how to help their children at home.
- The governors' annual report omits one minor element related to the success of special educational needs provision.
- Links with other schools, the local and wider community are very good.

Commentary

33. The school has the confidence of the parents. The school's open door approach is appreciated; parents are comfortable and welcome in the school. They are involved in their children's learning, support the school through the Friends' Association and many parents use their skills to help in the school. They are very happy with the way the school deals with any concerns or complaints they may have. The school reports that a very small number of parents do not help their children to complete their homework.
34. A minority of parents is undecided as to how well they are informed about pupils' progress and how well the school seeks their views. The school's national test results are not clearly presented in the school's prospectus or in the governors' annual report to parents. A statutory requirement to include the success of the special educational needs provision is omitted from the governors' annual report to parents. The parents are unable to make an accurate evaluation of the school's standards and success. Letters and general information are plentiful, informative and well presented. There is information for parents about the curriculum and how they can help their children at home. Parents' consultation evenings and pupils' individual annual reports keep parents well informed about pupils' progress. The school is receptive to parents' views through the school's first questionnaire and the open-door approach allows parents the opportunity to express their views.
35. The school has continued to have very good links with the local and wider community. It succeeds in providing many opportunities to broaden and enliven pupils' learning and promote their personal development. Links with the local church, brewery, museum, hospital and a home for the elderly are just a few examples. Pupils have been commissioned to create a mosaic of their old school on the wall of a local super store.
36. The Little Birch Pre School rents a building within the school grounds and shares the use of the school hall and grounds. There are growing links between the leader of this pre-school and the school staff. There are evening lettings for karate, a choral society and the parish council.
37. The school has continued to have very good links with the local cluster of small schools, with a number of shared curriculum and professional development initiatives; it liaises well with the middle school partners with regard to Key Stage 2 transfer. There are also good links with Blandford Upper School and Montacute Special School. There are teacher trainee placements from King Alfred's College and links with Bournemouth educational orchestra outreach. Parents report they are well informed of other schools and the induction for pupils is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher leads the school very well. The school is well managed. Governance of the school is sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and high expectations of the pupils and staff. Her leadership is focused on an innovative curriculum and pupils' learning.
- The provision for special educational needs is very good and there is a clear commitment to inclusion and the needs of all pupils.
- The school has very good systems for tracking performance of pupils and makes good use of the data.

- There is an effective programme of self-evaluation which is impacting on the quality of education.
- The governors are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Financial management and control are good and day-to-day procedures are very effective.
- There are two statutory requirements not currently fully met related to the ICT curriculum and the governors' annual report to parents.

Commentary

38. The headteacher works extremely hard and effectively within this small school. She has a very clear vision and high expectations of the pupils and staff colleagues. She is committed to providing an enriched and broad curriculum with a strong emphasis on the performing arts as a means to raising overall self-esteem and academic standards. Her own extremely high level of commitment and skill has played a significant part in bringing about good improvement in leadership and management since the last inspection. She strongly influences the curriculum and communicates her vision clearly for all. This vision has been a significant factor in the substantial rise in pupil numbers and in the building and site projects since her appointment in 2001.
39. Strategic planning is effective and involves staff and governors at the drafting and monitoring stages. The plan contains many targets for this relatively small team, including development and maintenance items. The main plan is complemented by detailed plans for the main priorities related to improving standards in reading, writing and provision in ICT. The school has very good performance data enabling accurate tracking of progress by individual pupils and whole year groups. The headteacher successfully leads this aspect and involves the subject leaders and class teachers appropriately so that it can be used effectively. There is a strong and all pervading commitment to inclusion within the school. All the pupils are equally valued and the rich performing arts curriculum enables them all to participate in high level activities. Talented pupils are encouraged in music, art and drama and perform in a variety of settings. The provision for special educational needs, which is led by the headteacher, is very well managed, ensuring early identification of difficulties, careful assessments, and clearly structured support programmes. Parents of these pupils are fully informed and involved in the support programmes. This very good provision enables the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs to achieve very well during their time in school.
40. The school is effectively managed and procedures and routines are clearly established. In this small school there are no other senior managers and the headteacher is reluctant to delegate unreasonable levels of responsibility to full-time class teachers with no salary enhancements. However, she successfully involves colleagues in decision making and policy formulation with well planned staff meetings and in service education in training (INSET) days related to whole school priorities. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator leads her team well. The science and recently appointed ICT co-ordinators are providing good leadership in their subjects. The core subjects of English and mathematics are led by experienced members of staff; their leadership in these subjects is satisfactory; it is strengthened by the headteacher who plays a key role in monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This is part of the successful self-evaluation annual cycle which is established and includes regular monitoring of teaching and learning, scrutinies of pupils' work, monitoring of curriculum planning and analysis of performance data. The headteacher's high expectations ensure self-evaluation is rigorous and weaknesses are addressed with clear timescales for improvement. Performance management is effectively led by the headteacher. It has been extended to include the support staff. All members of staff have clear objectives for development and opportunities to develop their skills.
41. Governors are very supportive of the school and use their expertise to help shape the future direction of the school. They have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and receive detailed information from the headteacher in addition to gaining first hand knowledge from their visits to the school and discussions with members of staff. Limitations in

