

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GILDAS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Yeovil

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123857

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Cottrell

Lead inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

Dates of inspection: 16th – 18th May 2005

Inspection number: 267784

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	212
School address:	St Gildas Catholic Primary School Mary Street YEOVIL Somerset
Postcode:	BA21 4BJ
Telephone number:	01935 423630
Fax number:	01935 411048
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin Doyle
Date of previous inspection:	8 th February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Gildas Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school, situated in the centre of the town of Yeovil. It caters for pupils from Catholic families in the parish of the Holy Ghost in Yeovil, but also draws many of its pupils from a much wider surrounding area. The school is of an average size, catering for 212 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 11. There is more demand for places than there are available. National statistics show that the socio-economic circumstances of the area around the school are below average, but pupils' home circumstances vary widely and are average overall. A below average proportion of pupils take their entitlement to free school meals. The school has an above average proportion, almost 14 per cent, of pupils who come from ethnic minority backgrounds, of which the largest group is of Indian origin. Of these pupils, five are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils who join or leave the school, other than at the usual times of joining or leaving, is similar to most schools. Just over 10 per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, but hardly any pupils receive help from outside specialists and none have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Children are admitted into the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they have their fifth birthday, attending on a part-time basis for the first term. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class varies considerably, but is average overall. There have been no major changes since the last inspection, apart from the appointment of a new headteacher a term before this inspection took place. Because the school is a voluntary aided Catholic school, the inspection of religious education and collective worship is carried out separately under Section 23 of the Schools Inspections Act 1996 (Denominational Education) by an inspector approved by the Diocese and appointed by the governing body.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
28899	Mr G R Sims	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology English as an additional language
09334	Mrs J Mynett	Lay inspector	
22397	Mr S Fowler	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education Personal, social and health education and citizenship Special educational needs
13307	Mr I Hancock	Team inspector	Science Geography History Foundation Stage curriculum

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Gildas Catholic Primary School is a **good** school, with some very good features, and provides good value for money. The very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, the caring, friendly relationships and high standards of care give rise to the school's very good ethos. The overall quality of the teaching is good and pupils achieve well, reaching well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. The new headteacher is providing good leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school's future development.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and the high standard of care provided by the staff result in a very good ethos which permeates throughout the school.
- Pupils of all capabilities achieve well throughout the school, resulting in well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- A stimulating environment, and exciting, interesting and very good teaching provide children in the reception class with a very good start to their education enabling them to achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching and standards of learning throughout the school are good, and at times very good. However, teachers do not always provide pupils with enough information on how well they have done or what they need to do to improve.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a good foundation in English, mathematics and science, but does not do enough to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in other subjects.
- The school has benefited from strong leadership in the past and the new headteacher is providing good leadership and clear vision for the school's future development.
- Not enough attention has been given to developing the leadership roles and management responsibilities of the deputy headteacher and some subject co-ordinators.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has made satisfactory progress in dealing with issues relating to teachers' planning, the assessment of pupils' work, the monitoring of teaching, and improving resources for information and communication technology, and good progress in developing pupils' investigative skills, solving noise problems in the Year 2 classroom and providing outdoor activity resources for reception children. Standards attained in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 have improved more than in most schools.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, pupils of all capabilities achieve **well** and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.

The attainment of children when they join the school varies considerably, but is average overall. Children make very good progress during their reception year. Nearly all children achieve the expected goals in all areas of learning, and many achieve above average standards by the time they start Year 1.

The school's national test results at the end of Year 2 in 2004 were well above the national average in reading and writing, but were below average in mathematics. Although slightly better than those achieved at the time of the last inspection, results have not improved as much as in most schools. This reflects the fact that the school caters for a growing proportion of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue, who may not attain as high standards as others, but nevertheless make good progress. Inspection findings indicate that pupils of all capabilities make good progress and achieve well above average standards in reading, speaking and listening and above average standards in writing, mathematics and science.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A*	A	A	B
mathematics	A	A	A	B
science	A*	A	A	C

Key: A - top 5 per cent of schools; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average. Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 have improved more than in most schools since the last inspection. The results of the national tests in 2004 were well above the national average in all three subjects. When compared with similar schools, they were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Inspection findings indicate that standards are well above average and pupils' achievement in these three core subjects during their time at the school is very good. Standards are not as high in other subjects, making pupils' overall achievement good, rather than very good. Although they are rising, pupils achieve only average standards in information and communication technology. Their work in subjects, such as geography, history, music, design and technology, is satisfactory, but lacks depth. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make good progress.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. The school's very high expectations with regard to behaviour, the high degree of personal care and the very good role models provided by the staff contribute to the very good ethos, which reflects the school's motto of 'care, courtesy and consideration'. Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work and the great majority are very polite and behave very well. Relationships between adults and pupils and amongst the pupils are very good. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education.

The overall quality of the teaching throughout the school is **good**, and pupils learn well. There is a significant amount of very good teaching, particularly in Year 2 and the reception class. Imaginative and stimulating activities help the school's youngest children make a very good start to their education. In the rest of the school, the teachers provide well-structured, interesting lessons and are very good at encouraging and engaging the pupils. Well-trained teaching assistants have a significant impact on pupils' learning, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory, but do not always help pupils to learn from their mistakes or to understand what they need to do to improve.

