

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST BUCKLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

West Buckland, Wellington

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123712

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Sally Evans

Lead inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

Dates of inspection: Monday 1st – Wednesday 3rd December 2003

Inspection number: 260710

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	63
School address:	West Buckland Primary School West Buckland WELLINGTON Somerset
Postcode:	TA21 9LD
Telephone number:	01823 663376
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Brown

Date of previous inspection: 5th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

West Buckland Primary School is a small village school situated in the village of West Buckland to the east of Wellington in Somerset. The school draws its pupils from the village, the neighbouring hamlets and a local authority housing estate near Wellington. There are currently 63 boys and girls, between the ages of 4 and 11, on roll, and the school is much smaller than most primary schools. The pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Most year groups have 10 pupils, but there are only four in Year 1. In Years 3 and 4 there are significantly more boys than girls; the situation is the reverse in Years 5 and 6. The socio-economic background of the pupils is very varied, but average overall. No pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Fourteen per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is average. One pupil receives help from outside specialists, but no pupils have a statement of special educational need. Children are admitted into the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they have their fifth birthday. The attainment of children when they start school varies widely, but is broadly similar to others of their age. Since the last inspection, an extension has been added to the main school building to provide internal toilets and a staff room. At the time of the inspection, the school was being looked after by an acting headteacher, pending the arrival of a newly-appointed headteacher at the beginning of the following term.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
28899	Mr G R Sims	Lead inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education English as an additional language
19693	Mrs S Hall	Lay inspector	
20846	Mr A Wilson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum English Religious education Geography History Personal, social and health education Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

West Buckland Primary School offers its pupils a sound education and provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. A very dedicated team of staff, who usually provide good-quality teaching, has held the school together well over the last two years while the school has been without a full-time headteacher.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Through two difficult years, the school has lacked clear educational direction and impetus for change, although the very good teamwork of the staff and a very well managed period of acting headship have provided the school with stability.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 and achieve above average standards in mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of pupils' writing is not as good as it should be.
- The current arrangements for teaching pupils from reception to Year 2 in the same class have an adverse impact on pupils' learning.
- The overall quality of the teaching is good, although the teachers are not always rigorous enough in the feedback they give to the pupils to help them improve.
- There is a good ethos to the school. Pupils' attitudes are positive, they usually behave well, and relationships between staff and pupils are good.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school has tackled, and continues to give importance to, the two key issues identified in the previous inspection, namely placing greater emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning and devising better procedures for assessment. Governors now give closer attention to their statutory responsibilities. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 have improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	A*	A	C
Mathematics	A	A*	A	A
Science	A	A*	B	D

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory.

Since the last inspection, the school's national test results at the end of Year 2 have risen in writing and mathematics and have remained the same in reading. Results at the end of Year 6 have risen at a faster rate than the national trend, and in 2003 were significantly better than those achieved four years previously.

Children enter the reception with skills that are similar to others of their age, and most reach the expected goals by the end of reception. The small number of pupils in each year group causes greater fluctuation in standards than in larger schools. The inspection findings show that pupils are making satisfactory progress and standards are currently average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and in English in Year 6. Standards are above average in mathematics and science in Year 6, and pupils are achieving well in these two subjects. The weakest aspect of

pupils' work is their ability to write accurately all of the time. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in information and communication technology and religious education.

The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the overall ethos of the school is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to the school and to their work, and they generally behave well. Relationships between pupils and adults are good. The level of attendance is above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education.

The overall quality of the teaching is good. When the teacher is able to focus on one or two year groups at a time, without other distractions, the teaching for pupils in reception to Year 2 is good and they learn well. At times, however, the arrangements for teaching all of these pupils in the same class in less than adequate circumstances adversely affect the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, the teaching for these pupils is satisfactory. In the other two classes for pupils in Years 3 to 6, over two-thirds of the teaching is good or better, and a third is very good. The school makes good use of teaching assistants to provide a very good ratio of pupils to adults, thereby helping to ensure individual needs are met well. Specialist teachers provide expertise in teaching music and physical education, and good use is made of the subject expertise of other staff. Teachers are not always rigorous enough in the way they mark pupils' work and give them feedback about how they can improve, and not enough attention is given to the development of pupils' writing skills through written work in subjects other than English.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, compensating as well as it can for inadequacies in its accommodation for physical education and for children in the reception. The range of activities outside the formal curriculum is good. The range of learning resources and the overall quality of the school's accommodation are satisfactory.

The school has satisfactory procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Staff know the pupils very well and provide them with good support, advice and guidance. The school's links with parents, other schools and the community are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The acting headteacher has played her role very well, bringing stability to the school and broadening the range of opportunities offered to the pupils. However, the school has lacked overall leadership and direction over the last two years. Staff have worked together very well as a team, but some subject leadership has lacked a clear focus. Governance is satisfactory, although governors acknowledge the need to become more proactive in challenging and supporting the school and helping to shape its future direction.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally pleased with the school. They value the fact that staff are approachable. They feel that the teaching is good and their children are making good progress. Pupils are generally pleased with their school. They like coming to school and have no concerns about the way they are treated.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that the governors and leadership at all levels provide clear educational direction and that the school's management systems provide regular opportunities for rigorous self-evaluation.
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- Review the arrangements for teaching pupils from reception to Year 2 in the same class.

- Improve the quality of teachers' marking and ensure that they give pupils more rigorous feedback on their work in order to help them improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, standards are average throughout the school and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 have risen at a faster rate than the national trend since the last inspection.
- Standards are above average and achievement is good in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6.
- Standards in reading are above average throughout the school, but are not matched by standards in pupils' writing, which is, at times, lacking in quality.
- The progress of the school's younger pupils is, at times, adversely affected by the arrangements to teach children in the reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 in the same class.

Commentary

1. Children's attainment on entry to the school is generally average. Their achievement in the reception class is satisfactory and most children are likely to achieve most of the goals expected of them by the end of the reception year. Children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development. In these areas of learning, they benefit from the interaction with, and opportunities provided for, the older pupils in Years 1 and 2 with whom they share their class. In other areas of learning, the teaching arrangements are not so beneficial, and children do not always have the close and informed supervision necessary to enable them to make better than satisfactory progress.
2. In 2003, the results of the national tests at the end of Year 2 were above the national average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. When compared with the results of similar schools, they were average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. The class teacher's own assessments of pupils' writing in 2003, and judgements of the inspectors, indicate that the 2003 results in writing were a fairly generous assessment of pupils' abilities. The number of pupils in each year group is very small, and this can give rise to significant fluctuations from one year to the next. Over the last four years, for example, results have varied from below average in mathematics and average in reading and writing, to well above average in all three areas. Overall, however, the trend since the last inspection has been one of improvement in writing and mathematics and stability in reading.
3. Inspection judgements show that pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, and standards in writing and mathematics are average by the end of Year 2. Standards in reading are above average. Pupils' progress varies from lesson to lesson and is, at times, affected by the far from ideal arrangements under which children in the reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught together in the same class. When the class teacher is able to concentrate on teaching pupils in Year 2 on their own, they make good progress, but progress is, at times, slow on the occasions when the whole class is taught together and pupils have to sit through questions directed at the younger pupils which provide little challenge for them.
4. The national test results at the end of Year 6 fluctuate considerably, but the overall trend since the last inspection is one of improvement at a faster rate than the national trend, particularly in English and science. Since the last inspection, results have ranged from well below average in science to well above average in each of the three core subjects. In 2003, the results were well above the national average in English and mathematics and above average in science. When compared with the results of similar schools, they were average in English and science and well above average in mathematics, which has been the most consistently successful subject over the last few years. Over the last three years, boys have been more

successful in mathematics and science than girls, but the situation is the reverse in English. With the small number of pupils in each year group and frequent imbalance in the proportion of boys and girls, these differences are not seen to be particularly significant.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003¹