the ICT curriculum are understood by governors and they are working resolutely to address these. They are involved in preparing the development plan and ensuring its success. They share the vision for the school and work diligently to ensure that parents and pupils get the best they can from the school. They are actively involved in a response to current LEA proposals to reorganise the school as part of a wider reorganisation of education across the town.

42. There is an effective committee structure and detailed records are kept of meetings and decisions. They play a significant role in the financial management of the school and have good procedures for monitoring the budget. The relatively large carry forward figure into the current financial year was planned to support the continuing commitment to single age classes. Principles of best value are now being applied and governors, together with the headteacher, are careful to ensure all contracts are providing good value for money. Almost all statutory requirements are fully in place. There are only two omissions. One is the provision for ICT curriculum, of which the governors are clearly aware and for which they have advanced plans. The second is related to the information in their annual report to parents which currently lacks an evaluation on the provision for pupils with special educational needs. A recent LEA independent audit was very favourable in its judgements of financial management and control. There are very good administrative procedures in the school office which is managed very well by the administrative assistant enabling the school to function smoothly from day to day.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	309,178	Balance from previous year	30 651
Total expenditure	293,359	Balance carried forward to the next	46 470
Expenditure per pupil	2,573		

43. The relatively large carry forward figure was to enable the governors to maintain small single age classes in the following year. This was achieved. The projected carry forward figure at the end of the current financial year is £18 000.
44. Whilst the current inadequate provision for ICT is a barrier to pupils learning, they benefit from a number of factors which aid their overall progress. These include the very effective partnerships with parents, and other schools, the innovative curriculum and the commitment across the staff team to valuing all pupils.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

45. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. This is a significant strength of the school and is an improvement on the time of the last inspection when it was judged to be effective. There is a new purpose built unit with access to a secure outside area and sufficient room inside for a wide range of activities to be underway simultaneously. Preparation of the children for the first year of the National Curriculum is very effective. The children are admitted part time at the beginning of the year in which they will be five, and move to full-time schooling from the beginning of the spring term. This is in line with the LEA policy for the admission of children. At the time of the inspection the children had completed just one week of full time education, and many of them were just four and a half years old.
46. The majority of children arrive in school with levels of attainment below those expected nationally, especially in relation to social skills, speech and language development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. A small minority are above national expectations on arrival. Very good teaching and learning and overall provision during the Foundation Stage enable the pupils to achieve very well so that by the end of the stage almost all have made good or very good gains and the majority are close to the national expectations. The very good teaching is strengthened by the excellent deployment and contribution made by the teaching assistant and the high expectations of the children within a sensitive and supportive environment.
47. Curriculum planning is good, carefully using the national guidance for this stage and ensuring that all six areas of learning are carefully integrated within the children's experiences. Opportunities for the children to plan and choose activities are planned for the final term of the reception year; at the time of the inspection, just one week after the pupils were receiving full time education, these opportunities were relatively limited. Good use is made of the outdoor areas, which are safe and secure and used as an integral part of the school day. There are very comprehensive on-going assessment procedures enabling accurate monitoring of the progress of individual children. This inclusive practice ensures that pupils' needs and skills are quickly identified. Those with special educational needs are identified early, during the first term of part-time schooling, and appropriate additional support is carefully programmed within the overall daily provision. Parents are fully informed and involved in this process. This information is used well to plan activities and responses, which in turn contribute to the good achievement by the children of all abilities. Good annual reports to parents at the end of the stage are detailed and fully address all six areas of learning, including the children's achievement and attitudes and with helpful suggestions of next steps. Very good use is made of volunteer parent help during the school day and this contributes well to the overall quality of provision. The work in this stage is well led by the co-ordinator who manages the team very well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures that personal and social development is promoted in all activities.
- Children are very positively taught the value of belonging to a caring community.
- Adults provide very good role models so that very good relationships are promoted.