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum. However, lessons for English and mathematics are often unnecessarily long, and insufficient time is allocated to subjects such as geography, history, music and design and technology. As a result, pupils' knowledge,

understanding and skills are not developed in sufficient depth. Teachers miss opportunities to relate work in one subject to what is being covered in another, and to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills through other subjects. The school provides a good range of additional opportunities, including extra-curricular activities, for learning beyond lessons. Overall, the school's accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Although the school lacks its own playing field, its indoor accommodation is spacious. There are insufficient computers for pupils to use new technology within the classroom.

The school takes very good care of its pupils. It has very good procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety and provides them with good support, advice and guidance. The school has very good links with parents, good links with other schools and satisfactory links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is **good**. The new headteacher is providing good leadership and has a very clear sense of direction for the school's future development. The school has benefited from strong leadership in the past, and this has been crucial in establishing the very good ethos of the school. However, responsibilities have not been delegated effectively; the deputy headteacher has few responsibilities commensurate with his position and not enough responsibility has been given to some subject co-ordinators for leading and managing their subjects. As a result, there has been little innovation in developing the curriculum and procedures for self-evaluation are not yet robust enough. Governance is good. Governors have been very reliant on the direction provided by the previous headteacher, but are very supportive and are beginning to have greater influence on the direction of the school. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Despite a few concerns regarding behaviour, which were not substantiated by the inspection findings, parents are generally very pleased with the school. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching, the progress their children are making and the school's ethos.

Pupils are generally very pleased with their school. They like coming to school and have no major concerns about the way they are treated.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide a more balanced and innovative curriculum, paying particular attention to: the time allocated to each subject; the depth of curricular coverage in design and technology, geography, history and music; the development of cross-curricular work; and the development of key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Develop the leadership and management responsibilities of other staff, ensuring in particular that: the deputy headteacher has a range of responsibilities commensurate with his position; subject co-ordinators have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the opportunity to carry them out and that staff with leadership responsibilities develop a greater understanding of self-evaluation procedures.
- Ensure that the school's assessment and marking procedures provide pupils with a clearer understanding of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are **above expectations** at the end of the Foundation Stage, **above average** at the end of Year 2 and **well above average** at the end of Year 6. Pupils of all capabilities **achieve well** during their time at the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved significantly since the last inspection in English and particularly rapidly in the last three years in mathematics and science.
- Children make very good progress in all areas of learning in the reception class.
- Despite a growing proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language, the school is maintaining good standards at the end of Year 2.
- The school ensures that pupils of all capabilities receive sufficient support to enable them to achieve well.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in subjects such as design and technology, geography, history and music because insufficient time is devoted to these subjects.

Commentary

1. The attainment of children when they start their primary education at St Gildas varies widely, but is average overall. Children make very good progress and achieve very well in the reception class, with the great majority of pupils achieving the goals expected for their age in each area of learning and many exceeding these goals by the end of the reception year. The very good attention given to children's personal, social and emotional development in the reception class and the keen interest in learning which arises from the stimulating environment and lively teaching lay strong foundations for pupils' learning in the rest of the school.
2. The school's national test results at the end of Year 2 have fluctuated since the last inspection, but there has not been a trend of improvement, as has been the case in most schools. The results in reading and writing in 2004 fell just into the category of well above average and were very close to those obtained at the time of the last inspection. However, over the last five years, the school has admitted an increasing proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Whilst these pupils make good, and in some cases very good, progress, they do not yet have the command of English to achieve at the highest level, and this has an effect on the school's overall results. The school has done well, therefore, not to let standards fall. Results in mathematics improved dramatically in the four years following the last inspection, but have fallen again over the last two years. In 2004, they were below the national average, but above those obtained shortly after the last inspection. When compared with similar schools, the results were average in reading, above average in writing, and well below average in mathematics, but these comparisons do not represent a truly comparative picture, as the school has a much higher proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language than most schools. Inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Year 2 are above average in writing and mathematics and well above average in reading, and that pupils of all capabilities are making good progress and achieving well.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores¹ in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.0 (17.8)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.0 (15.8)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.6 (17.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. As at the end of Year 2, results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have also fluctuated considerably in recent years, but the overall trend has been one of greater improvement than in most schools. Results in English, mathematics and science are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection, and there has been marked improvement in mathematics and science over the last three years. In 2004, the national test results were well above the national average in all three subjects. When compared with similar schools, they were average in science and above average in English and mathematics. The school sets itself ambitious, but nevertheless realistic, targets, and was successful in meeting most of its targets in 2004. Inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Year 6 are well above average in English, mathematics and science and that pupils of all capabilities continue to achieve well. Over their time in the school, pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science is very good.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.2 (29.4)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	29.0 (28.9)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	30.2 (30.0)	28.6 (28.6)

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

4. The school works hard to ensure that pupils of all capabilities achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. They are provided with good levels of support from their teachers and the teaching assistants. Pupils' targets are evaluated and reviewed regularly, and new specific, appropriate and measurable targets are set, when required, to aid progress. Pupils are removed from the school's register for special educational needs when they have achieved the required standards. The progress of pupils is tracked carefully, and most pupils achieve the national standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Although pupils learning English as an additional language do not reach the same levels as the most able pupils at the end of Year 2, the difference between their performance and that of other pupils has all but disappeared by the end of Year 6 in the case of pupils who have been at the school for a number of years. The school has improved the level of challenge for more able pupils, and a significantly higher proportion of pupils now exceed the nationally expected level in the national tests at the end of Year 6 than did at the time of the last inspection. In 2004, over 40

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

per cent of the pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics, and over 60 per cent achieved this level in science. Although girls achieve somewhat better results than boys in English at the end of Year 6, the gap between girls' and boys' performance is less than in most schools.