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 (30.4)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.8 (32.1)	27.0 (26.7)
Science	29.8 (31.3)	28.8 (28.3)

There were 13 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, and pupils achieve average standards overall by the end of Year 6. Standards in English, religious education and information and communication technology are all average. The weakest aspect of pupils' work is their writing, an area identified by the school for further development, but pupils maintain above average standards in reading. Standards in mathematics and science are above average. Pupils are competent mathematicians, although they are not particularly quick in carrying out mental calculations and do not always apply their knowledge well when carrying out investigations or solving more complex problems expressed in words. Pupils are also confident computer users, although the range of programs with which they are familiar is fairly limited.
- Through a period of instability in staffing, the teachers have done well to maintain momentum and to help pupils achieve at least satisfactory, and often better, standards. Pupils of all abilities achieve equally well. This is largely because the school has a good ratio of adults to pupils and the number of pupils in each year group and each class is small, so that staff can deal with pupils' needs, very often on an individual basis. The staff have a good knowledge of their pupils and have set appropriately challenging, yet realistic, targets, which they were successful in achieving in 2003. Targets for 2004 are somewhat lower, reflecting the differing capabilities of the current group of pupils in Year 6 and the current inspection judgements, which indicate that standards being achieved by pupils currently in Year 6 are slightly lower than those achieved in the 2003 national tests.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The level of attendance is above average and punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are usually enthusiastic about their work and activities outside lessons.
- The school's provision for moral development is good and pupils behave well.
- Attendance rates are above the national average, and there are very few unauthorised absences.
- Staff encourage pupils to feel part of the school community and there are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and work co-operatively.

¹ **Average point scores** are used as a way of comparing fairly the performance of pupils in one school with those in another. The level achieved by each pupil in the national tests is converted into a points score. The points achieved by all of the pupils are added together and divided by the number of pupils who took the test to arrive at an average point score. An average point score of 15 at the end of Year 2 is equivalent to a middle of the range Level 2, which is the standard expected of seven-year-old pupils. At the end of Year 6, an average point score of 27 is equivalent to Level 4, the national expectation for eleven-year-olds.

- There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their life and work, and to experience the richness of other cultures.

Commentary

- Pupils have maintained the good attitudes found at the time of the last inspection. In lessons, most pupils are enthusiastic learners, and this has a positive impact on their achievements. The vast majority of pupils listen carefully, are keen to answer questions, and work with sustained concentration. However, a few pupils are easily distracted. The pupils enjoy participating in the good range of after-school clubs, and the take-up rate is high. The pupils with special educational needs enjoy the extra help they are given and form good relationships with the adults who work with them.
- The school's strong moral code works well because of the consistent and high expectations of good behaviour by adults working in the school. The school's 'golden rules' are clearly displayed in classrooms, and staff are good role-models. Nearly all pupils respond well to the system of rewards and understand the consequences of their actions if they misbehave. Behaviour at the last inspection was judged to be very good. It is now good, as a few pupils sometimes find it difficult to get along with their peers and do not always respect others' feelings. One pupil was excluded last year for an outburst of violent behaviour. Pupils and parents say that the teachers deal effectively with any rare incidents of bullying, and ways of coping with anti-social behaviour are discussed in personal, social and health education lessons.

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
62	1	0
1	0	0

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

- The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. Their attendance rate is good, and the number of unauthorised absences is low. Attendance has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. The school has tightened up on its registration procedures since the last inspection, and registers are now marked correctly. The school works closely with the educational welfare service when absence is a cause for concern.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.6	School data :	0.1
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

- The school has developed a good sense of community amongst staff, parents and pupils, and relationships are good. Pupils usually support each other in lessons, and pupils of different ages play well together in the playground. There are some good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the classrooms, where everyone takes turns with 'class jobs'. Teachers are skilled at developing the pupils' self-esteem. They create an atmosphere where pupils are willing to answer without fear of failure. The pupils become more confident as they move through the school, and the older pupils work well independently, for example, when researching information on the Internet. Residential visits and opportunities to work with pupils from other local schools also enable them to develop their personal and social skills.

11. Provision for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. In assemblies, the staff create an atmosphere for reflection on carefully chosen themes, such as 'light'. Pupils are encouraged to make connections between their knowledge of world faiths and think about what they mean in their own and others' lives. In lessons, the pupils gain valuable insights into other cultures, for example, through Indian printing, painting in an aboriginal style, using multi-cultural musical instruments and studying life in other countries, such as the widely differing environments around Mount Kilimanjaro. Pupils' knowledge of their own culture is developed successfully through the curriculum. For example, history topics are enhanced by visits to museums, and a study of the witches' speech from Macbeth deepened the pupils' understanding of the power of the English language.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The overall quality of the teaching is good. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which is enriched by a good variety of activities outside the normal curriculum. The staff provide a satisfactory level of care for the pupils. The school's links with parents and the local community are good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of both teaching and learning is good. The school's procedures for assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and assistants work together very well as a team and are adaptable to changing circumstances.
- Good use is made of specialist teachers in order to enhance pupils' learning in subjects such as music and physical education.
- At times, arrangements for teaching children in the reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 together in the same class at times have an adverse impact on pupils' learning.
- Teachers plan their lessons well, taking good account of the differing needs of pupils within their class.
- Teachers are not rigorous enough in the way they mark pupils' work.

Commentary

12. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is good. Positive features noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained, and the very good teamwork amongst the staff continues to be a strong and vital feature, which helps to meet the pupils' needs. The teachers and assistants are prepared to adapt quickly and readily to changing circumstances, a feature which has been particularly important over the last two years. This was illustrated well during the inspection, when the dance teacher fell ill and all three class teachers filled in at the last minute to provide good, worthwhile experiences for the pupils.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	4	8	8	0	0	0

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

13. Overall, the teaching for children in the reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. There are plenty of occasions during the day when there is good teaching for these pupils, either for the whole class or for specific groups. However, the arrangement to teach all of these pupils in the same class is not always entirely successful, particularly when the youngest children are engaged in activities that involve learning through structured play and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are engaged in activities which require a greater degree of

concentration. Children in the reception benefit from the presence of older pupils in some areas of learning, particularly those relating to their personal, social and emotional development or physical development. However, the rate at which pupils in all year groups learn is affected to a greater or lesser extent during some of the whole-class sessions when it is impossible for the teacher to direct the teaching and her questions at a level which is relevant to all pupils. At such times, it is frequently the older pupils who are not sufficiently stretched. The teaching provided for specific groups of pupils is almost invariably good, but the supervision provided for pupils who are not being taught by the class teacher is not always as clearly focused or challenging as it could be. As a result, opportunities are missed to help children to become more independent learners or to provide them with real challenge to help them develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The physical confines of the classroom provide far from ideal working conditions, and there are times when the overcrowded nature of the room has an adverse effect on pupils' learning. The school is very conscious of the current difficulties, which have been brought about because there are only four pupils in the current Year 1.

