

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MERLEY FIRST SCHOOL**

Wimbourne

LEA area: Poole

Unique reference number: 113707

Headteacher: Mrs Sally Birley

Lead inspector: David Westall

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 267311

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: First  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 4 – 9  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 298

School address: Oakley Straight  
Wimbourne  
Dorset  
Postcode: BH21 1SD

Telephone number: (01202) 888 455  
Fax number: (01202) 840 351

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr Nigel Paton

Date of previous inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> December 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

There are 298 pupils on roll, aged between four and nine years and they are taught in ten classes. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, and the percentage identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Only one child is at an early stage of English language acquisition, and he has recently started at the school. The ward in which the school is situated is relatively advantaged, and children's standards on entry to the reception class are generally above average.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2004. For most of the previous academic year there was no permanent headteacher at the school. At present, there is an acting deputy headteacher.

The school achieved the 'Investors in People' award in 2002 and the 'Healthy Schools' award in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2414	David Westall	Lead inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education
1333	Elizabeth Forster	Lay inspector	
3856	Sandy Wellsted	Team inspector	English History Religious education Special educational needs Personal, social and health education and citizenship
2420	Brian McCutcheon	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography
19302	Christine Perrett	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI  
1 – 4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637 833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>4 - 5</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>6 - 9</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>9 - 15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>15 - 17</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>18 - 32</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE     SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>33</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a sound school.** The teaching is satisfactory, overall, and enables pupils to make mainly satisfactory progress in their learning. Pupils' personal development is fostered well and they are keen to learn. The staff are conscientious, and the recently appointed headteacher is providing the school with a clear, and improved, sense of direction. It provides satisfactory value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress in the reception classes, in mathematics in Years 1 to 4 and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 3 and 4.
- The headteacher has good leadership and management skills.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, and the school provides well for their personal development.
- The most capable pupils make unsatisfactory progress.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- Subject leaders do not monitor and evaluate provision with enough rigour.
- Assessment procedures are not securely established in Years 1 to 4, and do not enable pupils' progress to be tracked properly.
- Overall, there is not enough good teaching in Years 1 to 4.
- The school is a caring community where pupils' welfare is a high priority.
- Pupils underachieve in art and design.
- A very strong partnership is established with parents.

Overall, the school has made unsatisfactory progress since its last inspection in 1998. The specific weaknesses identified in the last report have been addressed. The school now has a sound strategic plan, pupils' attendance is carefully monitored and good procedures are securely established for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. In addition, all statutory requirements are now met and the range of extra-curricular opportunities has increased. However, the overall quality of teaching has declined since the last inspection, when it was good. As a result, pupils' current standards in Years 2 and 4 are generally a little lower than those found in 1998.

#### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.** From their mainly above average starting points on entry to Reception, children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. In Years 2 and 4, pupils' standards are generally a little above national expectations and represent broadly satisfactory achievement.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	B	B	C	D
writing	A	B	C	D
mathematics	B	B	A	B

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

*Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

The table above shows that the test results in Year 2 were lower than those reached in 2003 in reading and writing but were an improvement in mathematics. The overall trend in the school's results, over the past five years, is in line with the national trend.

Inspection findings show that, on entry to Year 1, pupils' overall standards are generally above national expectations in all aspects of their work. Current standards are a little above national expectations in reading and writing in Year 2, in English in Year 4, and in science in Years 2 and 4. These standards represent broadly satisfactory achievement. In mathematics, pupils achieve well and reach standards which are above national expectations in Years 2 and 4. In ICT, pupils' standards are in line with national expectations in Year 2 but above national expectations in Year 4, representing satisfactory and good achievement respectively. In religious education, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and is reflected in standards which match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 2 and 4. In design and technology, standards are in line with national expectations in Years 2 and 4, reflecting satisfactory achievement. However, in art and design, pupils underachieve and their standards are consequently below national expectations in Years 2 and 4.

Across the school, pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the targets in their individual education plans. The most capable pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. However, in Years 1 to 4, their overall progress is unsatisfactory.

**Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good**, and there are very positive relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils. Provision is good for pupils' spiritual and cultural development and very good for their moral and social development. The attendance rate is very good.

#### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a satisfactory standard of education.** Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, being good in the reception classes and satisfactory in Years 1 to 4. Pupils benefit from good teaching in mathematics in Years 1 to 4 and in ICT in Years 3 and 4. In addition, pupils with special educational needs are well taught across the school. However, the most capable pupils are given work which is too easy, especially in English and science; teachers' expectations are too low in art and design; and there is not enough good teaching, overall, in Years 1 to 4. Assessment procedures are not securely established which means that pupils' progress is not tracked effectively. The curriculum is satisfactory, is accessible to all pupils and meets statutory requirements. A good range of additional learning opportunities further enriches pupils' learning. The care and welfare of pupils are good, and the school has established very strong links with parents.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.** The recently appointed headteacher has good leadership and management skills, and is providing a clear sense of direction. The work of the acting deputy headteacher is sound and the leaders for the Foundation Stage and for provision for pupils with special educational needs are fulfilling their roles well. However, whilst the leadership and management contribution made by subject leaders is beginning to improve, it remains unsatisfactory, overall. School governance is satisfactory.

#### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils have positive views about the school.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

### THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:

- Ensure that the most capable pupils make better progress.
- Ensure that subject leaders monitor and evaluate their subjects more rigorously.
- Ensure that assessment procedures are established which track pupils' progress.
- Increase the amount of good teaching in Years 1 to 4.
- Raise pupils' standards in art and design in Years 2 and 4.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**. It is good in the reception classes and is otherwise mainly satisfactory.

#### MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Children achieve well in the reception classes.
- Pupils' achievement is good in mathematics in Years 2 and 4, and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 4.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across the school.
- The achievement of the most capable pupils is unsatisfactory, overall.
- Pupils underachieve in art and design and their standards are consequently below national expectations in Years 2 and 4.

#### COMMENTARY

##### *Standards on entry to the school*

1. On entry to the reception classes, children's overall standards are above average.

##### *The school's results in national tests*

##### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004***

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.1 (16.5)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	14.9 (15.7)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	17.6 (17.3)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The table above shows that the results of national tests in Year 2 in 2004 were broadly in line with the national average in reading and writing but were well above the national average in mathematics. When these results were compared with those reached by similar schools, they were below average in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics. The results in 2004 were lower than those reached in 2003 in reading and writing but were an improvement in mathematics. The school attributes the



reduction in standards in reading and writing to the increased percentage of pupils with learning difficulties in the last academic year, together with changes of staff which caused some disruption to the Year 2 classes. However, the school is not able to account for the increase in pupils' standards in mathematics in the same year, reflecting general weaknesses in its monitoring and evaluation procedures, which are detailed later in this report and are now being addressed. The trend in the school's overall results, since 2000, is broadly in line with the national trend.

#### *Standards at the time of the last inspection*

3. When the school was last inspected, in 1998, pupils' standards in Year 2 were well above national expectations in reading and writing, in line with national expectations in mathematics and above national expectations in science. In Year 4, pupils' standards were well above national expectations in English, and above national expectations in mathematics and science. In Years 2 and 4, standards were well above national expectations in ICT and were in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Standards were in line with national expectations in art and design, design and technology and physical education in Years 2 and 4. No overall judgements were made about standards in other subjects.

#### *Inspection findings*

##### *The Foundation Stage (The reception classes)*

4. **Children's achievement is good** and results from good teaching. They make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and good progress in all of the other required areas of learning. The majority of children are on course to demonstrate overall standards which are above national expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage in all areas of learning.

##### *Years 1 to 4*

5. **Pupils' achievement is satisfactory** in these year groups and results from satisfactory teaching. Pupils' standards are a little above national expectations in reading and writing in Year 2, in English in Year 4, and in science in Years 2 and 4. They reflect the satisfactory progress of most pupils from their entry to Year 1. Pupils achieve well in mathematics, and their standards are above national expectations in Years 2 and 4. In ICT, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Year 2, where standards are in line with national expectations, but good in Year 4, where standards are above national expectations. In religious education, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and is reflected in standards which match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 2 and 4. Standards in Years 2 and 4 are in line with national expectations in design and technology and also represent pupils' satisfactory achievement. However, in art and design, pupils underachieve, largely because teachers' expectations for pupils' potential standards are too low. As a result, standards in the subject are below national expectations in Years 2 and 4. Personal, social and health education and citizenship, permeate much of the school's work and enable pupils to achieve well in this important element of their development. Insufficient evidence was available to judge pupils' overall standards and achievements in other subjects. Taken as a whole, pupils' current standards in Years 2 and 4 are a little lower than those found when the school was last inspected.