5. When taking pupils' performance in all subjects into consideration, their overall achievement through the school is good, but their achievement in the humanities and creative, aesthetic, physical and practical areas of the curriculum does not match their achievement in English, mathematics and science. Despite the lack of a grassed playing area, pupils achieve well in physical education throughout the school. Achievement in information and communication technology is satisfactory and pupils reach the expected levels of attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6. Some good work is evident in art and design, but insufficient time is devoted to design and technology, geography, history and music, and pupils do not develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in these subjects to a depth which is commensurate with the skills and ability which they demonstrate in the core subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. The school makes **very good** provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The level of attendance and punctuality are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school fosters very positive attitudes, enabling pupils to mature exceptionally well.
- Pupils behave very well in and around school, and this helps to promote a harmonious environment.
- Pupils' awareness of how to treat others and their respect for each other contribute to a happy and welcoming school.
- The provision for pupils' personal development helps to develop their confidence and self-awareness.

Commentary

6. The great majority of pupils demonstrate very good attitudes. This is evident from the positive way they respond to opportunities for learning and social interaction. They like school and work well individually as well as in group situations. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the '*happy, friendly school*', the '*good teachers*' and the fact that they '*learn loads*'. Pupils' contribution to the life of the school is reflected in their willingness to take initiative and responsibility when given the opportunity to do so. The youngest children in the reception class show very good attitudes to school. They are happy to share their toys and equipment, take turns and concentrate well. The great majority of children are likely to achieve, and many will exceed, the expected goals for their personal, social and emotional development by the end of the reception year. The quality of relationships within the school bears testimony to the respect pupils show to others' feelings, values and beliefs. All of this has a very positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement, whilst preparing them for life within the school and beyond.
7. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy good relationships with their support assistants and work effectively as individuals or in small groups. They try hard and are happy to be withdrawn from lessons when required to do so. One group of pupils in Year 3, for example, enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with a teaching assistant to develop a group story. They made good progress because of the intense level of support that they received, and individual pupils talked enthusiastically about what they had accomplished.
8. The school's behaviour management support systems are well established. Teachers' sensitive management of pupils, including the use of praise and celebration of achievement, reinforces very good standards of behaviour in and around the school. Pupils respond very

well to adults' high expectations of them. There are no major concerns relating to bullying or harassment of any kind, and there was only one fixed-term exclusion last year. The school is very effective in dealing with minor incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	170	1	0
White – Irish	7	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	20	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0

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

9. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Pupils' spirituality is developed particularly effectively through opportunities for prayer and reflection, religious education lessons, assemblies and masses. The strong Christian ethos underpins school life and fosters care and self-esteem, enabling pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds to integrate into the life of the school. As a result, pupils show respect for each other's feelings, values and beliefs.
10. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has a strong moral code that sets boundaries for acceptable behaviour. Its framework of values enables pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and reflect on the consequences of their actions. Classroom activities and assembly themes often raise moral issues such as those concerned with caring for others and the environment, and adults always set good examples in this respect. Parents are extremely happy with the values and principles that the school promotes.
11. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school fosters very positive relationships and pupils are given many opportunities to enjoy each other's company in extra-curricular activities. The way pupils from diverse backgrounds work and play together in harmony is a particular strength of the school. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to take initiative and responsibilities such as those taken by pupils in Year 6 in the library and with the younger pupils, and the recently appointed school council representatives. All of this enables pupils to learn to become good citizens and contribute to the profile of the school in the community.
12. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have opportunities to develop an understanding and appreciation of their own cultural heritage through art, music and literature. The school has strong links with the local church and pupils visit theatres and museums. Pupils learn about different festivals and customs, dances, food and traditions through an annual multi-cultural week as well as topics within history, geography and religious education lessons. The school's rich cultural diversity also makes a good contribution to pupils' awareness and understanding of cultures other than their own.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.7	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.