14. The teaching in Years 3 to 6 is consistently good and, at times, it is very good, although the pupils have experienced some disruption to their learning over the last year with a number of changes of teacher. Shortly before the inspection, for example, changes were necessary to teaching arrangements because of the long-term absence of the regular part-time teacher in Years 5 and 6. Good use is made of visiting teachers and teachers' own areas of expertise. For example, the school overcomes lack of expertise in music by employing a specialist music teacher for half a day each week to teach music to all three classes. A similar arrangement exists for dance and has a visible impact on the standards pupils achieve. Other aspects of physical education are taught by experts. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed a good session on cricketing skills, taken by a professional cricketer from Somerset County Cricket Club. In physical education, these arrangements go a long way to making up for the shortcomings in the school's facilities for physical education.
15. Throughout the school, teachers plan their lessons well, taking particular account of the differing needs and groupings of pupils within the class. Lessons are well-organised. Teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils to ensure that questions are targeted appropriately. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning throughout the school, although not all are equally as effective. In Years 3 and 4, for example, a very close working relationship between the class teacher and her assistant make it possible for pupils to be taught in separate year groups for much of the time. Through careful grouping within each class and judicious use of teaching assistants, teachers ensure that good attention is given to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and additional challenge is provided for the more able pupils.
16. Much of the teaching is lively and imaginative. This has a positive impact, for example, on developing enthusiastic attitudes to literature and drama. In science, there is a good emphasis on developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding through an investigative approach. Visitors to the school and visits to places of interest also help to stimulate pupils' interest and support their learning in subjects like geography and history.
17. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessment, which provide teachers with a sound understanding of how well pupils are achieving. However, despite the many positive features to the teaching, teachers do not always make sufficient use of their day-to-day assessment of pupils' work to help pupils improve. Teachers are conscientious in the marking of pupils' work, but they are not always rigorous enough. For example, pupils are not always challenged if they do not complete as much work as they could, if they do not follow the school's conventions to head and date their work or if they present their work untidily. The pupils have many good opportunities to practise their writing skills, but because the marking does not pay sufficient attention to the quality of their writing, the pupils do not always know where they have made mistakes and what they have to do to improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and a good range of activities outside the formal curriculum. The overall range of learning resources and the quality of the school's accommodation are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has forged mutually supportive links with local schools and colleges.
- The recent introduction of additional specialist teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and personal development.
- The school has recently improved its range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended and enthusiastically received by the pupils.
- The grouping of children in the reception year with pupils in Years 1 and 2 limits their access to the curriculum from time to time.

Commentary

18. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum to support the academic and personal development of its pupils and meets all statutory requirements in relation to collective worship, special educational needs and sex education. Overall, subject areas receive a reasonable share of curriculum time, except that some English lessons are longer than they need to be, using time that could be allocated to other subjects. The curriculum has recently been strengthened by the introduction of additional expertise in areas such as dance, French, and sport, which, in addition to the specialist teaching that has been in place for some time for music, is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Similarly, the range and quality of extra-curricular activities have improved, and pupils now have opportunities to enjoy coaching in cricket and tag rugby after school. There is also a very successful craft club, which attracts a very large number of pupils every week. This is organised voluntarily by learning support assistants and supported very well by parents, creating a sense of community of which the school can feel proud.
19. The school is adequately staffed with suitably qualified and experienced teachers. The school has worked hard to maintain a stable and balanced curriculum, although long-term staff absences have placed a strain on teachers' energies and resources over recent months. The teachers are supported well by a good number of capable learning support assistants with whom they form effective teams. The school works hard to ensure that pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and receive additional help.
20. There remain strengths and weaknesses in the accommodation, which is satisfactory overall. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement with the welcome addition of a proper staffroom. A new toilet block has also been added, which has the advantage of being new and attached to the main building, although the number of toilets is insufficient for the needs of the school. There is still no hall suitable for physical education lessons. The school compensates by using the village hall, but pupils cannot enjoy regular use of a full range of gymnastics equipment. There are adequate, readily available resources for most subjects and these are of good quality for science and design and technology. However, the quality and range of equipment for art and design is not adequate. The co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures that pupils with specific learning difficulties are provided with the necessary resources to enable them to achieve as well as others.
21. The school is aware of the need to introduce strong cross-curricular links in the planning for subjects across the curriculum and is currently evaluating a scheme that has recently been introduced by the local authority. There has been satisfactory improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes satisfactory care of its pupils. The school has satisfactory procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides them with good support, advice and guidance. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know and support the pupils well.
- Induction procedures for new pupils are good.
- Pupils feel that they can turn to adults for help.
- There are no formal procedures for taking the views of pupils into account.

Commentary

22. The staff work hard to meet the needs of all pupils, and members of the school community show care and concern for each other. Parents value the family atmosphere where pupils of different ages support each other and play together. Adults working in school know the pupils very well, and the headteacher works closely with outside agencies to give good support to pupils and their families who have particular difficulties. Teachers track the progress of pupils' personal, social and emotional development through listening to pupils, for example in circle time. Support staff and midday supervisors also make valuable contributions to caring for pupils. The school celebrates pupils' achievements, and teachers make some valuable comments in the pupils' annual reports about their personal development. Pupils say that they can turn to staff if they need help. Through a series of visits, meetings and information, new pupils and their parents are welcomed into school and parents say that their children quickly settle into school routines.
23. Adults working in school value pupils' opinions. In lessons and assemblies, pupils are able to express their opinions, and they make comments about their own progress in their annual reports. There is no school council, or other formal method for gathering the pupils' views and this limits the opportunities for staff to ascertain and act on them.
24. Staff ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment, and governors make regular checks of the buildings. Staff are aware of the school's child protection procedures, and arrangements for first aid are satisfactory.
25. The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is sound because teachers plan work conscientiously for them and there is a good ratio of capable learning support assistants. However, the coordinator has identified a need for further training for support staff in the monitoring of individual education plans.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents, other schools and the community are good. Parents value the school and are pleased to send their children to it.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has established valuable partnerships with other local schools.
- The school welcomes parents and encourages them to become involved in their children's education.
- The school makes good use of local facilities and visitors to enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

26. The school has established good links with local schools; the staff and pupils all benefit from these partnerships. The staff work closely with other small primary schools to share resources, discuss the curriculum and give mutual support. Pupils take part in joint events, such as inter-school challenges in mathematics and technology. Through close links with the local secondary school, the teachers ensure that the transfer from one stage of education to

the next is as smooth as possible. The school also values the technical support for information and communication technology provided by the secondary school. There are useful links with the local pre-school group, and staff make visits and share expertise.