##### *The achievement of different groups*

6. There are no significant differences between the standards reached by boys and girls, and the very small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well

as their peers. The only pupil who is at an early stage of English language acquisition has recently started at the school and is making broadly satisfactory progress. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the targets in their individual education plans. Indeed, some reach the standards expected for their ages in Years 2 and 4. The most capable children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, although they sometimes need more challenging tasks to advance their literacy and numeracy skills even further. In Years 1 to 4, the progress made by the most capable pupils is too spasmodic and means that their achievement is unsatisfactory, overall.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils have **very good** attitudes and values. Their behaviour is **very good** and they establish very good relationships. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. Pupils' attendance is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils enjoy school and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Behaviour is very good, and very positive relationships are established between pupils and between pupils and adults.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good, and good provision is made for their spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils' attendance rate is well above the national median.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### *Attitudes and behaviour*

7. In their answers to questionnaires, pupils of all ages said that they liked school, and this was confirmed emphatically during conversations with inspectors. They enjoy being with their friends and are enthusiastic about a wide range of subjects, as well as after-school clubs. It is evident, from the comments they make, that pupils feel valued and secure within the school environment. The inspection found no evidence of bullying. From the youngest to the oldest, pupils are accustomed to working together constructively. They co-operate well and share resources fairly.
8. The conduct of the adults in the school community presents pupils with a very good model for their own interactions with others, and pupils respond positively. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good and pupils' behaviour is very good. There have been no exclusions in the current and last academic years. Pupils in Year 4 enjoy the responsibility they are given to help younger children with reading and in the playground. During assemblies, pupils receiving awards and those who perform, for example as part of a musical ensemble, are warmly applauded. Well taught by their parents and by their teachers, most pupils have a good understanding of what is right and what is wrong, and a good instinct for where the boundaries are set.
9. The value placed by staff on pupils as individuals – and on their many achievements both inside and outside school, whether related to special talents such as music or football, to effort or to positive attitudes – means that almost all pupils exude a quiet air of confidence. In lessons, they listen attentively to one another and to their teachers, and tackle each new task calmly. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support by their teachers, teaching assistants and peers, and they, too, approach their

work with the determination to succeed. Most pupils persevere well with the tasks they are given and have positive views of themselves as learners. The most capable pupils sometimes mark time in lessons and would benefit from more opportunities to use their own initiative and pursue independent lines of enquiry. Nonetheless, they behave well and sustain attention, even though they clearly find some of the work they are given rather easy.

**Attendance**

- Attendance is very good and pupils arrive very punctually. Levels of attendance are regularly monitored, in contrast to the situation when the school was last inspected, and parents understand that taking children out of school for holidays in term time could have a detrimental effect on their progress.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.6	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

**Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- The school makes good provision for pupils’ spiritual and cultural development, and very good provision for their moral and social development.
- Pupils’ spiritual development is promoted well through acts of collective worship which fully comply with statutory requirements. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on links between assembly themes and events and experiences in their own lives. Religious education lessons also make a significant contribution to pupils’ spiritual development, for example by exploring the impact of religious faith on the lives of religious leaders such as Jesus and Abraham and their followers. In religious education and in science, pupils learn both to wonder at the mysteries of Creation and to appreciate the diversity of the natural world.
- The school has a simple but very strong moral and social code, enshrined in its ‘Golden Rules’, which permeates every aspect of its work and which serves as a touchstone for pupils in their relationships with others. Similarly, strong moral and social values are promoted through personal, social and health education. Pupils have ample opportunities to work together to achieve shared outcomes, and, by so doing, learn to appreciate and respect one another. Through class-work, daily routines and involvement with the wider community and with other schools, pupils are shown how to care for one another and for the world about them. Involvement in fund-raising for charities develops their awareness of the need to care for those less fortunate than themselves. The school gives pupils a good range of opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to the life and work of the school. The recently re-established school council is set to enhance further their involvement in the decision-making process.
- Pupils’ cultural development is promoted well by work in various subjects such as English, history, geography, and religious education. The various visits made in the locality, for example to bring history to life and to study geographical features at first hand, are clearly enjoyed by the pupils and enhance their learning, whilst visitors of different faiths and cultures also contribute significantly to pupils’ experience and

understanding. Annual 'arts weeks' provide pupils with good opportunities to participate in a wide variety of artistic activities such as music-making, dance, drama, design and model-making, and the focus on Africa for the most recent week, in Summer 2004, helped pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of other cultures. A good range of school clubs and other extra-curricular activities also makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, being good in the reception classes and satisfactory in Years 1 to 4. The curriculum is satisfactory, is accessible to all pupils and meets statutory requirements. A good range of additional opportunities further enriches pupils' learning. The care and welfare of pupils are good and the school has established very strong links with parents.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching is **satisfactory** and pupils make mainly satisfactory progress in their learning, as a result.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- Teaching and learning are good in mathematics in Years 1 to 4 and in ICT in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well taught.
- The most capable pupils are sometimes given work which is too easy, particularly in English and science in Years 1 to 4.
- Assessment procedures are not securely established or used effectively to track pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- Weaknesses in elements of teaching in some lessons, especially, but not exclusively, in Years 2 and 3, mean that there is not enough good teaching in Years 1 to 4.
- Teachers' expectations are too low in art and design and this contributes to pupils' underachievement in the subject.

## Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 44 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	2 (4%)	23 (52%)	18 (41%)	1 (2%)	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

15. Although the table above shows that the teaching observed was mainly good, the figures mask a variation in its quality across the school. In the two reception classes, where nearly a quarter of all lessons were seen, the teaching was almost always good. In the older classes, whilst good teaching was regularly observed in Years 1 and 4, the lessons seen were mainly satisfactory, rather than better. Both very good teaching and unsatisfactory teaching are rare, with the only very good lessons observed in the reception classes and the single unsatisfactory lesson seen in Year 3. The quality of teaching has declined since the last inspection, when it was good, overall, and a quarter of all lessons observed were very good.

16. Across the school, the teaching is characterised by very good relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils like and respect their teachers and it is clear that these feelings are reciprocated. All teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour, and pupils respond well by demonstrating positive attitudes and concentrating on their tasks. In the most effective lessons, good use is made of time and teachers know just when to intervene with well-judged questions or comments to ensure that pupils are both supported and challenged. Whilst unsatisfactory teaching is rare, areas for improvement were evident in some lessons which were satisfactory, overall, in Years 1 to 4. In Years 2 and 3, in particular, teachers' questions sometimes need to be more focused in order to probe pupils' understanding and, too often, pupils' answers are accepted without further enquiry – even though they indicate that ideas have not been fully grasped. Across Years 1 to 4, some lessons proceed at a rather leisurely pace, and teachers do not always ensure that pupils make effective use of the time available. However, the most significant weakness is the lack of challenge for the most capable pupils which means that they underachieve, particularly in English and science.
17. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is a key strength in the school, and enables children to make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and good progress in all other areas of learning. The teachers and support staff work as an effective team, and provide children with very positive role-models. Questioning is used well to make children think and to stimulate their ideas, and children are successfully encouraged to develop independence. The teachers have a good understanding about how young children learn, and provide children with effective guidance and support. However, even in the reception classes, there are some occasions when the most capable children mark time because their work is too easy.
18. In Years 1 to 4, the teaching is satisfactory, overall, in English. Indeed, good lessons were seen in Years 1 and 4. However, teachers do not always provide pupils with sufficient time to write at reasonable length, and pupils sometimes need more focused feedback from teachers in Years 2 and 3 in order to understand what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, teachers do not expect enough of the most capable pupils in Year 2 in reading, and in Years 2, 3 and 4 in writing. In mathematics, the teaching is good in Years 1 to 4, and means that pupils do well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled at introducing mathematical ideas and encouraging pupils to explain their calculation strategies. In science, the teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 to 4, and means that the progress made by most pupils is satisfactory. However, the most capable pupils are not sufficiently challenged by their work and pupils in Years 3 and 4 have too few opportunities to develop their own hypotheses and to test their ideas by devising and carrying out their own simple investigations.
19. Insufficient lessons were seen to make a judgement of the quality of teaching in ICT in Years 1 and 2. However, in Years 3 and 4, the quality is good and enables pupils to make good progress in the subject. In religious education, the teaching is mainly satisfactory. It enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in their learning in the subject, although some lessons move at a rather pedestrian pace.
20. Insufficient lessons were observed to make secure overall judgements about the quality of teaching in other subjects. However, it is clear from the many opportunities which are provided, and from pupils' responses to these, that teachers cater well for pupils' personal, social and health education. A careful examination of pupils'

completed work shows that the teaching enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in design and technology but unsatisfactory progress in art and design. Teachers' expectations of pupils' potential achievement in art and design are too low in Years 1 to 4, and evidence suggests that they would benefit from well-focused training to increase their knowledge in the subject. The only unsatisfactory lesson seen during the inspection was in art and design, when pupils wasted time on mundane tasks which did little to benefit their artistic skills or understanding.