13. The level of attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to the school each day, and are eager to meet their friends and get on with their lessons. The attendance rate is above the national average. Where there are absences, this is mainly due to parents taking holidays in term time, sometimes for extended periods. Punctuality is good, overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

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

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of the teaching and standards of learning are **good**. The school's procedures for assessment are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of the teaching and standard of pupils' learning have improved since the last inspection.
- The quality of the teaching and the learning environment in the reception class are of a particularly high standard.
- In Years 1 to 6, consistently good teaching enables pupils to learn and achieve well.
- The school caters well for different groups of pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.
- Although teachers do not always make the most efficient use of time, there are few weaknesses in the teaching.
- Assessment procedures, and particularly the marking of pupils' work, do not give pupils a clear enough indication of what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

14. Overall, the quality of the teaching and standard of pupils' learning are good. They are very good in the Foundation Stage, and these judgements are better than those made during the last inspection. The quality of the teaching has improved in Years 3 to 6. The result of this is seen in the significant improvements in the school's results in mathematics and science. Weaknesses pointed out in the last inspection report, such as the lack of attention given to problem-solving activities and investigative work in science, have been rectified. There is more good and very good teaching than before. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of the teaching ranged from excellent to satisfactory. The teaching in the reception class was of consistently high quality, and there was also much very good teaching in Year 2. A hallmark of the teaching in the rest of the school is that the pupils receive consistently good teaching in a very high proportion of lessons. This enables pupils to achieve well and, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, to achieve very well over time. There are no major weaknesses and no subjects in which the teaching is

unsatisfactory and, in some areas, notably information and communication technology, teachers' expertise has improved significantly since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3)	12 (31)	20 (51)	6 (15)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

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

15. The teaching in the reception class provides children with a very good start to their education. The teacher's planning is imaginative and creative, and she provides a stimulating learning environment for the children. Lessons are lively and interesting and taught with great enthusiasm. Throughout the day, the teacher and her assistant make the very best use of every opportunity to consolidate previous learning, practise key skills and extend the children's horizons. As a result, children make very good progress and thoroughly enjoy learning.
16. In the rest of the school, the teachers provide well-structured, interesting lessons and are very good at encouraging and engaging the pupils. For their part, pupils show very positive attitudes to their work and a willingness to work hard. They also behave very well in lessons, and all of these factors contribute significantly to their learning. The teachers use a good variety of teaching methods, including whole-class discussions, paired work, individual assignments and the use of a good variety of resources. They provide clear guidance for pupils, such as how to plan a written piece of work in a particular style. Well-trained teaching assistants also have a significant impact on pupils' learning. They make good use of their time, are thoughtful in their interactions with pupils and provide considerable assistance to the teachers. In Years 3 to 6, most of the teachers are making increasingly good use of the interactive whiteboards to improve the presentation of their lessons and to engage pupils more actively in their learning.
17. There is a very good awareness in nearly all classes of the differing needs of pupils, and staff work hard to provide levels of work which are appropriate to these needs. The teachers are, for example, very aware of the potential difficulties faced by the growing proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. A number of occasions were observed during the inspection, for example, where these pupils were given additional help or explanation in order to help them understand what was being taught. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is also good. Pupils learn very effectively at their own pace because of the good-quality individual learning programmes that are provided and the support that they receive from teachers and teaching assistants within lessons. The teaching assistants are very effective because they liaise closely with the co-ordinator for special educational needs and individual teachers and feel part of a professional team. They give good support both to individuals in their care and to groups of pupils within lessons. Effective additional input is also provided from time to time for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented.
18. There are very few weaknesses in teaching which are applicable across the school, and these few relate to organisational issues of which the school is now aware. Some lessons are unnecessarily long and, in some classes, this can lead to a lack of pace or inefficient use of time. Although pupils enjoy the opportunity to read quietly, 25-minute reading sessions after lunch for pupils in Years 3 to 6 are not particularly productive, especially where the teacher is not actively engaged with pupils during the session. The organisation of pupils' work does not lend itself to the completion of high-quality extended work, nor does it encourage good presentation. Occasionally, all pupils are given exactly the same work to complete and this does not cater sufficiently well for the more or less able pupils. In a few classes, teachers are still too prescriptive in the tasks which they provide, leaving little room for pupils to exercise their initiative or develop independent learning skills.

19. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory, but do not always help pupils to learn from their mistakes or to understand what they need to do to improve. The school keeps track of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science and evaluates whether pupils have met, exceeded or fallen short of objectives for each unit of work in foundation subjects². Assessments are used to group pupils by ability for group-work in English and mathematics. They also allow staff to measure the progress that pupils are making over time. However, staff do not make sufficient use of assessment information to give pupils a clear understanding of their next steps in learning. Pupils' work is checked regularly, and teachers frequently write positive comments at the end of a piece of work. However, they frequently overlook pupils' mistakes and do not give them a clear enough indication of what they have done well or what they need to improve. As a result, pupils are not aware of, and, therefore, do not learn enough from, the mistakes they make. In addition, not enough time is built into lessons for pupils to review work they have completed, either on their own, with the help of adults or through working with their peers, in order to make improvements. Pupils' involvement in reviewing their own progress or setting specific targets is not established well enough across the school.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is **satisfactory**. A **good** programme of extra-curricular activities enriches the formal curriculum. The overall range of learning resources and the quality of the school's accommodation are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Insufficient time is spent in teaching the humanities, music and design and technology in Years 1 to 6.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, educational visits and visitors.
- Key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are not developed or consolidated sufficiently through the teaching of other subjects.
- Provision and support for gifted and talented pupils, for pupils learning English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs is good.
- The school has spacious indoor accommodation.