27. The parents and carers are mostly very positive about the school. They value the way in which the staff are approachable and are willing to discuss their concerns. This means that any issues are resolved quickly. Termly consultations give the parents good opportunities to discuss their children's progress, and attendance at these meetings is high. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed of their children's progress and are invited to attend annual review meetings. Pupils' annual reports are good. They provide the parents with information about what their children can do, how well they are doing and give guidance on how their children can improve their work. The school invites the parents to useful information sessions, for example on reading, and provides them with information about what their children will be studying. Newsletters give parents timely and relevant information about future events as well as celebrating the school's successes. The home-school contact books are an effective means of communication between parents and staff. The majority of parents are keen to support their children's learning. Some help in the classrooms, others assist with after-school clubs, trips and improving the school grounds. The active parent-teacher association works hard to organise fundraising and social events.
28. The school has established a good partnership with the local community, and these links have a positive impact on pupils' academic and personal achievements. Visitors add an extra dimension to pupils' learning in history. A cricket coach shares his expertise with the pupils and they gain skills and confidence. The school makes good use of the locality, with visits to museums, theatres and a residential trip to an activity centre. There are close links with the village, particularly through the Church. The vicar is a regular visitor and takes some assemblies. The school benefits from the local residents' support of the school's paper collection, and some villagers are regular helpers in school. The school raises funds for charities, sponsors a child from the third world and takes part in local events. This year, the school won a prize for the best school environment in Wellington in Bloom 2003, and came first in the 'Youth Speaks' speaking competition. Pupils gain a better understanding of the wider world through these activities and develop their social skills from meeting people from differing backgrounds.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is satisfactory. Over the last two terms, the acting headteacher has provided very good leadership.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Over the last two years, the school has lacked overall leadership and direction, which has adversely affected the focus for school improvement and the role played by subject co-ordinators.
- Very good leadership by the acting headteacher over the last two terms has brought stability to the school and has also led to the implementation of some new initiatives.
- Governors provide a good degree of personal support and commitment towards the school, but do not have rigorous enough systems for checking its performance and helping to shape its future.

Commentary

29. Over the last two years, the school has been without the full-time leadership of a permanent headteacher, firstly because of spells of prolonged absence of the previous headteacher and then through two terms without a permanent headteacher, during which time the school has been looked after by an acting headteacher. During this period, the staff have worked together very well as a team to ensure the continued smooth running of the school, but it has not been a time of major growth or improvement. The acting headteacher has provided very good leadership during her two terms of office, quickly establishing a very good rapport with staff, pupils and parents and providing fresh insights and challenge for staff. Minor alterations to the

layout of the classrooms in the main building, introduction of new after-school activities, and encouragement of the school's participation in local initiatives have helped the school to maintain momentum and pride in its achievements during this period of uncertainty. She has also helped staff to begin to think more deeply about the rigour of their practice and the challenge they provide for pupils. Above all, the successful team spirit and positive ethos, which were noted as particular strengths in the previous inspection, have been successfully maintained.

30. Despite the very good interim leadership provided by the acting headteacher, the school has lacked overall leadership and direction for the last two years. The main concern of governors and subject co-ordinators has been 'to see things through'. Aspects such as development planning, regular and rigorous self-evaluation, checking on the quality of teaching and learning and determining the key areas for school improvement have all taken a back seat. As a result, the role of subject co-ordinator, still a weakness at the time of the last inspection, is still not as prominent as it ought to be. Co-ordinators have maintained provision within their subject areas, but have not been sufficiently focused on determining what needs to be improved and providing clear and decisive leadership to bring about improvement.
31. Aspects of governance have improved, particularly with regard to the fulfilment of statutory requirements. Issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been rectified. On an individual level, many governors continue to give a considerable amount of support to the school. The creation of a new pond, garden and wildlife area is progressing because of the support and initiative of some governors. However, although appropriate links and structures exist, the governors still do not have rigorous systems in place to ensure quality and monitor the progress of the school. The last two years have highlighted their reliance on the headteacher and the consequent need for governors to become more critically aware of what is happening in the school so that they can become more proactive in challenging and supporting the school and helping to shape its future direction.
32. The day-to-day running of the school is smooth and efficient. Office staff and teaching assistants all have a good awareness of what needs to be done and provide support and help, often beyond the call of duty, whenever and wherever needed. Appropriate training is being provided for the new secretary to ensure that the daily financial management and control continue to be exercised efficiently. Governors have managed the school's finances well. From a small budget they have not only provided a good balance of expertise amongst the school's staff, but a very good number of teaching assistants and additional expertise from specialist teachers. The school's financial reserve, which is a significantly larger proportion of the total budget than is normally considered appropriate, has provided some security through times of uncertainty. This has enabled the school to continue to provide sufficient resources and staffing for its pupils, with a good contingency to meet unknown future circumstances. Although costs per pupil are well above most schools, they reflect the much higher costs of involved in running a small school. Given the quality of education provided, the standards achieved and parents' satisfaction with the school, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	231,204	Balance from previous year	47,495
Total expenditure	226,397	Balance carried forward to the next	52,302
Expenditure per pupil	3,234		

33. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up post at the start of the term immediately following the inspection. This provides an ideal opportunity for the school to look carefully at its systems for self-evaluation and planning for improvement and to ensure that the very good teamwork and willingness of the staff is used to provide a clear direction for the future.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

34. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**. In the previous inspection, provision was reported as very good. However, the change in provision has to be seen in the context of events since the last inspection and particularly during the past two years. The most significant of these has been the grouping of reception-aged children and pupils from Years 1 and 2 in the same class, owing to the small number of pupils in Year 1. This has made it difficult to ensure that each age group within the class has full access to an appropriate curriculum, especially given the lack of space and the far from ideal circumstances under which staff and pupils have to work. Additionally, a long-term staff absence has severely limited opportunities for the Foundation Stage coordinator to monitor the effects of this grouping on the achievement of children and pupils in the class. Indeed, it is to the credit of the coordinator in particular and also of hard-working support staff that stability of provision and satisfactory achievement have successfully been maintained and children are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education.
35. The children are gradually introduced to reception in the September before they are five, the majority having attended some form of pre-school provision. The curriculum is planned appropriately to provide a wide range of interesting and relevant activities, which are matched to their needs. There are good arrangements for the induction of children, including several occasions when children are invited in for shorter sessions. Good communication with parents has been established through initiatives such as 'Play to Learn'². The coordinator sets targets for all children based on early assessment of their ability. However, the continual management of reception children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 in the same classroom slows the rate of achievement because it is very difficult for her to monitor the progress of one group while she gives her full attention to another. In addition, support staff have not received sufficient specialised training in the management of children in the Foundation Stage, and whilst they work hard to support and encourage them, their attention is not always focused sharply enough on the learning outcomes planned by the teacher. This sometimes leads to children losing concentration on the task in hand, particularly over longer periods of time and when children are being taught away from the direct supervision of the teacher. In all other respects, there is a good ratio of pupils to learning support assistants, who provide very good role models for the children. The relationships between adults and children are very good, and this makes a positive contribution to their good achievement in personal, social and emotional development. There is no separate enclosed space, nor covered area for structured play, but the school compensates adequately by ensuring that children have undisturbed use of large wheeled toys on the playground at least once a week.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the good relationships that are quickly established and the good standards set by the teacher and support staff.
- Most children are on course to exceed the expected goals by the end of the year.
- Opportunities are occasionally missed to develop children's independence.