Commentary

48. Many of the children start school with personal, social and emotional skills well below those usually found. Some prefer to work in isolation and have yet to reach the stage where they

relate to other children and share experiences. Others are comfortable working side by side on a group task and are learning to collaborate, for example, helping to build a large cuboid from old cardboard boxes. In this area of learning, children achieve well. Very good teaching ensures that by the end of the reception year their skills have improved significantly enabling many to reach the Early Learning Goals expected for their age across the wide area of personal and social development. They are beginning to appreciate the need for rules and conventions about fairness and consideration. The staff team works very hard to nurture these important and all-pervading personal and social skills. Self-esteem is successfully boosted by such practices as 'today's special helpers' and portraits of all the children painted and displayed. All the children are included in these opportunities ensuring equal value and worth. Adults strongly encourage consideration for the needs of others and help children to learn how to share.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities for speaking and listening.
- Imaginative teaching engaging all the children.
- All areas of learning successfully contribute to the children's language development.
- Good partnership with parents in helping children in the reading process.

Commentary

49. At the beginning of the year many of the children enter the school with relatively underdeveloped speaking and listening skills. Their awareness of story, reading and writing is limited and some are reluctant to contribute to shared discussion times. The very good teaching in this area ensures their language skills are developed well through a range of experiences with lots of carefully structured opportunities for the children to talk about what they have been doing and their feelings. This good achievement maintains that reported at the time of the previous inspection. Their good achievement in listening skills is strengthened by the imaginative and inspirational role play and puppet work by the teacher and teaching assistant working together in literacy and mathematics lessons. Almost all the children enjoy participating in action rhymes and the more confident are able to begin to frame questions of a 'giant' who visits the classroom, others are learning to record simple sentences on a tape which they proudly play back to the rest of the children at the end of a session. They respond positively to stories and are learning to enjoy browsing through picture books.

50. The children are successfully encouraged to begin writing and are pleased to 'read' back to an adult what they have written. Some are making phonetically plausible attempts demonstrating good achievement in the short time in school. There is a good range of well presented and accessible reading material in the classroom which the children select with adult guidance. Very good home/school systems operate with a reading record, a sounds book and a key words book, enabling parents and teachers to work closely together with the children on reading and associated phonic activities. This is a further example of ensuring that all pupils' needs are appropriately met. Good guidance is provided for parents and many use this well contributing well to the children's good achievement. A significant proportion of the children on arrival in school are unable to talk about favourite books or stories. Each child's progress is carefully monitored and they all have individual targets which are frequently assessed and up-dated.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent teaching by the teacher and teaching assistant.
- Imaginative and carefully presented experiences.
- Well-planned opportunities for mathematical development across the curriculum.

Commentary

51. The excellent teaching in this area enables the children to achieve very well and almost all are on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals expected by the end of the reception year despite entering the school with attainment levels a little below the national expectation. This very good provision is a further improvement on the good provision previously reported. The excellent mathematics teaching inspires the children by the use of very good and well prepared apparatus and resources providing a range of visual and oral prompts, using and modelling good mathematical language and setting high expectations of the children yet within a very supportive framework. For example, children listen very attentively to a puppet struggling to learn about three-dimensional shapes and they make rapid progress in recognising, naming and describing the shapes and their attributes. They apply this new found knowledge enthusiastically in subsequent related creative activities.
52. There are well-planned opportunities for using and applying their understanding of number, for example, with the use of number rhymes, counting activities at registration, and the use of number lines to count forwards and backwards.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Carefully integrated activities linked to other areas of learning.
- Effective use of ICT.
- Good achievement by the children.

Commentary

53. Children achieve well in this area from a relatively low level of attainment on entry. This good achievement is a result of effective planning and teaching which ensures the children participate in first-hand activities in context across a wide range of curriculum areas. For example, the children enjoy making a giant spoon and bowl out of papier maché following some role play and language development work. They learn about living processes by sowing seeds and observing them grow, anticipating giant beanstalks. They draw plans of their route to school and then transfer these to a programmable toy which they later learn to steer by giving it instructions. Good use is made of the outside environment, including the recently created areas and a visit to the church which included a study of the materials used, and led to a discussion on their strengths and their purposes. This was followed up by rubbing surfaces around the school grounds and comparing patterns.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning supported by the effective use of good indoor and outdoor areas.

Commentary

54. The children achieve well in this area of learning having arrived with lower than average attainment, especially in handling small equipment. Effective teaching ensures that in the classroom they participate in frequent activities involving manipulating equipment such as scissors, inter-connecting mathematics apparatus, brushes and pencils. For example they assemble and stick together prepared nets of cuboids using glue as part of their mathematics on three-dimensional shapes, and in knowledge and understanding of the world they carefully hold sheets of paper whilst rubbing crayons over rough surfaces, and are learning to use saws and hammers to build toys. They also experience using the mouse on a computer and switches on the listening centre which they find difficult. Good use is made of the school hall for specific lessons in physical development; for example exploring ways of travelling across the floor using hands and feet, and also on apparatus. The learning is enhanced by careful observation, assessment and intervention by the teacher and teaching assistant. Curriculum plans indicate good intended use of the good outdoor facilities, including the playground space for large balls and games, the adventure playground area and the grassed areas.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables the children to achieve well and appreciate their own work