21. Various teaching arrangements ensure that pupils with differing special educational needs are given the help they need to make good progress. The main thrust of support involves teaching assistants working closely with these pupils during whole-class lessons. These assistants are well qualified and experienced, and they have a significant impact on the pupils' progress and attainment. Class teachers devise tasks which are well matched to the pupils' capabilities and stages of development and, when teaching assistants are not available, support the pupils effectively. Individual education plans are of good quality, with specific targets which are challenging but accessible.

#### *Assessing pupils' progress*

22. Overall, assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory. Whole-school systems for assessment are underdeveloped and fail to provide a clear picture of pupils' progress, most importantly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, as they move through the school. The school is aware of this weakness and, in order to improve the monitoring of individuals and of specific groups of pupils, has appropriately prioritised the development of tracking procedures in its current development plan. There are agreed procedures for assessing pupils' standards in the other subjects but the use of these is inconsistent throughout the school. However, assessment is thorough and effective in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with special educational needs. The quality of teachers' marking is variable but is satisfactory, overall. Whilst some teachers provide well-focused feedback, this is not always the case. For example, in Years 2 and 3, pupils sometimes need more detailed feedback to help them to improve their writing skills.
23. Individually, teachers make broadly satisfactory use of the information they have to group pupils within their classes, and to identify those who need extra support to help them catch up. In most lessons, the learning objectives are clearly defined and appropriate. These are often shared with pupils as sessions commence and, in the best practice, are used at the end of the lesson to provide opportunities for them to evaluate their own learning. However, the school appropriately recognises that more needs to be done to enable pupils to know and understand their targets for future learning. Weaknesses in teachers' questioning skills in some lessons mean that teachers do not always check pupils' understanding as thoroughly as they should. In addition, insufficient attention is often given to the assessment of the needs of the most capable pupils in Years 1 to 4. Subject leaders have assembled some portfolios of pupils' work, for example in ICT. However, there has been no whole-school discussion and agreement on the National Curriculum levels achieved and this limits their usefulness.

#### **The curriculum**

Curricular provision is **satisfactory** and a good range of additional opportunities enhances pupils' learning.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Curricular provision is good for children in the reception classes.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is good.
- A good range of extra-curricular opportunities, visits and other activities enriches pupils' learning.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs but the provision for the most capable pupils requires improvement.
- The curriculum in art and design does not enable pupils to make adequate progress in the development of key skills in the subject.
- The school's accommodation is very good and learning resources are good.

### Commentary

24. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well planned and is appropriately based on the six areas of learning defined in national guidelines. It is carefully balanced to ensure that there are ample opportunities for children to learn through direct experience and structured play, as well as through more formal teaching. Good provision is made for children to take responsibility for their own learning and make sensible choices.
25. In Years 1 to 4, the curriculum has satisfactory breadth and is securely based on the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. It provides pupils with a range of worthwhile learning experiences, meets all statutory requirements and includes relevant programmes to deal with safety, sex education and drugs awareness. The provision made for pupils' personal development is a key strength, and permeates much of the school's work.
26. There is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics, and literacy and numeracy skills are soundly promoted in work across the curriculum. However, pupils in Years 2 to 4 sometimes need to be given more time to create longer pieces of writing. In addition, the work set for the most capable pupils needs to be more challenging, particularly in English and science. Subjects are sometimes linked to make pupils' learning more meaningful and, in general, care is taken to ensure that the essential skills of each subject are not lost in the integrated approach. Weaknesses in provision, identified in the last report, have been addressed, apart from in art and design where the curriculum still does not ensure that pupils make continuous progress in the development of key skills. This subject is given barely adequate attention in the curriculum, although statutory requirements are met.
27. Good provision is made for the relatively few pupils who have special educational needs. Whilst they have the same access to the same curriculum as their peers, they also benefit from additional support where this is judged to be appropriate. For example, specially trained teaching assistants provide some one-to-one support or small group work for pupils experiencing difficulties with aspects of literacy and numeracy, with speech and language difficulties or with co-ordination difficulties. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides additional teaching for those pupils identified as having specific learning difficulties, and also runs a very successful social skills programme for the very small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties.
28. Overall, the school promotes equality of opportunity soundly, and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and to other activities. However, whilst pupils with special

educational needs are catered for well, there are deficiencies in the opportunities provided for the most capable pupils to do as well as they should.

29. The school has successfully addressed the limited provision for extra-curricular activities described in the last report, and a good range of additional activities now enriches pupils' learning. These currently include French, art, chess, recorders, violin, football, karate, ball skills and cycling. There is also a good programme of educational visits, including to Scaplen's Court, Badbury Rings Celtic Fort, Wimborne Model Village, Putlake Farm, Brownsea Island, Swanage and Dorchester County Museum. In addition, a good range of visitors enrich pupils' learning. Themed events such as a 'Grounds Week', 'Pirate Day', 'Celtic Day', 'Arts Week' and 'Victorian' costumed activities make a good contribution to pupils' personal development as well as their academic learning.
30. The level of staffing is good, and teachers generally have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. However, some teachers are not sufficiently informed about art and design. Teachers are effectively supported by well-trained teaching assistants who are an integral part of the teaching team and make an important and valued contribution to pupils' learning.
31. The accommodation is very good. The school is spacious, and includes a well-appointed hall and music room and an attractive computer suite located conveniently alongside the Year 3 and 4 teaching bays. The smaller banks of computers, which are used by younger pupils, and the school library are about to be relocated and improved. Staff make the most of the generous space which is available and, throughout the school, attractive displays of pupils' work enhance the learning environment. Outside, pupils have access to good-sized playgrounds and grassed areas, and also to a very good environmental garden area which is used effectively to support curriculum provision. Learning resources are plentiful and of good quality.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Good** provision is made for pupils' care, welfare health and safety. The support and guidance pupils receive is **satisfactory**. The school is involving pupils well by seeking and listening to their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is a caring community where pupils' welfare and health and safety are high priorities.
- Pupils' views are sought and considered carefully.

### **Commentary**

32. The school is a caring and happy community where all adults and pupils are valued and pastoral needs are recognised and met. This is fostered through the very good relationships between staff and pupils which are based on care and respect and a sensitivity to pupils' needs. Parents and teachers are happy to share matters of concern that might have a negative impact on pupils' well-being so that appropriate support can be given. This ensures that pupils feel valued, and develop high self-esteem and confidence about all aspects of school life. The very good role models set by staff encourage pupils to develop similarly high standards of care and consideration and to forge very good relationships with each other. Consequently, pupils are confident that should they develop worries or concerns, they will be listened to carefully and necessary action will be taken.



33. Child protection matters are well understood and staff have had appropriate training in awareness, in contrast to the situation when the school was last inspected. Care is taken to ensure that all adults who might come into contact with pupils through clubs, visits or helping in classes have had appropriate checks. The governors and staff take matters of health and safety seriously and meet their responsibilities fully. Regular checks are made of the buildings and grounds and appropriate risk assessments, including those for off-site visits, are undertaken. Well-established and appropriate procedures govern the storage and administration of medicines. Several staff have the appropriate training in first aid and clear records are kept of the minor accidents and incidents that occur; these are improvements since the last inspection. The zoning of the playgrounds by age and activity ensures that younger pupils do not feel overwhelmed or excluded. Healthy living is strongly promoted, for example by encouraging all pupils to drink water through the day and providing the free fruit for the younger pupils.
34. Teachers know their pupils' personalities well and provide good pastoral support and guidance on personal development. However, the lack of a consistent tracking system for pupils' progress sometimes restricts teachers' ability to provide accurate academic guidance and to set well-judged targets to help pupils to improve.
35. Induction arrangements are good. There are effective links with the three feeder pre-schools, with visits for new children before they start at the school. The transition from the Foundation Stage to the Year 1 is carefully planned, with initial continuity of learning support assistants and lunchtime staff so that pupils feel secure. Pupils are successfully encouraged to express their views about the school, and their opinions have already resulted in plans for the upgrading of the toilets. The recently established school council provides a regular forum for pupils' ideas and reflects the importance that is given to hearing their views.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Parents provide very good support for learning at home and at school.
- The school seeks parents' views regularly and acts upon them.
- Parents are provided with a good range of information about the school and what is being taught.
- Links with other schools enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

36. There are very good links with parents and this is a strength of the school. Parents receive a good range of information about the school and its activities, and are well briefed about what is to be taught each term. The school brochure and governors' annual report are friendly and informative and are included on the school's well-designed website, together with a selection of pupils' work. Home/school books are valued for keeping parents informed about homework tasks, and useful guidance booklets are provided for parents to help them to support their children's learning at home. Workshops to explain more about how subjects are taught are held from time to time and are well attended. Parents have several formal opportunities through the year to discuss their children's progress with the teachers and they value the easy accessibility of staff for discussions at other times. Annual written reports give good evaluations of pupils' personal development and sound indications of their academic progress.