Commentary

36. This is an aspect of the grouping of pupils in Years 1 and 2 with the reception children, which clearly has a positive impact on achievement. This is because the children quickly begin to

² "Play to Learn" is designed to increase parents' understanding of how children learn through play.

look up to older pupils and copy their good standards of behaviour. More significantly, the teacher sets high standards when the whole class is together and insists that the children listen quietly and politely, looking directly at the person who is speaking. Similarly, during the library sessions, the children are expected to respect the need for quiet. As a result, they enjoy looking at books by themselves or sharing them sociably with others. Appropriate opportunities are provided for children to develop independent learning habits, for example, through the provision of a board on which children have to indicate what tasks they have chosen to undertake. During the inspection, most children changed for physical education without any help from adults because there is an expectation on these occasions that they develop a sense of independence. On the other hand, opportunities are sometimes missed to promote these qualities, for example in art sessions where adults do not encourage children as much as they could to put on their own aprons or wash up and tidy away for themselves. Nevertheless, the overall gains in learning already evident in this area are the result of regular reinforcement of sensible rules by all adults, so that children treat each other with courtesy and respect and are confident and relaxed.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Direct teaching provided by the teacher, particularly at the beginning of lessons, is good and has a positive impact on the development of the children's language skills.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the children's work during lessons.

Commentary

37. The teacher makes skilful use of a range of imaginative strategies for developing language. One example is the 'Look and Tell' session where children are asked to bring in a favourite object from home to describe to their classmates. They are expected to speak clearly when it is their turn and sit still and listen when others are talking, and this has a positive impact, both on their social development and the development of their speaking and listening skills. Another is the planning of sharply focused sessions using glove puppets and hand signals which are fun and build quickly on their knowledge of initial sounds and letter blends. A small number of more able children are beginning to write independently and are on target to exceed the expected goals in this area by the end of the year. On the other hand, a few are still at the stage where they need regular support from adults to over-write or fill in letter shapes. The teacher has clear targets for improvement for all children and works hard to give support. Nevertheless, it is difficult for her to monitor and guide individuals personally when she often has to give her full attention to other age groups within the class, and this slows the rate of achievement over time. Children enjoy regular library sessions and opportunities to look at books, which they handle with care, appreciating that text is read from left to right.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The class teacher plans a wide range of activities to support learning and ensure that the children achieve satisfactorily.
- Some opportunities are missed to develop mathematical skills during play activities.

Commentary

38. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and most children are working at the expected levels for their age. A minority attain better than the expected standards by, for example, adding sums of money to 10 pence and measuring the length of classroom objects using paper clips. The class teacher also provides opportunities for children to develop their understanding of time and makes good use of the 'Dark Wood' role-play area to help them to

understand the concept of night and day. Many children recognise that some daily routines take place before others, for example, that we have breakfast before we get to school, whilst the less confident children need a lot of help from adults to place pictures of events in the right order. The class teacher has designed creative activities for the play areas to develop mathematical skills, although insufficient focused use is made of these tasks to reinforce or promote learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The class teacher makes good use of the question-and-answer session at the beginning of lessons to assess and develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them.
- The grouping of reception children with older pupils sometimes restricts learning.

Commentary

39. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and most children are working at levels expected for their age. A variety of appropriate and interesting activities is planned to capture children's interest and curiosity. For example, they learn the names of vegetables and fruits that help them to grow strong and make a healthy fruit salad. They carry out traffic surveys in the village and gain a greater understanding of their own life in a rural setting through watching the exploits of Barnaby Bear. In a lesson seen during the inspection, the class teacher made skilful use of questioning, drawing on children's role play in 'The Dark Wood', to encourage the use of words such as 'countryside', 'farming' and 'badgers'. The children achieved well during this part of the lesson. However, progress varies on occasions when, as in the lesson referred to, the class teacher quite unavoidably has to concentrate on other groups and this has the effect of disturbing the flow of learning for the younger children.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The contribution of a specialist dance teacher is having a positive impact on standards.
- Many pupils are on track to exceed the expected goals by the end of the year.
- The coordinator makes good use of the village hall to ensure that the children can achieve well.
- The specialist teacher's planning is not readily available in the event of absence.

Commentary

40. One lesson of dance was seen in the village hall from which it was clear that the children are achieving well in this area. This is another aspect of learning in which there is some benefit from having a mixed-age class of children in the reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2. The reception children followed the examples set by their older classmates, used the space around them safely and interpreted a range of dance movements with enjoyment and confidence. In the absence of the specialist dance teacher, the class teacher improvised well, making good use of skilful performers to show others what could be achieved. She managed pupils' behaviour well and ensured that children consolidated what they had learned and achieved adequately. Nevertheless, copies of the specialist teacher's planning is not available in the event of absence, so that teaching can not carry on from where it left off and new learning does not build on what was already taught. The school provides a good range of large wheeled toys, and opportunities are provided for children to enjoy well-supervised outdoor play. Children's coordination and use of space was good when they were observed. The coordinator makes good use of the opportunity provided by the weekly trip to the village

hall to develop children's awareness of the need to follow instructions from adults and to behave sensibly and safely. Consequently, the absence of a hall for physical education is turned to the school's advantage, and this becomes a well-organised social event, which makes a good contribution to children's personal development.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

41. No direct teaching in this area was seen during the inspection and no overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning has been made. Nevertheless, observation of children at work and play and the evidence from displays of their previous and current work suggest that standards are as expected for their age. The school provides a suitable range of activities to support creative development and there is an attractive and stimulating area for role-play that is used well. Children have opportunities to develop skills using a variety of media, including water-colours and coloured crayons, and they make and decorate Diwali pots, linked to their work on Hindu traditions.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading are above average throughout the school, but standards in writing are not high enough.
- The school promotes positive attitudes to literature and drama.
- Marking does not always give pupils a clear picture of how well they are doing or what they have to do to improve.
- The subject co-ordinator does not have sufficient opportunity to monitor the impact of the curriculum on teaching and learning.

Commentary

42. Standards in English by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have fluctuated in recent years, ranging from below average to well above average. High standards were achieved in the 2002 tests for pupils in Year 6 and well-above-average results for pupils in Years 2 and 6 were achieved in 2003. This wide variation in results has to be seen in relation to the relatively small class sizes in West Buckland and the make-up of particular groups of pupils from year to year. For example, there is a higher proportion of pupils who need additional support in the current Year 6 than in recent years. Additionally, the grouping of pupils in Years 1 and 2 with children of reception age slows the progress of the oldest pupils in this class, despite the best efforts of teacher and support staff. The pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes are on track to achieve average standards for their age in the 2004 tests, and pupils throughout the school the school are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs receive additional support, which enables them to achieve at a similar rate to their classmates. An additional factor is the continued long-term staff absence, which is making it very difficult for the coordinator to successfully monitor and improve standards. The school is aware, for example, of the need to improve the quality of writing, particularly for boys, and has introduced positive initiatives such as inviting authors and storytellers into school to stimulate greater interest. In contrast, the favourable number of capable support staff in the school has made it possible to provide regular additional guidance in reading, with the result that reading standards are above average throughout the school.
43. Overall standards in speaking and listening in Year 2 and Year 6 match those achieved in most schools. In the best lessons, teachers use good opportunities to develop these skills, for example, by saying, "Discuss this with the person next to you for a minute", then asking for clear contributions from each group. Consequently, most pupils are used to addressing the rest of the class, speak confidently and listen carefully when others are speaking. The more able pupils in Years 5 and 6 discuss ideas articulately and at length, reflecting

standards above expectations for their age. For example, one pupil putting forward an argument for building a holiday resort in an area of natural beauty explained, "We must emphasise the fact that we're going to create an animal park to preserve wild life." Some, on the other hand, are hesitant and restrict contributions to single words or short phrases. Teaching in the class for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is making good use of drama for pupils of all abilities to practise and develop clear speech, which is beginning to have a positive impact on standards in speaking and listening and is creating a strong platform for further improvement.