Commentary

55. Children's attainment on arrival is a little lower than the national expectations. However, most of them are in line to achieve the expected learning goals by the end of the reception year as a result of good achievement. Good teaching enables them to experience a wide range of activities in which they begin to develop; it provides time and opportunity for them to talk about what their intentions were and what they have made and to begin to say what they like about the work of others. There is good provision for role-play activities; for example the children help design and build the giant's castle and equipment for inside, and are then encouraged to play out the story of Jack and the Bean Stalk having experienced outstanding role play demonstrations by the teacher and teaching assistant. Music is used effectively in the classroom and for specific lessons in the hall. For example, in one lesson the children were learning about fast and slow rhythms and this activity was successfully used to further reinforce their listening skills.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of English is excellent in Year 1.
- Speaking and listening skills are developed well through a range of opportunities.
- Pupils make good progress in writing and achieve well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. As a result of very good systems for identification, intervention and support from the teaching assistants, these pupils achieve well.
- Very good procedures for tracking the progress of individuals are in place.
- The use of the guided reading sessions is not always productive.

- The literate environment is not well-developed; the small library has a limited section of fiction and topic books.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

56. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in communication, language, and literacy. Nevertheless, standards in writing attained by Year 2 pupils in the 2003 national tests were average. These standards are being maintained. This is good achievement by the pupils and is the direct result of the emphasis placed on the teaching of writing. Standards in reading in the national tests were below average. A wide range of assessments is used to track individuals' progress, and the information gathered is used well to set individual learning targets. This contributes to the pupils with special educational needs achieving more than predicted. However, gifted and talented pupils do not achieve as well in comparison. Standards in the present Year 2 are good in writing, average in speaking and listening, but below average in reading.
57. Speaking and listening skills are promoted well. The structure of literacy and other lessons provide many opportunities for pupils to listen carefully to teachers and other pupils. Teaching assistants work hard to encourage and prompt pupils with special educational needs to express themselves. Pupils are confident to take part in whole-school assemblies, when presenting decisions from school council meetings or to introduce songs in whole-school singing. In a discussion, Year 4 pupils were able to clearly explain their roles in the recent school production of 'Jungle Book'. As peer mediators, they made mature reflections on the impact of the mediation programme. In some lessons and during whole-school assemblies, a few pupils become over-excited and forget the conventions of listening carefully. This is not always dealt with promptly and effectively.
58. Teaching in English is satisfactory overall; it is very good at the lower end of the school. Teachers follow a common well-structured, medium-term plan. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' application and behaviour, with the emphasis on purposeful activities. The weakest part of some lessons is when pupils sit for too long listening to explanations. Some pupils lose concentration and become restless, this interferes with their learning. There are some good examples of teachers marking work to give clear indications about how to improve but despite clear target sheets, some pupils are given inappropriate tasks and this is inhibiting their progress. In some instances, the wrongly spelt key words and headings are not corrected.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent lesson in which the teacher used a playwriting task to reinforce writing, reading, handwriting as well as personal and social skills.

An excellent lesson in Year 1 was characterised by many very good features; pupil achievement was very high because the teacher had high expectations and made very good use of the excellent teaching assistant, to support both pupils' learning and the learning atmosphere. A combination of interactive sessions, often with props like a puppet and a story-stick, and the very good use of praise and rewards engaged the pupils' interest. She maintained a very good pace throughout and punctuated the lesson with a series of mini-plenaries to reinforce learning. She introduced the playwriting task and the whole class, the teacher, and the teaching assistants followed the storyboard using words and signs. The responses of the pupils, their vocal and facial expressions were quite stunning. Later, after a wonderful explanation of the task through a role-play between the teacher and teaching assistant, the pupils demonstrated their variations on the original story with all pupils listening intently. The applause of their peers raised the self-esteem of the contributors. Although the focus of the lesson was writing, the teacher took every opportunity to reinforce reading, handwriting, and personal and social skills.

59. The national literacy strategy has been implemented well and has been appropriately adapted to support learning, especially in writing. But the guided reading sessions that start each afternoon in all classes are not always effective in promoting reading, books and reading skills because

many teachers, other than those in Year 1 and the Foundation Stage, do not plan effectively for this time. In the Year 1 class, structured planning to promote reading skills is highly effective in developing pupils' awareness of books and reading skills but this practice is not replicated higher up the school. This has an impact on reading across the curriculum as many pupils do not have the necessary skills or interest in books to use texts effectively.

60. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in language development throughout the school. Detailed records of all pupils' progress are kept and used to plan carefully for SEN pupils. Teaching assistants are most effective in building confidence and enthusiasm and are responsible in no small part for the pupils' very good achievement. Displays around the school show how the production of 'Jungle Book' was used to develop links between music, writing and listening skills.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. The use of language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers' planning for other subject areas like personal, social and health education as well as literacy, includes opportunities for all pupils to listen carefully and make suitable responses. Pupils have underdeveloped word processing skills and this limits the use of ICT skills to support their English work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning in Year 1 are very good.
- Pupils of average and below average ability achieve very well.
- Pupils of above average ability do not achieve as well as they could.
- The deployment of teaching assistants makes a very positive contribution to the teaching and learning of pupils of below average ability.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support mathematics learning.

Commentary

62. Standards in mathematics are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This is an improvement on the time of the last inspection when the then most recent national tests indicated standards at the end of Year 2 were well below national averages, and inspection evidence found standards in Year 4 a little below national averages. A high proportion of the current pupils have special educational needs; almost all of these make good and frequently very good progress and are achieving very well. This is a direct consequence of several factors. The first is the deployment of skilled teaching assistants who work most effectively in many lessons with small groups of pupils. The second is the deliberate focus on practical mathematics experiences which encourages and motivates those pupils who have learning difficulties. The third is the very good teaching in Year 1 and examples of good teaching in other year groups. However, pupils of above average ability are not making as much progress as they could. The school's commitment to practical mathematics means that relatively little mathematics is recorded and pupils are not fully supported in developing an understanding of more formal written methods of recording more complex calculations. In some lessons although different work is given to groups of pupils according to their ability, that given to the more able pupils is not always sufficiently challenging and rarely do these more able pupils get the benefit of direct and concentrated work with the teacher or a teaching assistant. A pupil with a hearing disability is supported effectively by being seated in a prominent position and by the wearing of hearing loop apparatus by the teacher, ensuring he is fully included at all times. Another pupil with autism is supported in all mathematics lessons by a skilled teaching assistant enabling him to take a full and active role in the lesson.

63. Pupils have a good understanding of the number system and place value. They are developing effective mental arithmetic skills. These strengths are supported by the focus on practical activities and the planned opportunities and encouragement to talk through strategies they have used to complete a calculation. In Year 2 pupils are able to identify two digit numbers and place them accurately on a hundred square. In Year 3 they are developing good strategies for adding and subtracting two and three digit numbers and by Year 4 they are able to combine pairs of two, three or four digit numbers to the next multiple of thousands and talk confidently about the values of each digit. Whilst most of the mathematics work during the time of the inspection was related to number, Year 1 pupils were very purposefully engaged in using and understanding money; some of the pupils were particularly motivated by the use of a computer programme identifying coins and combining their values. Pupils' recorded work across the school shows that they have also recently learnt about fractions, the properties of shapes, measuring length and problem solving. There is little evidence of pupils using ICT in their mathematics work.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There are a number of very good features but the inconsistent challenge for more able pupils limits the overall quality to good. At the time of the last inspection it was satisfactory. Teachers plan carefully, and ensure that their lessons contain several practical elements and work of different challenge for each ability group. However, it is not always matched to the potential of the more able pupils. Teachers carefully explain the purpose of the lesson and what it is the pupils will be learning. In many lessons the teaching assistants are particularly effective; sometimes they support pupils with challenging behaviour during whole-class sessions. At other times they very effectively lead small groups of pupils, usually those of below average ability, who are working on similar tasks. Teachers provide them with notes so that they are clear about the intended learning process. In Year 2 the lower ability group is frequently withdrawn from the class for the whole mathematics lesson. This contradicts the school's commitment to inclusion and is not appropriate. Most teachers mark pupils' work carefully, some include constructive comments on how work can be improved. At Key Stage 1 there is relatively little recorded work, and in Year 2 much of it is on loose sheets which are frequently undated and stored in loose folders, limiting the apparent status given to the work and the ease with which progress can be tracked. Teachers assess mathematics well and there is a whole-school structured process for this. There is very good data showing progress by all the pupils from one year to the next with targets for the end of the year and end of the infant or junior years. However, pupils do not have short term targets explaining what mathematics aspect they need to work at next. Pupils with special educational needs have very good individual plans; parents have good involvement in these and careful support programmes are planned and implemented. Relationships and behaviour management are good and nearly all pupils show a positive attitude to the subject and to their work. A small minority, mainly boys in Years 3 and 4, struggle to maintain a focus; careful management of these avoids disruption of the lessons.
65. Mathematics is led and managed satisfactorily. There is an experienced co-ordinator who has good subject knowledge. The coordinator was instrumental in adopting the school's practical approach to the subject. The related planning material used is similar to that advocated within the National Numeracy Strategy. The headteacher plays a significant role in monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning across the school. However, there is no analysis of the annual test papers to identify which aspects pupils did well on and in which they struggled. Resources for mathematics are satisfactory. There is very little pupils' mathematics work displayed in classrooms or around the school and in some classrooms there is little mathematics material displayed to help with the teaching and learning of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Whilst the National Numeracy Strategy principles are largely adopted by the school there is no systematic planned approach to using mathematics across the curriculum. Little evidence was seen of mathematics supporting learning in other curriculum areas. In a science lesson a number of pupils' measurement skills limited the accuracy of the scientific results recorded.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching overall but more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to meet their potential.
- The work of the subject manager is very good.
- All aspects of science are covered with a good emphasis on investigation.
- Good use of outside learning environment in science.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the support they receive.
- Cross-curricular links with mathematics and ICT are limited.
- The pupils co-operate well but do not take much responsibility for organising and planning their own work.