37. For their part, parents are very supportive of the school, hold it in high regard and are keen to help their children. They make every effort to ensure children's regular and punctual attendance. By hearing their children read at home and being supportive of pupils' homework tasks, they make a positive impact on pupils' achievements and attitudes to learning. The Merley School Association makes an important contribution to the life of the school, not only by organising events which raise significant funds for additional resources and equipment, but also by making new parents feel welcome. Parents are pleased to act as a sounding board for new ideas, and are keen to contribute their own suggestions. Their views are sought regularly, and their responses are listened to and acted on to bring about improvements.
38. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed when their child's needs are first identified and at each stage of the Code of Practice. Most parents value the school's efforts on their child's behalf and willingly attend parents' meetings where they are encouraged to share their child's individual education plan and sign it if they feel it is appropriate. In addition, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and teaching assistants occasionally organise informal coffee mornings for the parents or guardians of pupils with special needs, and there are regular half-termly 'drop-ins' for those wishing to consult the SENCO. The school has good links with four special schools, each of which specialises in particular aspects of special needs work and whose staff offer valuable services in the form of staff training and guidance.
39. The school has a range of good links with other schools which help broaden pupils' horizons and enrich their experiences. Good links with the three main feeder pre-schools prepare children well for their start at the school. The local group of schools provides teachers with good opportunities to meet with others and benefit from shared training courses. The transition from First to Middle school is well planned, with the Year 4 pupils having the opportunity to undertake science projects jointly with those a year older at middle school. Links with the community are sound, and the community use of the buildings and grounds out of school hours provides children with additional learning opportunities.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The recently appointed headteacher has good leadership and management skills, and is providing a clear sense of direction. The work of the acting deputy headteacher is sound. However, whilst the leadership and management contribution made by subject leaders is beginning to improve, it is unsatisfactory, overall. School governance is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher is working effectively with staff and governors to improve strategic planning and the school's self-evaluation practices.
- Subject leaders do not monitor and evaluate provision with enough rigour.
- The leadership and management of provision are good for children in the Foundation Stage and for all pupils with special educational needs.

### **Commentary**

40. When the school was last inspected, in 1998, the quality of leadership and management was judged to very good. However, when the current headteacher took up her role in September 2004, following a period when the school had no permanent headteacher, there were some important weaknesses. A culture of self-evaluation had not been securely established, lessons were very rarely observed in order to judge the quality of teaching and learning, and subject leaders were not fulfilling their roles

adequately. In addition, there had been no school development plan for the academic year 2003/2004. All available evidence suggests that there was a need for the development of a stronger corporate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and that staff and governors needed to establish a shared sense of direction which would enable the school to tackle areas for improvement.

41. The headteacher has good leadership and management skills and has already had a beneficial impact. She has analysed the results of statutory testing in Year 2 and non-statutory testing in Year 4, and increased teachers' awareness of what they show in relation to pupils' achievement. Following discussions with teachers to establish a shared understanding of the criteria for effective teaching, the headteacher has observed lessons and provided teachers with well-focused written and verbal feedback. She is quick to recognise and praise teachers' achievements and provides pertinent advice to address elements identified for further development. The headteacher has organised and led a very successful training day when all staff, virtually all governors and some parent representatives have discussed the school's aims and shared their views about its strengths and areas for improvement. Following this worthwhile initiative, the headteacher has worked effectively with staff and governors to formulate a school development plan which is properly informed by her astute analysis of the school's performance, and identifies commonly agreed areas for improvement. The plan is well organised and includes detailed information to support the implementation of individual initiatives in the current educational year, including success criteria. Key priorities are well judged, and include plans to improve assessment procedures and the role of subject leaders. The plan extends to 2007, rectifying weaknesses in long-term strategic planning which were identified when the school was last inspected.
42. The headteacher has high expectations for pupils' academic and personal development, and communicates these clearly to guide the school's work. She has good interpersonal skills and encourages teamwork. As a consequence, staff morale is good and they are keen to make the school even more effective.
43. The acting deputy headteacher provides a good role model for her colleagues through her positive attitudes to change and her good teaching skills. She works closely with the headteacher on strategic issues and is making a sound contribution to the leadership and management of the school. The leadership and management of provision for children in the Foundation Stage are good, and ensure that children in both reception classes benefit from a rich curriculum and a good start at the school.
44. The leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs are also strengths. The SENCO's management of day-to-day provision in special educational needs is both efficient and effective. She has played a key role in creating an effective team of teaching assistants who are well trained and sensibly deployed. She has also established positive working relationships with a wide range of external agencies and specialists involved in special needs work. As a result, she is now able to draw on the varied expertise and talents of staff both inside and outside the school, and is successful in her endeavours to secure the appropriate provision for each pupil. All statutory requirements in regard to special needs provision are met.
45. The leadership and management of subject leaders are beginning to show signs of improvement but remain unsatisfactory, overall. They willingly provide advice for their colleagues, organise resources effectively and have a satisfactory overview of planning

for their subjects. All have recently produced action plans for the development of their subjects, and these include some useful initiatives. However, their procedures for monitoring and evaluating pupils' standards and achievements, and the quality of teaching and learning, are insufficiently rigorous. Consequently, leaders are generally in weak positions to identify strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and to target areas for improvement with sufficient precision in their action plans. Subject leaders are conscientious and are keen to improve. As a result, with the benefit of the committed support of the headteacher, they are well placed to enhance their leadership and management roles in line with the intentions of the recently formulated school development plan.

46. The school's policy for performance management is being implemented satisfactorily. Teachers' targets properly reflect both whole-school priorities and individual needs, and all staff have opportunities to benefit from training courses. The headteacher has ensured that teachers will receive feedback from lesson observations to inform their performance management discussions, in contrast with the situation in the last academic year when lesson observations did not form part of the performance management process. Formal procedures for the performance management of teaching assistants and non-teaching staff are not established but the headteacher has sensible plans to rectify this situation.
47. The quality of financial planning is just adequate. Staffing costs are considered carefully by the governors, and the finance committee monitors spending effectively. The school improvement plan is satisfactorily costed, and governors soundly apply the principles of best value when making major spending decisions. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money. However, the school carried forward nearly £75,000 into the current financial year, and this sum is unacceptably high. In part, this sum has been accumulated because the governors have set aside excessive funds to contribute to repairs to the building, when they become necessary. However, the considerable underspend is also likely to be associated with weaknesses in strategic planning, which are now being addressed. For example, in the last academic year, there was no school development plan with associated costs.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	740,168
Total expenditure	742,395
Expenditure per pupil	2,534

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	77,077
Balance carried forward to next year	74,850

**Governance**

48. The governance of the school is satisfactory, and is improving. The governors are strongly committed to the school, their attendance at meetings is good and they ensure that statutory requirements are met. When the school was last inspected, there were important omissions in the school prospectus and in the annual report for parents from governors. In addition, governors' decisions were not always minuted in their meetings. All of these weaknesses have been rectified. An appropriate range of committees is established and all provide sound support for the leadership and management of the school. The chair of governors visits very frequently and has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement as a result of his regular discussions with the headteacher. The governors with specific responsibility for literacy and

numeracy took on their roles in the Autumn Term 2004 but have already met the subject leaders and have observed some English and mathematics lessons. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is new to the role, and has appropriate plans to attend training and to discuss provision with the special educational needs co-ordinator. Governors are linked to all subjects of the National Curriculum and to religious education. These responsibilities have only recently been allocated but already most governors have met with subject leaders and have started to increase their awareness about provision. Whilst the governors allowed the school to function without a specific development plan for the last academic year, they have made a sound contribution to the current plan and have a clear understanding of the priorities identified for improvement. Overall, the governors are increasing the rigour of their strategic management and monitoring roles. As a consequence, they are beginning to ask the school appropriately challenging questions to hold it to account.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Overall, the provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

49. Children are admitted to the reception classes at the beginning of the school year in which they have their fifth birthday, initially for mornings only. After a thorough induction period, which enables children to settle in well, all attend full-time by January. Children enter school with a range of capabilities but, overall, their standards are above average. Children benefit from good teaching and a curriculum which is well matched to their learning needs. A wide range of interesting and relevant activities is provided, and the teachers ensure that there is an appropriate balance of teacher-directed tasks and opportunities for children to learn through purposeful play. The leader of the Foundation Stage fulfils her role well, and teachers and teaching assistants form an effective team. Assessment procedures are good and are generally used effectively. As a result of good provision, children generally achieve well in the Foundation Stage, and the majority are on course to demonstrate overall standards which are above national expectations on entry to Year 1. Children with special educational needs make good progress in Reception. The achievement of the most capable children is satisfactory, overall, although they sometimes need more challenging work. The progress made by the one child who is at an early stage of English language acquisition is broadly satisfactory. The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage was also good when the school was last inspected.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Children achieve very well.
- Relationships are very good and children are confident and happy.
- Teachers and teaching assistants cater very well for children's learning needs, and help them to become confident, well behaved, independent and caring.