44. Pupils achieve well in reading, and standards are above average throughout the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have regular support and practice both in school and through a successful home-reading scheme, which results from a good partnership with parents. Pupils' home-reading records are kept up to date and comments or lists of new words read are added by pupils and adults. All pupils in Year 2 read fluently and have a number of ways of tackling new words, whilst the more able pupils read more widely from both fiction and non-fiction. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to develop positive attitudes to books. In the absence of a school library through lack of space, the teachers make sure that the pupils learn good library skills, so that most find information quickly by skimming the text or using an index. The teachers also provide frequent opportunities for practising these skills, for example when carrying out research on insects on topics such as insects or World War Two. All pupils read independently, with more able readers forming mature opinions about the styles of different authors. For example, one very able reader, describing a book she had particularly enjoyed, commented, "The chapters dart from one stage of his life to another and the story doesn't come together until the very end."
45. Staff have rightly identified writing as an area for development and are working hard to improve overall standards, which are average in Years 2 and 6. In Year 2, most pupils write clear sentences, beginning with capital letters and ending in full stops, reflecting standards typical for their age, with only a minority needing help from adults. Some are on track to attain above average standards, writing in clear, consecutive sentences, and using speech marks correctly, for example, when writing stories about 'The Dark Wood'. By Year 6, the vast majority of pupils plan work carefully and organise ideas into paragraphs. The more able pupils regularly use more complex sentence construction, above the expected level for their age, as in, "The wooden floor is harder, so it would only absorb some energy from the ball, leaving enough energy for the ball to bounce back up." Teachers have been encouraging greater care with handwriting throughout the school. This is beginning to bear fruit and most pupils concentrate hard on forming letters and words correctly and setting work out neatly. However, teachers do not always demand high enough standards of all pupils in terms of the quantity, quality and accuracy of pupils' written work.
46. Taking full account of the lessons seen and close analysis of pupils' previous work, the quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory and is satisfactory overall. A strength of teaching throughout the school is the detailed planning of literacy lessons. This has a particularly successful impact on the introductory session in most lessons. Teaching is lively and imaginative, all pupils are fully involved in question-and-answer sessions and, as a result, are fully engaged and interested. In the best lessons, teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses to set activities at the right level of difficulty for the wide range of abilities within their mixed-age classes, the teachers or their learning support assistants provide focused support where it is needed, and pupils achieve well. All teachers mark work conscientiously according to lesson objectives and often include encouraging comments, but the scope of their marking is not always broad enough to help pupils consolidate previous learning. The marking is neither rigorous enough nor linked sufficiently closely to pupils' individual writing targets, which vary in quality and relevance. Consequently, it does not have an immediate influence on the quality of pupils' day-to-day writing, they are not clear about what they have to do to improve, and progress over time is slower than it could be. The teaching of reading is good throughout the school. This is clearly the result of positive, combined effort on the part of teachers, support staff, parents and volunteer helpers, which is having a positive effect on standards and attitudes to reading. The use of drama, particularly in the class for pupils in Years 5 and 6, is also having a positive impact, not only on the development of language, but on pupils' attitudes to literature. This was clearly seen in a very good lesson in that class, where pupils of all abilities thoroughly

enjoyed taking turns acting out parts in the famous 'three witches' scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

47. The coordinator has a clear view of the priorities for development in the subject. The good quality of individual lessons seen during the inspection provides clear evidence that there is a positive ethos for learning and good potential for improvement, provided that sufficient opportunities are created to rigorously pursue and address the areas for development that have been identified.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. The teachers provide a good range of opportunities for the pupils to use their language and literacy skills in other subjects. However, they do not make the best use of these opportunities to help pupils develop their skills, as they are not rigorous enough in pointing out to pupils where they have made mistakes or how they can improve their writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve above average standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils and plan work that is suited to the needs of individuals.
- Work in mental mathematics sessions is not always sufficiently challenging.
- The weakest aspect of pupils' work is their ability to carry out investigative activities.

Commentary

49. Although there have been fluctuations, the school's results in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 have risen steadily since the last inspection. In 2003, the results at the end of Year 2 were well above the national average, although they were below average the previous year. For the last few years, the results at the end of Year 6 have been well above the national average. Girls usually achieve better results than boys at the end of Year 2, but the situation is reversed at the end of Year 6. With such small numbers in each year group, these differences are unlikely to be significant. In general, the picture with regard to mathematics is healthy. The school is making good provision for the teaching of mathematics, and there has been satisfactory improvement in this subject since the last inspection.
50. The achievement of pupils currently in Year 2 is satisfactory, and they are achieving average standards. The progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 varies according to the teaching arrangements. In a good lesson observed during the inspection, the pupils in Year 2 achieved well because the teacher was able to concentrate on teaching the seven pupils in the group whilst other pupils in the class were working outside with the assistant. Progress during mental mathematics sessions is sometimes slow for the older pupils, as questions directed at pupils in Year 1 rarely provide them with sufficient challenge.
51. The achievement of pupils currently in Year 6 is good, and standards are above average. Results at the end of the year are unlikely to be as high as in previous years because of the different nature of the year group, where only a small number of pupils with particular needs has a significant impact on overall standards. Pupils cover a broad range of work in mathematics, and appropriate assessment tests provide teachers with good information about how well pupils are achieving. Pupils have thorough understanding of most areas of mathematics, although they are less secure when asked to apply their skills to investigative situations. Whilst pupils have competent skills in mental mathematics, their ability to answer quick-fire mental mathematics questions is not as well developed as the very good results over the past few years would suggest.

52. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good awareness of pupils' different levels of understanding and target questions and reinforcement activities well to individual circumstances. Their planning is good, and indicates clearly separate objectives for different groups of pupils. The small class sizes at Key Stage 2 and good use of teaching assistants have a significant impact on pupils' learning. In a very good lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, the teacher and assistant worked together very well, each taking responsibility for a year group and helping pupils to develop their mathematical understanding through a series of well-directed tasks, which were modified for individuals as the lesson progressed, according to how quickly pupils grasped new concepts. In this lesson, pupils in Year 4 quickly grasped how to multiply by eight using only their knowledge of the two-times table. Pupils are taught different methods of carrying out calculations and encouraged to choose methods that work well for them. Pupils' books contain little evidence of investigative work in mathematics or solving more complex problems expressed in words, which probably accounts for the hesitancy of a more able group of pupils during the inspection when faced with an investigation to discover the largest area they could create whilst maintaining the same perimeter. Although each of the lessons observed started with a mental warm-up session, these were quite brief and not particularly challenging. In Years 3 and 4, the teacher makes good use of computer programs to reinforce the teaching of basic numeracy skills.
53. No judgements are made on the quality of leadership and management in mathematics, as the mathematics co-ordinator was absent during the inspection. As with most other subjects during the period of turbulence, the school has been in a situation in which impetus for change has been curtailed because of lack of overall direction for the school. Self-evaluation through the observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work is not a well-established practice. However, pupils have been well served during this time, and most leave the school as competent mathematicians, and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Although little evidence for the development of numeracy skills through other subjects was evident during the inspection, displays show that suitable opportunities are taken to develop skills, such as data-handling, in subjects such as geography and science.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in science have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now above average by the end of Year 6.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and there is also some very good teaching.
- There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding through an investigative approach to science.
- Teachers do not make use of opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills when producing written work in science.