Commentary

67. The pupils like their science lessons because they regularly conduct experiments and activities are often practical. By Year 4, pupils have a very good knowledge of physical sciences, such as electricity and have compared things that need electricity in the classroom. They have constructed a switch from drawing pins and a paper clip to make circuit to light a bulb and drawn a conventional circuit with the correct symbols for battery, bulb, buzzer and motor and the symbols for switch on/switch off. Good photographic evidence of the Year 4 science day was seen that was based on electricity and making circuits. Pupils have investigated materials and sorted them into those that bend, tear, stretch and fold and understand that some materials change when heated or mixed. For example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils were investigating the rates that different materials absorbed water. Pupils understood the principles of fair testing and predicted what they thought the outcomes would be, undertook the experiment and then recorded their results and findings on prepared charts. Furthermore, the more able pupils were given the opportunity to design their own record sheets. Pupils have studied plants parts and labelled a diagram showing the pot, roots, stem, leaves and petals and undertook an investigation to find out how much light a plant needs to grow. The school has a very good outdoor environment that is well used for scientific study. Pupils have learned about how to keep healthy by healthy eating and exercise and have drawn diagrams of a skeleton and know how the skeleton can protect parts of the body, such as heart, lungs and brain.

68. Pupils of all ages achieve well because teachers ask probing questions to make them think. For example, in Year 4 pupils became very involved in discussions through an experiment where they were testing with thermometers the temperature of water in jugs that were insulated by a variety of materials to identify the transfer of thermal energy over a measured period of time. The pupils are making good progress in making predictions and carrying out fair tests because the school has focused on scientific enquiry. Pupils also use a range of methods for recording their investigations. Examples of diagrams and charts were seen in pupils' books, but there was limited evidence of graphical representation. However, although lessons are often practical, there are few situations where pupils plan and devise their own experiments or decide on the best ways for recording work. There do not use ICT very often for scientific measures or recording their work.

69. The teaching is good overall. However, where the teaching is not so effective pupils are given too low level work and a significant number of pupils, especially those who are considered more able fail to complete the single task set. Marking is satisfactory but lacks consistency, because in some classes very little correction of punctuation and spelling was seen in the books, notably the spelling of subject vocabulary words. In the best marking the teacher challenges the pupils to think more deeply, especially about the conclusions from their experiments.

70. The subject is very well managed by a subject co-ordinator who has specific knowledge and expertise in science. Science is planned in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum and national guidance on the teaching of science and supported by a published scheme of work.

The subject co-ordinator monitors the subject well and notably the discussions held with pupils about their learning in science have been transcribed and analysed for future planning in the subject. Assessment is undertaken at the end of each unit and used to guide future planning. Resources are sufficient to teach the subject and are well used, especially the electronic microscope. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT are below national expectations.
- The school is currently unable to provide the full range of ICT expected within the National Curriculum.
- The subject is now well led and managed by the new co-ordinator.
- The school has effective and well advanced plans to address the limitations in provision.