Commentary

20. Although the school's curriculum is broad and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, it is not sufficiently balanced. Insufficient time is spent on the teaching of design and technology, geography, history and music and, as a result, pupils are unable to develop fully their knowledge, skills and understanding in these curricular areas. In contrast, curricular provision in English and mathematics is very good, although some lessons are too long. On occasions during the inspection, teachers had to shorten planned lessons because pupils were unable to sustain concentration for such long periods. At present, the time allocated for teaching in Years 3 to 6 is below the nationally recommended level. The school is aware of the need to carry out a comprehensive review of curricular planning.
21. Although there are some developing cross-curricular links within the school, teachers do miss opportunities to relate the teaching in one subject to what pupils are studying in another. Whilst key skills are taught very effectively in English and mathematics, there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to use and develop these skills in other curricular areas. For example, there is little recorded work in history and geography in Years 3 to 6, and pupils do not have opportunities to employ their literacy and numeracy skills in the planning and evaluation processes of design and technology projects.

² The foundation subjects are: art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, and physical education.

22. An extensive programme of clubs, visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision includes clubs for football, netball, rounders, hockey, basketball and art. In addition, pupils have opportunities to participate in peripatetic woodwind tuition, whilst pupils in Year 5 are able to participate in a residential experience based on outdoor pursuits. A good range of visits supports learning in individual curricular areas. For example, pupils visit Stourhead as part of their geographical studies, Bristol Ballet to develop their appreciation of dance and Sherborne Castle to help them develop their historical awareness. Visitors to the school include dance teachers and visiting performers, such as those who support the annual multi-cultural week. The school also organises special focus weeks, including a recent and successful creative arts festival. All of these experiences enrich the curriculum and provide pupils with good opportunities for learning.
23. Provision and support for pupils with special educational needs and for those learning English as an additional language are good. The co-ordinator for special educational needs works well with other teachers and the teaching assistants and keeps clear records of pupils' progress over time. Assessment is used effectively to ensure that the work provided for pupils with special educational needs is closely matched to their needs and to highlight any particular needs for pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils' individual education plans are of good quality and are reviewed each term. All pupils with special educational needs are involved in the full range of school activities. Pupils receive very good support from their teaching assistants and consequently achieve well. The provision and support for gifted and talented pupils are equally good. The enthusiastic co-ordinator has implemented a programme of support for individual pupils, which encompasses and seeks to develop academic, physical and creative ability. Overall, the school is effective in ensuring that all pupils are given equal access to the statutory curriculum and all other activities provided.
24. There are particularly good features of the school's accommodation. Classrooms are large and light and create a good learning environment. The hall is spacious and proves an excellent base for physical education lessons. There is a well-stocked and well-used library and additional rooms dedicated to the teaching of food technology, information and communication technology and special educational needs. The disadvantages of the accommodation are that the school does not have access to its own playing field, the playground space is limited, there are no parking spaces for staff or parents, and pupils in Years 3 to 6 have to go down six flights of stairs to access their toilets. The school is, however, well maintained and kept very clean by the caretaker and cleaner. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall and good in science and physical education. However, there is a shortage of equipment for information and communication, particularly in respect of classroom computers.

Care, guidance and support

Systems to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are **very good**. The school provides **good** support, advice and guidance. It is **good** at seeking, valuing and acting upon pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The staff provide a very caring environment for the pupils.
- The school pays very good attention to health and safety.
- Pupils benefit from very positive and trusting relationships in school which help promote a strong sense of community.
- There are good induction arrangements for those joining the school.
- Good support is provided for individual pupils who have particular learning needs.

Commentary

25. The school continues to offer a very strong ethos of care and consideration for others, which permeates through the whole school community and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. This positive feature of the school is founded on the school's pervasive Christian ethos. The school is a happy, harmonious and well-organised community, providing a safe, secure and very caring environment for all its pupils. Each pupil is valued and respected and feels secure and able to turn to any adult if they have a problem or concern. This has a positive impact on their confidence and self-esteem and is reflected in their levels of attainment and progress. Parents are very pleased that their children are well nurtured and supported. They speak very positively about the kind and caring teachers and support staff and the way they treat pupils fairly.
26. There are very good child protection procedures. The school demonstrates a positive, proactive approach to health, safety and security within the school, and the governors undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. Support staff and mid-day supervisors are well focused on caring for and supporting the pupils, and there are appropriate numbers of staff trained in first aid.
27. Good induction arrangements help the youngest children begin their school life happily and confidently. Parents value the sensitive introductions and caring staff who help ease their children into school. Pupils who join other year groups and who have little knowledge of English are made welcome and benefit from the supportive environment of the school.
28. Teachers know their pupils well and have a good understanding of their emerging strengths and weaknesses, and readily respond to their needs. Tracking systems are in place to monitor pupils' academic development and progress, and pupils have targets in areas such as literacy and numeracy. However, these are not always used consistently or reviewed regularly to ensure pupils are clear about how they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. Pupils with special educational needs are assessed regularly, and a wide variety of information is recorded to help identify pupils' current attainment. The information gained is used most effectively to provide suitable new work for individual pupils. This enables most pupils to achieve national standards by the time they leave the school. The school now provides better opportunities and challenge to higher-attaining pupils, and is very effective in identifying and making appropriate provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for those acquiring English as an additional language. The school collaborates with outside support agencies and offers a high level of support in lessons. Teaching assistants are patient and supportive to all these pupils, and make a very positive contribution to their learning.
29. Teachers use registration periods and circle times well to listen to pupils' views. Opportunities to consult with pupils and involve them in the decision-making process have recently improved through the introduction of a school council. Pupils are enthusiastic about this new initiative and are keen to bring forward their ideas about how they can improve their school, such as the facilities in the playground.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established a **very strong** and enduring partnership with parents. Links with the local community are **satisfactory**, and links with other schools and colleges are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very positive about the school and hold it in high regard.
- Many parents are fully involved in the life of the school and contribute much to the pupils' education.
- The school keeps parents well informed about what is happening in school.
- The good links with local primary and secondary schools help to promote curricular development and enrichment opportunities for pupils.