Commentary

55. At the time of the last inspection, standards in science at the end of Year 6 were close to the national average, sinking to below and then well below the national average over the following two years. Since then, there has been a significant improvement, and results in 2001 and 2002 were well above the national average, and in 2003 they were above average. The improvements in standards coincided with changes in staffing and a more specialised approach to the teaching of science. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are achieving well and standards are above average by the time pupils leave school.

56. At the end of Year 2, the teacher's assessments show standards to be well above the national average. However, evidence in pupils' books indicates that this is a somewhat optimistic assessment of pupils' attainment. The pupils are achieving satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2 and standards are at an average level. Much of the learning for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is based on practical work. The pupils greatly enjoy this approach, but do not always have the self-discipline to pursue the scientific purposes of their investigation. Their preference for a hands-on approach is evident from the quality of their recorded work, which is not always well presented.
57. The approach to teaching science in Years 3 to 6 is thorough. Investigative work forms the cornerstone of the school's approach to teaching the subject, and some topics are developed in depth. For example, the final assessment of pupils' work on seed dispersal, set out in the form of a mind-map, shows good understanding of the topic, well-developed subject-specific vocabulary and careful recording of research and investigations. Pupils have a good understanding of the concept of a fair test. In a very good lesson during the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 worked in small groups to devise their own investigations to test different aspects of conditions for plant growth. The teacher had devised the tasks carefully so that all were contributing to the overall investigation, yet those with special educational needs and the more able pupils each had tasks that were appropriately challenging for their level of ability.
58. The overall quality of teaching and learning in science is good, and there is also some very good teaching. The lesson observed in Years 5 and 6 was planned meticulously and executed in a very thorough manner, helping pupils to consolidate previous learning, offering them opportunities to work together and make new discoveries, and drawing learning together at the end of the session so that all were clear about what they had gained from devising their own investigation. Throughout the lesson, the teacher provoked the pupils by asking pertinent questions, to get them to think more deeply about what they were doing and why. This contrasted starkly with a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, where the teacher had to contend with three year groups, each engaged on different activities, where the inadequacy of the facilities available for children in the reception engaged in creative play led to over-crowding and had an adverse impact on the learning of other pupils.
59. The recording of pupils' activities and investigative work in science offers a good opportunity for the development of pupils' writing skills, but staff do not make the best use of these opportunities, as pupils' written mistakes are often not corrected and they are not shown ways in which they could improve their writing. There is occasional good use of information and communication technology to assist pupils' learning, for example, through the use of a branching database program to investigate different types of plant. Investigative work offers good opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to work with others. In the lesson observed, pupils managed this well, in contrast to pupils in a lesson in Year 2 who found it very hard to take turns looking through a tiny hole to discover what they could see in the dark. In Years 5 and 6, the teacher encouraged a number of fruitful discussions, in which pupils shared their ideas and enriched each other's understanding.
60. The science co-ordinator provides a good role model for other staff through her own good practice and shows good awareness of the importance of developing in pupils the ability to work independently. During the transitional period when the school has been without a permanent headteacher, there has been little monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, and the school has not ensured that all staff are following a consistent approach to developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are confident in using computers, although they only have knowledge of a limited range of software.
- Teaching assistants play an important role in supervising and helping pupils to learn new skills.

- There is some good use of new technology to assist pupils' learning in other subjects, but subject co-ordinators do not take sufficient responsibility for planning where and when to use information and communication technology within their subjects.

Commentary

61. Only one information and communication technology lesson was seen during the inspection, but pupils were observed using computers on a number of occasions and various pupils were interviewed regarding their use of computers in school. Pupils' achievement in information and communication technology is satisfactory and, overall, standards are similar to those in other schools at the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards are higher with regard to the ease with which pupils operate a narrow range of computer programs, but lower in some aspects of the curriculum which have not been taught in sufficient detail. The school has maintained the satisfactory and good features noted at the time of the last inspection.
62. By the end of Year 2, the pupils show confidence in using a range of software. They use a word processor competently, for example, to write a sequence of instructions in English, and produce a pictogram of their favourite fruits in connection with work in science and mathematics. The physical constraints of the classroom for pupils in the reception and Years 1 and 2 make it difficult to access the classroom computers at times and limit the use of computers as a regular tool for learning. However, they gain sufficient experience to make good use of the more conveniently located computers in Years 3 and 4. Here, the computers are in regular use, and pupils show easy familiarity with a broader range of programs, most of which are connected with their work in other subjects. By the end of Year 6, the pupils are adept at finding out information from the Internet and use a word processor competently to produce, edit and review written work. Many pupils avail themselves of the opportunity to use the computers during their own free time, demonstrating an easy familiarity with a number of programs beyond those encountered in the normal curriculum.
63. The quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology is satisfactory. Teaching assistants play a very important role in facilitating the learning of new skills; they are well trained and give the pupils good advice and guidance. In a well-organised session for pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, the teacher made good use of most of the school's available resources. Whilst five pupils remained in the classroom to practise skills of cutting and pasting, importing images and varying the layout of their text, another group worked under the supervision of an assistant to research web-sites with information about Anglo-Saxons. A third group interviewed the headteacher about her experience of using computers and took some digital photographs, which were then downloaded to the classroom computer. The pupils were motivated and enthusiastic and learnt quickly and well during this session.
64. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, but, as with most other subjects over the last two years, there has not been a clear focus on improving the school's provision for the subject, and the co-ordinator does not have a sufficiently clear overview of the subject to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are taught in sufficient detail. Discussions with pupils reveal that some aspects of the curriculum are covered only minimally. For example, the pupils have not had the opportunity to put together any multimedia presentations and their knowledge of databases and spreadsheets is very limited. These weaknesses would be revealed more readily if there were a systematic approach to checking on the quality of teaching and learning and evaluating how well the curriculum is implemented.
65. The school's accommodation is not ideally suited to any other form of organising the computers, other than placing them within the classrooms. However, the good ratio of pupils to adults enables the pupils to work under supervision in different parts of the school, and staff endeavour to make efficient use of the resources available. One of the teaching assistants plays a very valuable role as technician, ensuring that all of the computers are in working order and have the appropriate software installed. This is a much more cost-effective solution to maintaining the school's computers than is evident in many schools.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. The use of new technology across the curriculum is patchy. In some subjects, such as mathematics, very good use is made of a range of programs that help to improve pupils' numeracy skills. Research on the Internet features as an important part of pupils' work in geography and history. However, the approach to using new technology is still somewhat haphazard and dependent on a range of familiar programs. Not all subject co-ordinators have yet to take responsibility for identifying where, when and how information and communication technology should be used within their schemes of work. Pupils have the confidence and inclination to use the available computers, but the overall provision needs to be better organised than it is at present.