Commentary

71. Standards in ICT are below national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils of all abilities, especially the more able, achieve well below their potential. This low level of achievement is a direct consequence of inadequate equipment and limited access. It does not reflect the quality of teaching or the teachers' commitment to ICT. Standards in text management are relatively secure, although many pupils' keyboard and mouse skills are limited. This is a direct consequence of the inadequate opportunities they get of working on a computer keyboard. The school has a number of programmable moving toys and the pupils have developed good skills and awareness of programming and controlling them to follow a given route; for example Year 3 pupils have programmed the machine to travel from the school to the nearby supermarket on a plan on the classroom floor. Access to the Internet is extremely difficult and pupils' skills in searching for and using information and also sending and receiving electronic mail are below expectations, as are their skills in data management and modelling. The pupils are confident in the use of listening centres in each class and some are beginning to use a digital camera. By Year 3 they are able to change font, size and colour for producing labels and captions for their work in line with national expectations.
72. The learning in lessons observed was restricted by the pupils lack of access to computers, having to rely in one class on paper simulated key boards, and in the other over 20 pupils having to take turns one at a time to operate the mouse on one machine when learning about the storage of information in files. The teaching is well planned and teachers show confidence in the subject material and very good preparation of materials within the constraints that exist. Assessment procedures are established across the school and teachers record pupils' achievements at the end of each unit. This is made more difficult by the limited access to computers and therefore the difficulties of observing pupils at work, and the fact that there is currently no facility for pupils to save, store and retrieve previously completed work.
73. Despite the current weaknesses in provision and standards, the newly appointed ICT co-ordinator is already leading the subject well. She has good subject knowledge and experience of leading ICT in another school. She has a detailed ICT action plan and the full support of the headteacher and governors in addressing the weaknesses. A substantial amount of new equipment has arrived and is ready for installation in the newly designated ICT suite. Teachers and teaching assistants have completed a programme of training and are keen to begin using the new machines and software as soon as possible, as are the pupils. Several staff meetings scheduled for later in the spring term have been allocated to making the best use of the new equipment. There is also a programme for upgrading the computers in classrooms.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. The current limited access to computers has restricted the opportunities and scope for the use of ICT across the curriculum. However, the school has a whole-school curriculum plan which clearly indicates opportunities for cross-curricular uses, and evidence of some good examples were observed; these include in Year 3 the use of an electronic microscope during a science lesson on testing the absorbency of materials and the use of the programmable toy to follow a map to the local supermarket in geography, and in Year 1, practising mouse control through drawing 'jungle bugs' inspired by the whole-school production of the Jungle Book, and using a word bank to sort labels on drawings of the human skeleton in science.

HUMANITIES

75. Religious education did not form part of this inspection. It is covered under a Section 23 Inspection being reported upon separately. Only one lesson was seen in geography and none in history during the inspection. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement on provision in geography or history, nor standards achieved and the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence was gained from the analysis of curriculum plans for each subject and the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work since September.

76. The one lesson seen in **geography** was in Year 4 and was a good lesson. A visitor talked to the pupils about experiencing an earthquake; the obvious expertise from this first-hand experience inspired the pupils, all of whom, including the pupil with a hearing disability, supported by the use of a hearing loop, listened intently. The teacher used the motivation to challenge the pupils to plot locations of earthquakes around the world, which they responded to well. Displays in classrooms indicate standards are broadly in line with expectations; they also indicate a good use of the local environment where pupils had visited the local church, photographs and descriptions of a walk of the local area and a good display that linked history and geography in and around Blandford. This also included a visit to the Blandford museum. Some maps were seen on classroom walls, but the quality of some equipment, such as globes indicated that some resources need updating and replacement.

77. Work was sampled in **history**, but no lessons were seen. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision. However, displays across the school demonstrated the work ongoing in some classrooms. For example, Year 3 had a very good display on Children in World War II and the Year 4 display on Victorian Childhood also included a visit to Dorchester County Museum. Year 2 had a very striking display on the Great Fire of London. The work pupils had completed and on display indicated that standards are broadly average.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. It is not possible to report in detail on all the subjects in this curriculum area. A total of four lessons were observed across the curriculum area: two in art and design, one in music, and one in physical education. None were observed in design and technology. Further evidence was gained from teachers' planning, assemblies, discussions with pupils, a scrutiny of their work in the subjects, photographs of previous events and activities and substantial related displays in classrooms and around the school.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weakness

- Pupils in all year groups achieve well and standards are above national expectations.
- The subject is a priority within the school curriculum and is used well to contribute to cross-curricular activities.

Commentary

78. In the two art lessons seen pupils were purposefully engaged and a strength was the cross curricular links in, for example, speaking and listening and science.
79. Displays of pupils' work in central areas of the school as well as in classrooms show that pupils in all year groups achieve good standards. For example, line drawings expanded and then enhanced with colour produced by a Year 1 class were of good quality, as were the background scenery and props for the Jungle Book production. In both lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 pupils were confident in using a range of materials for drawing, and making models and masks. Pupils worked cooperatively and were able to make decisions independently about the most appropriate action to take. The school took part in the 'Take One Picture' project with other local schools and Year 4 pupils worked effectively with a papier maché sculptor to create a model of Canaletto's 'The Stonemason's Yard'. This work of high quality displayed in the entrance hall contributes well to the overall rich artistic environment and demonstrates the school's commitment to using outside expertise in extending the pupils' cultural experiences. Art is also successfully used to encourage and motivate pupils. An autistic pupil who draws skilfully gains pleasure and self-esteem from the recognition his art work is given across the school, where it is prominently displayed. For him, art is frequently used as the way into understanding concepts in other curriculum areas.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All the pupils are given good opportunities to perform in musical productions.
- The pupils enjoy music.
- Singing is of a high standard.
- Music adds positively to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