Commentary

30. The school's partnership with parents is very good. Responses to parents' questionnaires indicate a high level of support for the school. Parents, in general, are very pleased that the school is approachable, has high expectations of their children, who like the school, behave well and are achieving well. The inspection team found substantial evidence to support the parental views.
31. The school is highly successful in establishing effective links with parents. Parents feel welcome and are encouraged to play an important part in their children's learning at home. Parents visit for special events and masses. A number of parents help out in the school, which contributes very effectively to pupils' learning experiences. Some parents run after-school clubs or undertake coaching; others help in the classroom with craftwork or cookery, listen to pupils read or help out on trips. The parent-teacher association is run by an active group of parents who organise a number of successful social and fund-raising activities each year. Parents appreciate that they can approach individual teachers or the headteacher, and any issues or concerns are resolved promptly with care and consideration.
32. Although a few parents do not feel they are kept well informed, the school does provide a good range of information. The regular newsletters from the school provide details of forthcoming activities and events. Curricular information is shared with parents so they can see what is going on. There are regular formal and informal meetings for parents, and attendance at these meetings is good. The annual reports inform parents about their children's academic performance and personal development. However, whilst they broadly indicate what pupils have been doing, they are not always evaluative. The school has established good arrangements for involving and informing parents whose children have special educational needs. They are invited to all review meetings and kept well informed of their children's progress.
33. The school seeks to foster strong links with the church, the wider community and businesses but acknowledges that there is much work to do. Through links with the parish church, parishioners are encouraged to attend for important masses, and the priest attends periodically, as do ministers from other churches, to conduct assemblies. Visitors and visits to places in the local area are linked to areas of the curriculum and help enrich pupils' learning opportunities. These include visits to local museums and Yeovil Football Club, singing for the elderly or involvement in a commando challenge to raise funds for school equipment.
34. The school has a close partnership with other schools through the Yeovil Federation of Schools. This helps promote joint staff-development activities and opportunities for enrichment activities including sporting events for pupils. The partnerships with linked secondary schools are carefully fostered to enhance curricular activities and provide work placement opportunities for students. The transition arrangements are sensitively organised to ensure that the move into secondary schools is as smooth as possible.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is **good**. The leadership of the headteacher and the governance of the school are **good**. The leadership of other key staff and the effectiveness of management are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has benefited from strong leadership in the past and the new headteacher is providing good leadership and clear vision for the school's future development.
- The school has a very good commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Not enough attention has been given to developing the leadership roles and management responsibilities of the deputy headteacher and the co-ordinators of foundation subjects.
- Governors are experienced and provide good support for the new headteacher and staff.

- Financial management procedures are good.

Commentary

35. The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision and high aspirations for the continued success of the school and has already established a good understanding of the most important areas for future development. She has quickly established a positive rapport with governors, staff, pupils and parents. The school has benefited from strong leadership in the past, and this has been crucial in establishing the school's very positive ethos and strong commitment to inclusion. These support pupils' learning well and ensure that the school is a happy and supportive community, where pupils enjoy learning, work hard and attend regularly.
36. The school's management procedures are satisfactory. They have been used well to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and opportunities have been provided for the co-ordinators of these subjects to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and focus attention on the quality of pupils' work. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils learning English as an additional language is also managed well. There are clear procedures for dealing with these pupils, good working relationships with other teachers and teaching assistants, and a good understanding of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. Overall, however, responsibilities have not been delegated effectively. Some teachers have taken on a disproportionate number of responsibilities, whilst the deputy headteacher has few responsibilities commensurate with his position and not enough responsibility has been given to the co-ordinators of foundation subjects for leading and managing their subjects. As a result, the deputy headteacher plays little part in the leadership and management of the school, there has been little innovation in developing the broader curriculum, and foundation subject co-ordinators do not have a clear enough understanding of their areas of responsibility.
37. Governance has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. The governors are experienced, and many visit the school regularly. As a result, they have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governors have provided good support for the new headteacher. Although they have previously been very reliant on the direction provided by the previous headteacher, with the change in leadership style, they are becoming more proactive in leading and managing the affairs of the school. They are fully committed to the school's aims for constant improvement. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs provides good and knowledgeable support to the school. He visits the school on a regular basis and has a very good awareness of the progress of individual pupils over time. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils statutory requirements.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	557,681	Balance from previous year	46,618
Total expenditure	563,684	Balance carried forward to the next	40,615
Expenditure per pupil	2,671		