#### **Commentary**

50. By establishing good relationships and regular routines, and by making clear their shared expectations, staff bring a sense of purpose to children's experience of school. Children are confident and happy, and demonstrate good social skills. Most children are consistently polite, respond well, listen to adults and to each other, and interact in a kind and constructive way. In their work and play, children have already established very good relationships with others. Their developing independence is shown when they choose their own activities, and most stay on task even when not directly supervised. Children enjoy being the 'leader' for the day, helping with class routines such as changing the date and weather board. They are encouraged to identify the positive attributes of the 'Person of the Week', and enjoy learning about the special treasures that the chosen child has proudly brought to show them. This engenders an appreciation of the values and beliefs of others and helps to create a very caring community. Teachers grasp every opportunity to enhance the children's personal and

social and emotional development, so this area of learning permeates all other activities. Very effective teaching is enabling children to achieve very well in this area of learning. As a result, children are on course to demonstrate standards which exceed the expected goals at the end of the Foundation Stage.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Children achieve well in the development of key skills in communication, language and literacy, as a result of good teaching.
- Children's progress is generally monitored and assessed well.
- The most capable children are sometimes given work which is too easy.

### **COMMENTARY**

51. Most children demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. They listen attentively, share ideas confidently and readily, and often respond to questions with extended answers. The children enjoy stories read by their teachers, and benefit from being encouraged to take books home to share. Children are developing well as young readers as a result of the careful teaching of sounds and words and the many opportunities that are given for adults to listen to their reading. Most children confidently write their name, and are beginning to write independently. Structured activities offer good opportunities to practise and develop reading and writing skills. A strong emphasis is placed on correct letter formation, so that good habits are embedded into daily practice. Adults generally assess children's progress well, and this information is used to group children to meet their learning needs. This ensures that most children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. There are, however, occasions when the most capable children need more challenging tasks to achieve even higher standards, particularly in writing. Overall, the teaching of communication, language and literacy skills is good, and most children will exceed the expected learning goals by the end of the Foundation Year.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Children make good progress in their mathematical development as a result of good teaching.
- The most capable children are not always given the extra challenge to develop their skills further.

### **COMMENTARY**

52. Teachers provide a good range of activities to promote children's mathematical understanding and assess children's progress carefully. As a result of good teaching and generally well-judged activities, including mathematical play, children make good progress in counting, calculations and in the development of their understanding of shape. However, the most capable children sometimes need more challenging tasks, including those to develop their recording skills further. Teachers use practical activities effectively to introduce and reinforce children's mathematical understanding. Children generally achieve well in this important area of learning. As a result, most are on course to demonstrate standards that exceed national expectations by the end of the Foundation Stage.



## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Children benefit from a well-planned range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Children achieve well in this area of learning, as a result of good teaching.

### **COMMENTARY**

53. Most children start school with good general knowledge, and with a strong desire to learn more. Good opportunities are provided to engage, stimulate and extend the children. Teachers' careful planning ensures a well-balanced range of themes, across the year, to explore and extend children's understanding of the world, including their scientific and historical understanding, and their awareness of different religious festivals, such as Easter and Diwali. For instance, the current topic about castles is helping children to understand the way that people lived a long time ago. Children are also helped to understand how things have changed in more recent times when handling and examining old household items and comparing these with modern equivalents. Teachers devise interesting ideas to capture children's interest and to develop their understanding. For example, during the inspection, children were asked how a toy animal frozen in a block of ice might be retrieved. Children made sensible suggestions, and then watched as the ice melted. This engendered a real sense of wonder as the animal emerged, and helped to develop children's scientific understanding.
54. Children use computers confidently to create pictures, and can access their own programs. They have good opportunities to construct models, using a range of resources and materials. For example, children are able to select different recycled materials to build a castle, extending their creativity alongside their knowledge of the world. By the end of Reception, most children will exceed the expected standards in relation to their knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve well in this area of learning, as a result of good teaching.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Physical education lessons in the hall are taught well.
- There are regular opportunities for children to play outside.
- Many opportunities are provided for children to develop their dexterity.

### **COMMENTARY**

55. Children in the reception classes have good physical skills, and achieve well in free physical play and in class physical education lessons. There are good daily opportunities for children to play outside, to run about and to use wheeled toys. In addition, there are ample opportunities for them to use a range of tools and equipment to develop their dexterity, for example through artwork, when making simple models from card and recycled materials, and when using beanbags and balls for throwing and catching. During play activities, children work well together, and show good physical co-ordination and awareness of safety.

56. Both classes have regular physical education lessons in the hall. Children listen carefully, follow instructions, and work and move in directed ways. They show good physical control of their own bodies and awareness of those around them, and handle equipment appropriately. They are beginning to evaluate the work of others by identifying good practice. Most children are on course to exceed the early learning goals for physical development by the end of the reception year, as a result of good teaching.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good opportunities are provided for children to use their creative skills, including through role-play.
- Children's creative development is promoted well by good teaching.

## **COMMENTARY**

57. Teaching and learning are good, enabling children to make good progress. Children are given many opportunities to develop their imagination through role-play, and use puppets to tell simple stories. Role-play is used very well to enhance all areas of learning alongside creativity. For example, children count and sort coins when in the King's Counting House, and sort pairs of socks when pegging out the washing in the Maid's Kitchen, enhancing mathematical development. Children learn a range of musical songs and rhymes, and use percussion instruments effectively to accompany the nursery rhyme "Sing-a-song of Sixpence".

58. Children use a variety of different materials to form attractive collages, and learn when to use thick and thin brushes when painting. However, although many opportunities are given for children to use paint, colours are usually prescribed, leaving few opportunities for children to make their own choices and mix their own colours. Nevertheless, children are on course to exceed national expectations in relation to their creative development by the end of the Foundation Year.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- The more able pupils are not always suitably challenged.
- Assessment results are not used effectively to pinpoint weaknesses in pupils' performance or to track their progress over time.
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory but are beginning to improve.

## Commentary

59. Standards in reading and writing in Year 2 and in English in Year 4 are a little above national expectations. However, when account is taken of pupils' starting-points and capabilities, the standards attained represent only satisfactory achievement. Inspection evidence shows that some pupils in Years 2 to 4 could do better in both reading and writing. Pupils of all ages listen well, and most speak Standard English confidently and accurately from an early age. Quick to assimilate and use new words, they acquire, and use, an extensive general vocabulary as well as the specialist terms they have been taught during lessons in different subjects. They are given many opportunities to discuss their work and to share ideas with others. As a result, they make good progress in speaking and listening and reach standards which are above national expectations in these key skills, including pupils in Years 2 and 4.
60. Current standards in reading and writing in Year 2 are a little higher than in the last academic year, when the results of the national tests were in line with the national average, but below the average results of similar schools. However, standards have fallen since the last inspection in reading and writing in Year 2 and in English in Year 4, where they were well above national expectations. Whilst there are always understandable variations in pupils' overall capabilities and performance in different year groups, other factors also have a bearing on the standards pupils attain. Inspection evidence shows, for example, that teachers' expectations of the more able pupils are not always high enough in Year 2 in reading and writing. All pupils in Year 2 are developing a secure grasp of reading strategies which enable them to make sense of what they read. They can talk sensibly about story structure, characters and plot. However, some of the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged by the reading matter presented to them in lessons, and their own choice of reading matter often lacks real challenge too. Their knowledge of well-known authors and titles is slim and they do not read as widely as might be expected.
61. In Year 4, pupils of all abilities have very positive attitudes to reading and many are fluent, accomplished and discriminating readers. Pupils of average and higher attainment have well developed reading preferences. They talk knowledgeably about the work of many authors and about different types of fiction. They know how authors create effects and engage their readers. They know exactly how to use information books, reference books, magazines, newspapers, CD-ROMs and the Internet to find things out. In addition, they understand how the layout, the language used, the choice of typeface and the use of graphics all play their part in making information easier or harder for readers to assimilate. In their independent reading, they choose texts at an appropriately challenging level.
62. Pupils in Year 1 make good progress in writing. In each of the year groups 2 to 4, pupils make satisfactory overall progress in writing, and there are also some examples of writing by talented pupils in each year group which is of a very high quality in all respects, including technical accuracy. Nevertheless, there are also some capable pupils whose written work is not quite as good as it should be, for the following reasons:
- The priority given to speaking and listening means that pupils are not always given the time they need to develop and complete extended pieces of writing.