80. In the one lesson seen in music, the teaching was good. Good planning ensured that all pupils, including a high number with special educational needs, remained interested in their work, and were confident in their demonstrations. A good range of musical instruments ensured that all pupils had the chance to participate in creating sound. Parents are appreciative of the opportunities their children get in music and of the quality of their performances. Displays and discussions with pupils about the whole-school production of 'Jungle Book' last term show that the experiences related to the performance had a very positive impact on many aspects of school life. In one classroom a display of photographs showed how pupils had used jungle sounds, for example 'footsteps crunching through twigs and leaves' to make music, working cooperatively in groups. In the regular Arts Week held in the summer term pupils took part in song writing workshops; working with the local upper school, pupils wrote, sang and recorded their own song which was played on local radio.
81. During the inspection the vast majority of pupils joined in with songs and movements from 'Jungle Book' with evident pleasure as part of a whole school celebration of story week; the standard of singing was well above average, being tuneful and sensitive to pitch and rhythm. Pupils were successfully singing two part harmonies and one pupil sang a solo very well which was well received by the other pupils.

Design and technology

82. There were no lessons being taught in design and technology during the inspection period and little work available to gauge standards or coverage of National Curriculum expectations.

However, curriculum planning indicates that the subject is satisfactorily covered in line with National Curriculum expectations.

Physical education

83. It is not possible to give a judgement on overall provision in physical education because only one lesson was observed. However, evidence gained by talking to the subject co-ordinator, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of school documents indicates a number of strengths within the provision.
84. The school has good facilities for outdoor games and pupils take part in a range of activities to develop skills in dance, gymnastics, games and athletics. The school provides a rich variety of opportunities in extra-curricular physical activities, including clubs for football, netball, athletics and gymnastics. The school is involved with the Youth Sports Trust for Top-Sports and is taking part in the School Sports Co-ordinator initiative. The school has had outside visitors to support the physical education in the school to lead courses. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator is very pleased with the progress made in creative dance and gymnastics. To gain information on what clubs pupils attend out of school the subject co-ordinator sent out a letter that resulted in a list of ten different clubs. In addition, and as a result of the survey one parent offered her support in helping with the netball club.
85. The subject co-ordinator has been in post since September 2003 and has specialist knowledge in the teaching and learning in the subject. In that time she has updated the physical education policy and monitored the work in the school, audited resources and is purchasing new equipment from identified needs and also teachers requests. Good attention has been paid to health and safety in physical education and the subject co-ordinator's file includes a log of all meetings and jobs done since September, monitoring information, planning and assessment of units covered in each class, auditing records, equipment resource list and sports programme co-ordination.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in PSHE.
- The establishment of the school council is valued by pupils and contributes well.
- The peer mediation system is innovative and effective.
- There are regular planned and informal opportunities to discuss personal and social issues in 'circle time' and through drama.

Commentary

86. On entry to the school many of the pupils' PSHE skills are below those expected nationally. During their time in the school they achieve very well in these areas as a direct consequence of the very good provision and whole-school approach. PSHE is promoted well in a variety of ways within the school and this is valued and appreciated by the parents who see it as a strength. Most importantly, it permeates the culture of the school, and the development of pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence is paramount in all of the school's work. In this, it is successful. Pupils also have a formally taught lesson of PSHE each week. These lessons cover a good range of topics. The inclusive ethos within the school is exemplified by the care to ensure that those pupils with emotional and social difficulties are supported and teachers and teaching assistants, who know the pupils well, help them overcome any perceived barriers in their PSHE development.

87. Displays around the school show how the production of 'Jungle Book' was used to develop links between music, writing and listening skills, and an awareness of the points of view of others, when two Year 4 pupils mediated between Mowgli and Shere Khan. Everyone in the school takes seriously this system operated by Year 4 pupils who trained alongside the previous Year 4 pupils. In discussion, pupils were able to confidently explain how the system operated and how they had modified it to fit current circumstances. It is a neutral, 'no blame' approach to disputes between pupils that can be settled satisfactorily through discussion with a pair of mediators. This avoids the need to make many incidents a matter for formal intervention by adults.
88. Citizenship, responsibility, and a sense of community are strong features in the school. Each class develops and maintains its own 'golden rules' that contribute to the order and well being in the school. The school council works effectively and is given a high profile. Members of the council take their responsibilities seriously and good opportunities are provided for all pupils to be informed about the work of the council. In weekly whole-school assemblies school councillors confidently and articulately report on their work.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).