HUMANITIES

67. No overall judgement has been reached about provision in **history**, since no lessons were seen during the inspection and there was little in the way of current work due to the organisation of the school timetable. It is clear that an appropriate curriculum is in place and that good use of visits to places such as Taunton Museum has been made to promote pupils' interest. Pupils in Year 6, for example, spoke with enthusiasm about their study of the Tudors. In 2001, the school introduced a successful 'History Timeline' project, which enabled pupils throughout the school to explore the history of West Buckland from the times of early invaders up to World War Two. Good links were created with subjects such as art and design, the lasting benefits of which remain in the form of attractive playground panels.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are strong links between religious education and the curriculum for personal, social and health education which have a positive impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- There are no procedures for assessment.

Commentary

68. Standards of attainment securely meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, as they did at the time of the last inspection and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. One lesson was observed and judgements are based on this as well as an analysis of previous work.
69. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 gain a sound appreciation of traditions and beliefs embodied in the Jewish and Islamic faiths. These are linked successfully with pupils' everyday lives, for example with the school's behaviour code or relationships with younger brothers and sisters. In Years 3 to 6, younger pupils have good opportunities to enjoy and discuss stories from the New and Old Testaments, whilst pupils in Years 5 and 6 are asked to explore more abstract issues, through themes such as 'The Real Me', or 'Life is...'. In a good lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, the class built on a previously held discussion on the issue of the existence of God. The teacher gave pupils newspaper articles to sort into two piles, depending on whether or not they supported the existence of God. This was a difficult exercise, particularly for less able pupils, but stimulated lively discussion at the end of the lesson, which engaged pupils of all abilities and made a positive contribution to their capacity to reflect on moral and religious issues.
70. The acting headteacher is providing sound temporary leadership, which is ensuring satisfactory coverage and planning of the agreed syllabus. However, she does not monitor and review the impact of the curriculum on teaching and learning rigorously in order to increase the overall standards of work and rate of achievement. There are good links with the local church, for example, through regular visits by the parish vicar. Pupils have also had opportunities to compare harvest festival celebrations in their own church with those held in other parts of the world, and these initiatives make a positive contribution to their

understanding of Christian values. The school does not organise visits and visitors to strengthen the pupils' understanding of other world faiths.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning make a positive contribution to the development of language.
- The school is making effective use of visitors and visits to places of interest to support teaching and learning.
- There is no strategy for measuring the impact of the curriculum on standards.

Commentary

71. Standards throughout the school are similar to those found in most schools, and pupils of all abilities are achieving satisfactorily. The vast majority of pupils in Year 2 have a clear appreciation of the fact that they are growing up in a rural area of England and are gaining an awareness of how changes such as the building of motorways affect the lives of both humans and animals in the countryside. Some more able pupils provide clear written or spoken arguments for or against these changes, reflecting above average standards for their age, whilst less able pupils at this stage need support from adults to record ideas and observations. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop appropriate technical skills from Years 3 to 6, most clearly reflected in the work of pupils in Years 3 and 4, who have produced a range of charts comparing rainfall or temperatures in different countries and were observed using grid references to locate towns in England.
72. Taking full account of previous work and direct observation of lessons, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Three lessons were seen during the inspection, two of which were satisfactory and one which was very good. Teachers plan a suitable range of activities to ensure that pupils develop an awareness of their position in the world around them and how, for example, the lives of people in different countries are affected by climate. Teaching and learning are supported by the organisation of visits to places of interest such as a Somerset cider orchard or by inviting visitors to school to stimulate interest. The value of this was seen in a very good lesson in Years 5 and 6 where someone who had climbed Mount Kilimanjaro had previously visited the class. This had clearly fired their interest and enthusiasm for the topic. The class teacher had followed this up by planning a range of interesting discussion topics which led to good progress both in subject knowledge and the development of speaking and listening skills. By providing opportunities to discuss environmental issues, teaching also makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.
73. The coordinator has only recently been appointed and is providing satisfactory leadership for the subject. The coordinator and colleagues are working hard to ensure that the scheme of work is used to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. On the other hand, there are too few opportunities to ensure that pupils are developing the full range of skills, step by step, as they grow older or to measure the progress of West Buckland pupils against nationally agreed standards.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The subjects of **art and design, design and technology, music and physical education** were not a major focus for this inspection. Brief visits were made to an art and design lesson in Years 5 and 6 and physical education lessons in each class, and pupils' work was scrutinised for evidence of their achievements in these subjects. No lessons in design and technology or music took place during the inspection.

74. From the small sample of pupils' work on display, standards in **art and design** at the end of Year 6 appear to be above average. Well-produced pastel drawings of fruit, and realistic, life-like, water-colour paintings of flowers contrast and complement some interesting printing

using Indian art blocks. The acting headteacher has used her expertise well to provide pupils in Key Stage 2 with a range of experiences using different media.

75. Although there was very little evidence of work in **design and technology**, the subject has made a sound contribution to pupils' cultural development, as pupils have explored designs around the world, ranging from a Chinese shoe and Ghanaian sandals to Aboriginal bark paintings and Indian puppets. Links with the community have been promoted through the design and construction of games, which were displayed, and then set up on stalls and played at the school's Christmas Fayre. Working for a specific purpose encouraged pupils to complete their games to a sufficiently high standard for use by other people, and provided a very good opportunity for them to evaluate the games in the light of this experience.
76. The school has good arrangements to overcome lack of expertise amongst the staff in **music**, through the employment of a specialist music teacher for half a day each week. Similarly good arrangements exist in **physical education**, through the employment of a dance specialist and the use of other professionals, such as a cricket coach from Somerset County Cricket Club. The school has adequate outdoor facilities for physical education, but lacks any suitable indoor facility. The local village hall is used for dance and some indoor physical activities, but is unsuitable for gymnastics and most indoor sports because of its size and very low ceiling. The school compensates for this by offering as broad a programme as possible in other sporting activities and through the employment of professionals. The dance teacher was ill during the week of the inspection, but brief observation of pupils' performances in all three classes indicate that they achieve higher standards in dance than is usual for their age as a result of this teaching. Cricket coaching, observed with pupils in Years 5 and 6, is well organised and enables pupils to have access to expertise and equipment which is not normally available to pupils in a primary school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, Social and Health Education

77. The school sees pupils' personal development as an important part of its work. The coordinator is working hard to establish a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education, the success of which is reflected through the good relationships which exist throughout the school. The school's policy for sex education meets statutory requirements, and care is taken to raise issues of healthy eating and drugs awareness. The coordinator has created opportunities for pupils to evaluate the quality of the programme on physical development, and their responses were very positive. The 'Life Bus', a mobile project for raising pupils' awareness of the importance of physical wellbeing, has visited the school to work with each class. The coordinator has also introduced positive initiatives to promote the notion of citizenship by inviting parish councillors and a local Member of Parliament to visit school and talk to pupils about their roles.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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