- Pupils in Years 2 and 3 are not always given enough feedback to help them improve their work and are too little involved in the evaluation of writing based on rigorous assessment criteria.
  - The most capable pupils are sometimes constrained in their responses to writing tasks by the structures they are required to use which are particularly helpful only to their lower attaining peers. This slows the pace of their writing and restricts their creative response.
63. Whilst the points made above seek to explain factors which restrict the performance of some pupils, the teaching of English is satisfactory overall, and good lessons were observed in Years 1 and 4. Common strengths include the good management of behaviour, the creation of an appropriate climate for learning and the effective use of teaching assistants. The provision made for pupils with special education needs is good, including the support they receive from teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. In the best lessons, teachers' expectations of all pupils are appropriately high, the teachers' knowledge and understanding of what is being taught are secure, and learning proceeds at a brisk pace. In less successful lessons, the pace is often slow, and higher attaining pupils sometimes spend too long pursuing well-intentioned 'structured' activities rather than developing their own ideas or producing original, rather than derivative, writing. Across the school, assessment data is not used as effectively as it should be to identify specific weaknesses in pupils' performance and to track their standards and progress. Overall, satisfactory use is made of ICT to support pupils' work in English.
64. The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped. He is conscientious and enthusiastic, and, during his time in post, has responded constructively to requests for advice and support from his colleagues. He has ensured that the staff have been kept abreast of national developments and initiatives and that there are good resources for teachers and pupils to use. When relevant, he has produced good quality resources himself, including materials to support a combined approach to the teaching of reading and handwriting which has proved most successful in Year 1. However, the subject leader recognises that his monitoring and evaluation role is not sufficiently rigorous. Systematic procedures are not securely established to check the quality of teaching and learning, or to monitor pupils' standards and to track their progress through the school. These deficiencies limit his ability to identify and target areas for improvement. Though much remains to be done, these are challenges which he is well equipped to master. Inspection evidence shows that he is beginning to gain an overview of provision and standards across the school and is taking steps to establish coherent systems and approaches to teaching and learning.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

65. Overall, pupils' language skills are soundly promoted across the curriculum. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop and use spoken language throughout the curriculum. Teachers often encourage them to explain their ideas, to describe what they have observed and to recall what has been learned on a previous occasion. Pupils of all ages are accustomed to talking things through with a partner and to developing ideas by working with others in a small group. In most subjects, pupils are taught the specialist technical terms they need to discuss their work. There is evidence that pupils develop reading for information and note-making skills in history, whilst work in religious education has resulted in some good examples of extended writing, for

example in retellings of the Christmas story. Overall, however, pupils in Years 2 to 4 record what they have learned in other subjects economically, for example in notes, diagrams and pictures. An emphasis on the sustained discussion of topics, irrespective of the subject, means that some pupils write little in the time available, although most can readily adapt the style, format and language of their writing to its given purpose.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above national expectations in Years 2 and 4, and represent good achievement.
- Mathematics teaching is good, overall, and is enabling pupils to progress well.
- The current systems for checking pupils' progress are insufficiently rigorous.
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

66. Pupils' standards in mathematics are above national expectations in Years 2 and 4, and represent good achievement. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good overall progress in the subject although, in a minority of lessons, the most capable pupils could do better. No significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls were evident in mathematics during the inspection.
67. Standards in Year 4 are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. However, standards in Year 2 have improved since 1998 when they were judged to be broadly average. The results of the national tests in Year 2 in 2004 were well above the national average and above the average results of similar schools.
68. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' numeracy skills across the school. As a consequence, most Year 2 pupils can count, read, write and order numbers to 100 and understand that strategies such as 'doubling' can speed their calculation skills. They are familiar with the mathematical names for common two- and three-dimensional shapes and can describe most of their features. As they move up the school, pupils extend their skills in number operations and in solving mathematical problems, as a result of regular practice and good teaching. In Year 4, most pupils can calculate quickly and accurately, and have a secure knowledge of a good range of multiplication tables. They can handle data, identify different types of triangles, measure and calculate the perimeter and area of shapes and know the relationship between familiar units of length.
69. The quality of teaching is mainly good, across the school. Teachers are clear about what pupils are expected to learn in each lesson and they appropriately share these objectives with pupils, usually at the beginning of sessions. Pupils are encouraged to use the correct mathematical language in their discussions and this is often skilfully introduced and consolidated by teachers. A well-qualified numeracy assistant provides particularly good support for older pupils with learning difficulties, and other teaching assistants also make a valuable contribution to pupils' mathematical learning. Overall, teachers make sound use of ICT to support and enhance pupils' work in mathematics, and some good practice was observed in Year 4.

70. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that all pupils are actively involved throughout the session. They also provide opportunities for individuals to explain their mathematical ideas or calculation strategies, while still maintaining a good pace. Although no unsatisfactory lessons were observed, some satisfactory lessons showed areas for improvement. For example, teachers do not always expect enough of the most capable pupils, their questions do not always probe pupils' understanding enough, and the pace of learning is sometimes a little slow.
71. Teachers know their pupils well and make sound use of day-to-day assessments to inform future planning. As a consequence, most of the tasks set are soundly matched to pupils' varying needs. However, assessment procedures lack consistency and the absence of an effective whole-school tracking system means that teachers do not have access to all of the information they need about pupils' standards and progress over time. Pupils are sometimes encouraged to evaluate their own work and progress, for example at the end of lessons but, overall, their understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve is underdeveloped.
72. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject leader is conscientious and enthusiastic about mathematics. He has attended relevant training and provides useful advice and support for his colleagues. However, his procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' standards are not sufficiently rigorous. As a consequence, although there is an action plan for mathematics, it is not informed by an adequate evaluation of what needs to be done. The school is aware of this weakness and there are plans to address it in the near future.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

73. Satisfactory use is made of mathematics to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils are encouraged to use tables and graphs to show the results of experiments and, in ICT, they use their knowledge of length, angles and rotation when controlling floor and on-screen devices.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The most capable pupils underachieve because they are given work that is too easy.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported.
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.
- Procedures for tracking pupils' progress are not sufficiently developed.

#### **COMMENTARY**

74. Standards in science in Year 2 are a little above national expectations. They are higher than in the last academic year, when the results of the statutory teacher assessments in Year 2 were below the national average and were well below the average results of similar schools in relation to the percentage of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level. The school attributes the low results in 2003 to the larger proportion of

pupils with learning difficulties in the last academic year, together with changes of staff which caused some disruption to the Year 2 classes. In Year 4, pupils' current standards are a little above national expectations. The standards reached in Years 2 and 4 reflect the satisfactory achievement of most pupils from their starting points on entry to Year 1. However, whilst pupils with special educational needs achieve well in science, the most capable often mark time because their work is too easy. Current standards in Years 2 and 4 are not quite as high as those found in the last inspection, which were above national expectations in Years 2 and 4.

75. In Year 1, pupils can identify and describe a range of common materials, and most are able to make sensible predictions about the most suitable fabric for making an umbrella. In lessons seen in Year 1 during the inspection, most pupils made satisfactory progress when recognising and naming a range of sound sources. However, the most capable pupils were not expected to describe sounds with enough precision, and this limited their learning. In Year 2, pupils are able to draw and make simple electrical circuits and most can explain why some circuits work and others do not. During the inspection, most Year 2 pupils made sound progress when learning how forces can move objects and sometimes change their shape. However, the most capable pupils marked time because they were expected to work at the same speed as the rest of the class, despite being given the same tasks as their peers.
76. In Year 3, pupils make sound progress when naming a range of rocks and identifying their characteristics. Pupils understand that shadows are formed when light from a source is blocked and have noticed how the length of a shadow from the sun changes during the day. However, few have recorded their observations clearly in their books, showing times and measurements. In Year 4, pupils make satisfactory progress when learning about solids and liquids, and when carrying out experiments to discover how they can be separated. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils made good progress when learning about the human skeleton and comparing it with the skeletons of other animals. By the end of the lesson, they demonstrated good knowledge for their ages, and were able to name a range of major bones and show that they were common to different animals.
77. The quality of teaching in science ranges from satisfactory to good, and is satisfactory, overall. As a result, most pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning in the subject. The most effective teaching seen, in Year 4, demonstrated the teacher's good subject knowledge, clear explanations and skilful use of questions. However, even in this good lesson, the pace of learning was rather leisurely at times. All lessons are characterised by very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and by pupils' positive attitudes and their very good behaviour. Across the school, teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported well in science lessons. However, evidence from pupils' completed work and from the lessons observed shows that there are areas for improvement in the teaching. Whilst the most significant weakness is the lack of challenge for the more able pupils, teachers' questions sometimes fail to probe pupils' scientific understanding with enough rigour, and pupils' answers are often accepted without further enquiry, even if they show that ideas have not been fully grasped. In addition, some lessons should proceed at a faster pace and, particularly in Years 3 and 4, pupils have too few opportunities to develop their own hypotheses and to test their ideas by devising and carrying out their own simple investigations.