38. Financial management is good. The headteacher and chair of governors, who is also the chair of finance, work closely together to monitor the school's financial position on a regular basis. Budgets are set in accordance with statutory requirements. The school makes good use of specific grants and generous donations by parents for school improvements, including the purchase of new equipment. The school's budget has a healthy carry forward which is appropriately targeted to improve accommodation and has a contingency against the effect of falling rolls. Day-to-day financial arrangements are good, and the school applies well the principles of best value when purchasing goods and services. The school provides good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the reception class achieve very well due to consistently high-quality teaching.
- The class teacher works very hard to plan purposeful activities and makes excellent links between areas of learning which help the children to learn very well.
- The teaching assistant provides very good support across a wide range of activities.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for children to use computers or wheeled vehicles.

Commentary

39. When children start school, their attainment is wide and varied but average overall. Induction arrangements are good. Children start on a part-time basis for the first half of term and then attend full time. Children achieve very well due to the high-quality experiences provided by the class teacher and teaching assistant who work in effective partnership. By the time children start Year 1, the great majority will meet the expected goals for children of this age in all areas of learning and many will exceed these goals.
40. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, and some excellent teaching was seen during inspection. Children are happy, very settled and eager to learn because staff have established good classroom routines. Activities are carefully planned to ensure the children not only gain from working alongside each other, but also have the opportunity to learn by carrying out interesting practical activities. The teacher uses a wide range of teaching approaches and interesting resources, including many brought in by children, to make learning relevant and enjoyable for all children, including those with English as an additional language. She uses questioning very well to extend learning and has significantly improved assessment opportunities since the last inspection to track children's progress. The warm praise and encouragement children receive ensure they try hard and achieve very well. Staff are adept at identifying children with individual needs, including those with English as an additional language, and are quick to ensure that the appropriate support is put in place for the individuals concerned.
41. Provision in the Foundation Stage is led and managed very well and has improved significantly since the last inspection. All of the issues raised in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The new outdoor climbing area provides a valuable resource and extension to the classroom. The co-ordinator uses her knowledge and experience to create an attractive classroom, full of interesting areas for children to explore and enjoy. Very creative use is made of classroom space, including the yellow submarine, which supports all aspects in this phase of education. The very good provision ensures that children are very well cared for. As a result, children are very well motivated, learn to behave very well and develop very positive attitudes.
42. High priority is given to children's **personal, social and emotional development**, provision for which is very good. Children are happy, confident and secure in school. They know the classroom rules and expectations and are aware that sometimes they must wait for adult attention. They take a lively interest in all the activities offered to them and know where classroom resources and equipment are stored. Most concentrate very well on activities they are given or have selected themselves. Staff organise activities for children to work with adults and independently with each other, and children take the initiative in many situations. Children are learning to understand the feelings of others, including those with English as an

additional language, and show kindness to one another. The teacher and adults ensure that they reward good behaviour and have very good relationships with children.

43. Children make very good progress in **communication, language and literacy** and achieve very well, including those learning to speak English as an additional language. Very good opportunities are provided to develop children's skills in language and literacy lessons. All children demonstrate growing assurance when answering questions and many are confident speakers. Most children develop good reading skills, and standards of reading are above average. Children handle books carefully and listen attentively to stories read by adults. They are keen to make progress in reading, and are encouraged to do so through regular practice at home and in school. Children learn the correct way to shape letters, copying examples of writing with increased control, and many have developed good writing skills for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage.
44. Children make very good progress in **mathematical development** and achieve very well. Many opportunities for the promotion of mathematical skills are incorporated successfully into daily routines, such as during registration. No moment is lost to support children's learning in mental arithmetic through numerous songs and rhymes. A strength of the teaching is the way staff are very effective in promoting learning through relevant cross curricular-links, such as using the beach display to explore and count shells, and by participating with children in their play activities. As a result, children have a good understanding of basic number, and higher attainers count, calculate and subtract with larger numbers. Children have a secure grasp of terms such as 'longer' and 'shorter', 'lighter' and 'heavier' when directly comparing two objects and know the names of many shapes.
45. Children achieve very well in developing their **knowledge and understanding of the world** because they are provided with excellent opportunities for first-hand experiences. Through investigations, they learn about the similarities and differences of many objects and can predict which shells hold the most water. They extend their general knowledge by visits to the local hospital and further afield to Charmouth Beach. Visitors include representatives from the police, fire and ambulance services who often rescue 'Fred the Ted' and bring him safely back to school. Most children operate the computer confidently, but opportunities are restricted to the timetabled slots in the computer suite. This has a negative impact on achievement as children do not benefit from regular use of a computer in the classroom.
46. Children make very good progress in their **physical development**. They use the outside environment well, including the new climbing equipment, to ensure they develop skills of confidence, balance and co-ordination. Through skilful use of praise and guidance, staff provide strong encouragement for all individuals. The sensitive support children receive encourages them to develop confidently, which has a positive influence on accelerating their progress. However, there is a limited number of trikes and bikes available to develop skills in using wheeled vehicles. Activities and tasks provided by staff ensure that children handle tools well to develop their manipulative skills.
47. Children achieve very well in **creative development** as adults provide an extensive range of activities to extend learning as part of many other lessons, including literacy and numeracy sessions. The children have a good range of media to draw, paint, print and make models. During the inspection, high-quality paintings of sea creatures, where children demonstrated advanced techniques in mixing colours, were seen, as well as very detailed pictures created by carefully arranging a variety of seashells. Children have very good opportunities for imaginative role-play, for example, in the beach café, yellow submarine and classroom office. Children thoroughly enjoy playing percussion and unconventional instruments to compose their own seaside symphony and singing fun songs and rhymes.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching, learning and progress enable pupils to achieve very well during their time at St Gildas and to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- There is a very good awareness of pupils' differing needs, and the school caters well for a growing proportion of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue.
- Good teaching methods and a good response from pupils contribute to a productive learning environment throughout the school.
- Pupils' reading, speaking and listening skills are developed well, although the large amount of time devoted to reading sessions is not used as productively as it could be.
- Initiatives to improve the quality of pupils' writing have helped to raise standards, but writing skills are not consolidated as well as they could be through written work in other subjects.
- The assessment of pupils' written work is not always critical enough.