78. Teachers ensure that scientific vocabulary is introduced and reinforced, and this makes a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' oracy skills. Writing, numeracy and ICT skills are promoted satisfactorily, overall. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils made good use of ICT to research information about skeletons.
79. The leadership and management of the subject are underdeveloped. There are signs of recent improvement; for example, the subject leader has analysed aspects of teachers' planning and has increased her awareness of the results of the statutory tests in Year 2. In addition, she has sensible plans to increase the rigour of her monitoring of the subject, including through lesson observations and the careful examination of pupils' completed work. Strategies for assessing and recording the standards reached by pupils in science as they move through the school are not securely established, and mean that the subject leader has limited information to track pupils' progress. At present, deficiencies in the rigour of monitoring and assessment procedures mean that the subject leader is not in a good position to identify strengths and weaknesses in science or to target areas for improvement with sufficient precision.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

It was not possible to judge the overall quality of provision in Years 1 and 2 because too few ICT lessons were observed. In Years 3 and 4, the provision is **good**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- The quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 is good and enables pupils to achieve well in ICT.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 would benefit from more time using computers in order to develop their skills further.
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.
- Assessment procedures are not securely established across the school.

### **Commentary**

80. Pupils' standards in Year 2 are broadly in line with national expectations and represent satisfactory achievement. However, standards in Year 4 are above national expectations and represent good achievement. In Year 4, pupils use a range of ICT skills and work independently and confidently. When the school was last inspected, standards were judged to be well above average in both Years 2 and 4.
81. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils made good progress when using ICT effectively to consolidate their understanding of how to measure the area of rectangles. In Year 3, pupils achieved well when learning how to navigate a simulation program featuring the Roman town of 'Sapientum'. Pupils in Year 2 demonstrated satisfactory skills when using ICT to amend and improve text and have made sound use of a painting program to create attractive designs based on the work of the artist Mondrian. In Year 1, pupils made satisfactory progress in extending their understanding of control technology as they programmed movements for a floor robot.
82. The school makes good use of available space and has created an attractive ICT suite in the corridor between the Year 3 and 4 classrooms. This provision of 15 networked computers enables a whole class to work together. The suite was in constant use during the inspection. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have access to small banks of



computers within or just outside their classrooms. These are readily available but are not conducive to larger group or whole class teaching of ICT skills. In addition, the amount of time that individual pupils in Years 1 and 2 have for 'hands-on' learning is more limited than for those in Years 3 and 4. The school has plans to improve the provision for pupils in Years 1 and 2 in the near future.

83. The quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and, in Year 4, a team-teaching approach is employed well, with one teacher leading the teaching of ICT. Older pupils also benefit from the support provided by a well-informed learning assistant who is well deployed and supports teachers effectively. Good use is made of a digital projector to provide clear demonstrations for pupils, and the school is awaiting delivery of two interactive whiteboards to enhance teaching and learning in the subject. Across the school, pupils have very positive attitudes and are keen to learn. They happily share computers and benefit from working collaboratively.
84. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject leader has attended relevant training and is enthusiastic about the use of ICT. She has monitored teachers' planning and is assembling a helpful portfolio of pupils' work. However, she has not observed any teaching of ICT and there are currently no strategies in place for the regular scrutiny of pupils' work from each class. These deficiencies mean that she has limited information to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and to target areas for improvement with sufficient accuracy.
85. Planning for ICT is based on helpful guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and is satisfactory, overall. However, more attention needs to be given to data handling and the use of e-mail. Common assessment procedures are not consistently applied, across the school and this makes it difficult to judge pupils' achievements and to plan for their next steps in learning.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

86. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory overall and, in Years 3 and 4, there are some good examples of ICT being used to support and enhance work in other subjects. In literacy, for example, Year 4 pupils have created interesting 'story-boards' adding text to photographs they have taken around the school with small digital cameras. In Year 3, pupils have used their word processing skills effectively to write clear instructions, and have successfully combined different text types with photographs to record a visit to Badbury Rings, a Celtic hill fort.

### **HUMANITIES**

87. It is not possible to make overall judgement about provision in geography or history. No lessons were seen in geography and only one lesson was seen in history. In addition, although examples of pupils' completed work were examined, there was insufficient evidence to make secure judgements about pupils' standards and achievements in these subjects. Teachers' planning for geography and history was examined and discussions were held with the leader in both subjects.
88. In **geography**, the limited available evidence shows that the subject meets statutory requirements and is enriched by fieldwork activities. For example, pupils in Year 1 explore the school site and surrounding area, including a visit to a local church. In Year

2, the area of enquiry is extended to include Brownsea Island and pupils enjoy a boat journey across Poole harbour. In Year 4, pupils undertake relevant fieldwork when they study the nearby seaside resort of Swanage.

89. Appropriate attention is also given to the study of contrasting localities overseas, including the current Year 4 focus on India, which is linked to a religious education focus on Hinduism and also to the recent tsunami disaster. The world travels of 'Barnaby Bear' provide younger pupils with a growing understanding of other countries and of the similarities and differences to the area in which they live. Many of them take one of the school's teddy bears on holiday with them and return with photographs, which promote geographical discussion and the use of globes and atlases.
90. In **history**, in the single lesson observed, Year 3 pupils were able to recall previous learning about the Celts in considerable detail and used coins and other artefacts to good effect to develop ideas about the Roman Empire. This lesson was well taught and enabled pupils to make good progress in their learning. Teachers' planning and pupils' written work shows that statutory requirements are met. However, often pupils actually write very little. For example, in Years 1 and 2, brief captions written by pupils accompany printed pictures, whilst pupils in Year 4 record what has been learned very economically, largely in the form of short notes.
91. Displays around the school show that pupils benefit from a variety of visits and role-play experiences that bring history to life, and there is also evidence of the effective use of ICT to support pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 recorded their visit to the Celtic site at Badbury Rings, using digital photographs accompanied by notes and captions. They learned how archaeologists find out about the past, adopted roles as Celts and Romans, examined the use of ditches as a defence system, explored the use of vegetable dyes and used computer graphics to design Celtic neck ornaments known as 'torcs'. In Year 4, pupils visiting Scaplen's Court experienced a vivid re-enactment of life in a Victorian kitchen under the strict supervision of 'Mrs Jelly' the cook. Dressed in Victorian clothes, they learned to scrub the table, to knead bread and to toast it on the range. Short but very well written descriptions of the courtyard in which they had to wait at Scaplen's Court testify to pupils' observational skills and make meaningful links between history and English.
92. The subject leader for history and geography is conscientious and knowledgeable about both subjects and willingly provides advice and support for her colleagues. She has a satisfactory overview of teachers' planning, and has organised resources for both subjects efficiently. She has carried out some useful sampling of pupils' work but her monitoring does not yet provide her with sufficient information to make secure judgements about pupils' standards and the quality of teaching and learning in the subjects.

### **Religious education**

PROVISION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IS **SATISFACTORY**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Pupils are given a broad experience of major religious faiths.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The subject leader's monitoring role is not yet sufficiently developed.

## Commentary

93. Pupils' achievement is generally sound and, in Years 2 and 4, their work meets the required standards set out in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Similar standards were reached when the school was last inspected. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the 'special' nature of religious artefacts and places of worship and are aware that different religions share some common features. For example, they know that both Christians and Jews celebrate harvest, and that there are many similarities, though also some significant differences, between the Christian celebration of Christmas and the Jewish festival Hannukah. By learning about the life and work of Jesus and of Jewish forefathers such as Abraham and Moses, they understand that followers of each faith believe in the existence of a special relationship between God and mankind, and that the Bible is a 'special' book which records that relationship.
94. Most pupils in Year 4 are able to make links between what they learn in religious education lessons and what they know in the world around them. For example, they can explain the underlying messages or morals in stories such as The Good Samaritan and see parallels in the friendships they make in their daily lives. They understand that religious texts such as the Bible, the Torah and the Qu'ran give the followers of major religious faiths guidance on how to live their lives. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of key facts, festivals, religious practices, symbols and religious writings in relation to Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. They have explored creation stories from different religions, societies and cultures, and are learning to understand how even very different belief systems share common values – for example the need to take responsibility for the care of the Earth.
95. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well and use interesting strategies, including the use of artefacts, videotapes and well-written stories, to engage the pupils' interest. In a well-taught lesson about 'special books' seen in Year 1, the teacher challenged pupils to recall previous learning and to interpret the meaning of Bible stories. The lesson proceeded at a lively pace and pupils of all abilities made good progress. In lessons judged satisfactory, the methods used sometimes led to a lack of pace. However, evidence from teachers' planning and from pupils' written work shows that, overall, the subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
96. All teachers now use end-of-unit assessments to identify those pupils in their classes who have not understood what has been taught, and those who have exceeded expectations, whilst teachers in Year 1 make more rigorous related to individual pupils. However, there is little evidence to show how assessments are used to plan further work.
97. The headteacher, appointed only at the start of the current academic year, is currently overseeing provision in religious education. Given the many other priorities she has needed to address, she has had little time, so far, to familiarise herself with the quality of teaching and learning in the subject, although she has monitored teachers' planning and scrutinised displays of work. There are good resources to support work on each of the major faiths studied, and the school is able to benefit from visits by leaders of different faiths who talk to the pupils about their beliefs and practices.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

98. It is not possible to judge the overall quality of provision in art and design, design and technology, physical education and music, because too few lessons were seen in these subjects. However, pupils' completed work was very carefully examined in art and design and design and technology, and pupils' performances in music were heard during assemblies. In addition, discussions were held with the subject leaders for art and design and design and technology, and a range of school documentation was scrutinised. The evidence revealed a particular **weakness in art and design**.
99. In **art and design**, pupils underachieve and their standards are below national expectations in Years 2 and 4. Standards have fallen since the last inspection, when they were in line with national expectations. The subject is given barely adequate attention in the curriculum. In Years 1 to 4, pupils' drawing skills are not developed progressively, and there are few opportunities for pupils to use paint. In Year 1, there is evidence of pupils reaching satisfactory standards for their ages when using paper collage to create self-portraits. However, in Year 2, pupils underachieve when making very simplistic images inspired by a fragment of an illustration showing cartoon characters. In Year 3, pupils spent far too long during the inspection engaged in the unchallenging task of making rubbings from plastic coins, shading around the outlines of mathematical shapes and arranging these in basic sequences. The results clearly demonstrated pupils' underachievement and could easily have been done by much younger pupils. In Year 4, there is little evidence of pupils' completed art and design work in the current academic year. However, they have derived very limited benefit from making simple decorated letters, using pencils, crayons and felt-tipped pens.
100. Whilst it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching in art and design, pupils' completed work clearly shows that teaching is not enabling pupils to do as well as they should in the subject. In addition, unsatisfactory teaching was demonstrated in Year 3 in the only art and design lesson observed. Teachers' expectations of pupils' potential achievement are often too low, and evidence suggests that teachers would benefit from in-service training to increase their knowledge and skills in the subject. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but does not ensure that pupils' key skills and knowledge are progressively developed across the school. The use of ICT to support pupils' work in art is a positive feature of provision in Year 1, where pupils have used a program to create images of people, and in Year 2, where pupils have made geometric pictures which reflect the work of Mondrian.
101. The leadership and management of art and design are unsatisfactory. The subject leader runs a popular after-school art club, and organises an annual arts week which provides pupils with interesting opportunities, particularly to develop their awareness of the arts of different cultures. However, she does not monitor pupils' standards with enough rigour and does not have a sufficiently focused plan to improve their achievements.
102. In **design and technology**, standards are in line with national expectations in Years 2 and 4, and reflect those found when the school was last inspected. Pupils' achievement in the subject is satisfactory.
103. In Year 1, pupils demonstrate satisfactory standards for their ages when using card to make model houses with opening doors, and when creating simple percussion instruments using recycled materials. In Year 2, pupils have made sound designs for

wheeled vehicles and have clearly identified the materials and tools they needed to make their models. Pupils' finished models demonstrate their satisfactory making skills, and show that they understand the function of axles and know that the bodies of some vehicles are built on a separate chassis.

104. In Year 3, pupils have made satisfactory designs for photograph frames, and have made good progress when measuring, cutting and joining wood to make their frames. Most have made freestanding frames and have learned suitable methods for making the structure stable. Some pupils, however, have been given insufficient challenge and have only made simple hanging picture frames. In one Year 3 class, pupils have shown their enthusiasm for design and technology through their response to a homework task of creating a stool or chair by using rolled newspaper. Pupils' finished products are carefully made, and many show that they understand how triangles can be used to strengthen structures. In Year 4, pupils demonstrate satisfactory making skills when creating books, which incorporate a simple pop-up mechanism, using scoring, folding and appropriate joining techniques. In a lesson observed during the inspection, Year 4 pupils made sound progress when developing their design ideas for a simple alarm system.
105. Whilst it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching in design and technology, a careful examination of pupils' completed work shows that the teaching is enabling pupils to make sound progress in the subject.
106. The leadership and management of the subject are underdeveloped. The subject leader, who took on her role in September 2004, willingly provides advice for her colleagues but has yet to carry out any monitoring of pupils' standards and achievements in the subject. As a consequence, she is not well placed to plan for improvements.
107. No **physical education** lessons were observed. However, teachers' planning shows that statutory requirements are met in the subject. Pupils benefit from a good range of after-school sporting opportunities.
108. No **music** lessons were observed during the inspection, so it is not possible to judge pupils' overall standards in the subject. However, it is clear that pupils who receive specialist violin tuition do well. During the inspection, nearly 20 of these pupils performed during assemblies and demonstrated their good skills. Indeed, some pupils play exceptionally well for their ages. In addition, a significant number of pupils are good recorder players, and also make a valuable contribution during assemblies. The quality of pupils' singing in assemblies is broadly in line with national expectations.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHEC)**

Provision in PSHEC is **good**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Good provision is made to help pupils develop positive attitudes and values and to promote a healthy, safer lifestyle.
- PSHEC promotes strong moral values: the pupils are shown how to develop good relationships and respect for others.
- The new subject leader does not yet have an overview of provision and her monitoring role is underdeveloped.

## Commentary

109. Only one PSHEC lesson could be observed during the inspection, and there is insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about the overall quality of the teaching of PSHEC as a subject in its own right. Nevertheless, evidence from displays around the school, discussions with staff and pupils, and from pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour all show that the school provides well for this key area of pupils' learning.
110. Through their own conduct, through the high expectations they set for pupils' behaviour, and through their daily interactions with pupils, staff help pupils to acquire a good understanding of the need to respect the differences between people and to recognise the consequences of their own actions on others. For the relatively few pupils who experience difficulties in establishing good relationships, special provision is made available. Working for brief periods in a small group with the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants, in the most sensitive and respectful of ways, they are taught to recognise, for example, the importance of eye-contact, the subtle signals conveyed through body language, and the impact of unkind words on people's self-esteem.
111. Through links with other schools and with the wider community, pupils develop a good sense of their place in a wider world. Studies of other cultures, as in the African arts week and contact with visitors from other cultures and of different faiths, play their part in helping pupils to respect and value similarities and differences in people. They begin to see themselves as citizens of the world and learn something of the responsibilities that brings, for example for the care of the Earth itself and for people less fortunate than themselves, both in this country and abroad. Opportunities to act in a practical way to help others, for example by collecting for special appeals and for national and international charities, further develop their sense of responsibility and their belief that they can make a difference.
112. 'Golden Rules' devised by the pupils themselves govern their daily conduct and give them some understanding of the need for rules and laws in any society. The recent 'polling day', when pupils voted to elect members of the School Council, and a presentation in assembly describing its proposed role have already given pupils some insight into democratic processes and the responsibilities of living in a community.
113. In 2003-04, the school received the 'Healthy Schools Award' for its work in promoting a healthy, safer lifestyle. Initiatives included a healthy eating campaign, in part taught through science but also through the provision of fruit at break-times. New playground equipment and the availability of a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular sporting activities have encouraged many pupils to partake willingly in regular exercise and to begin to cultivate interests that may well stay with them for life. All pupils benefit from visiting the mobile 'Life Education Centre' when it comes on site, and pupils comment on how much they have enjoyed the activities and presentations designed to help them make the right choices in life in order to keep their bodies healthy and safe, and their minds happy. An after-school cycling skills club for pupils in Year 4 emphasises road safety and helps those pupils who attend to develop the skills and knowledge they need to stay safe when cycling.

114. The subject leader assumed responsibility for PSHEC only at the start of the current academic year. She has carried out a useful audit of provision and resources, mainly through discussions with staff, but she has not yet had the opportunity to investigate the different strands of provision or to monitor teaching and learning directly. As a consequence, she does not yet have a clear overview of provision.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	4

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

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	5
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).*