Commentary

48. Pupils' overall achievement in English is very good. This is a result of the cumulative effort of good teaching, good learning and good progress year by year as the pupils go through the school. They move from a position of average English skills on entering the school in the reception class to well above average skills at the end of Year 6, with almost all pupils achieving the minimum level expected by this stage and over 40 per cent of the pupils achieving the higher Level 5. Pupils learning English as an additional language show particular determination and often achieve very well.
49. The school's national test results in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 in 2004 were well above the national average and were very close to the levels pertaining at the time of the last inspection. Although they have fluctuated from year to year, the school's results have not improved as they have in most schools, but the school has done well to maintain this level as it now admits a much greater proportion of pupils for whom English is not their mother tongue. Whilst these pupils make good, and in some cases very good progress, they are not yet ready to achieve particularly high levels in the national tests, and this has an adverse effect on the school's results. Overall, the inspection findings indicate that standards in reading, speaking and listening are well above average and standards in writing are above average. Pupils of all capabilities achieve well.
50. The school has improved on the above average results at the end of Year 6, which the school was achieving at the time of the last inspection, and the latest results in 2004 were well above the national average. Despite the fluctuations from year to year, the results have improved more than in most schools. The inspection findings indicate that standards are well above average in all aspects of English by the end of Year 6. Pupils of all capabilities achieve well. The smaller proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language in this part of the school continue to gain rapidly in confidence and perform with a confidence which is indistinguishable from that of their peers. The skills of reading, speaking and listening continue to be the major strengths, but pupils' performance in writing is also above that which is normally found.
51. The subject has been led and managed well, and the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Consistently good input from all staff, starting from the very solid foundation laid in the reception class, has led to good improvement since the last inspection and enables the pupils to make consistently good progress and achieve very well over time. In almost all classes, there is a very good awareness of pupils' needs. Pupils with special educational

needs are provided with well-targeted help, often through additional literacy sessions or booster classes, which help them to catch up. In almost all classes, work is carefully differentiated according to pupils' abilities, and teachers are aware of individual circumstances, such as those of pupils who are learning English as an additional language and who receive extra support when needed. Teaching assistants are proactive and helpful, engaging well not only with those whom they are designated to help, but also providing more general assistance wherever it is needed.

52. Teachers are well prepared for their lessons, are very good at encouraging the pupils and engaging their attention, and manage pupils' behaviour very well, ensuring a very good learning environment within the classroom. Pupils respond positively and, in almost all classes, show a great sense of enjoyment as they apply themselves well to their work. The teachers use a good range of teaching methods and techniques. In a very good lesson in Year 5, for example, the teacher asked pupils to use a Venn diagram, more commonly used in mathematics, to compare two versions of a story. In the same lesson, the teacher engaged the whole class in discussion, encouraged pupils to discuss answers with a partner, provided work for individuals, made good use of the interactive whiteboard and small individual whiteboards, maintaining all the time a very good pace so that pupils were constantly challenged by what was happening. Most teachers in Years 3 to 6 are beginning to make good use of the interactive whiteboards for a wide range of activities. The tasks given to pupils to complete using information and communication technology, however, are not as imaginative, often being restricted to worksheet-type activities, and missing opportunities to develop more substantial pieces of writing, making use of the editing features of a word processor.
53. Although the school does not have a planned programme to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, all teachers are good at making the most of opportunities which arise. They ask pertinent questions, provoke thought and elicit participation. They place a very good emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary so that, by the time the pupils leave the school, they are articulate and confident of coping orally with a wide range of situations. Although pupils in Year 1 are not yet good at listening, the opposite is true in the rest of the school. A very good proportion of pupils are involved in discussions in most classes, and teachers deal well with some quite difficult concepts. In Year 5, for example, the teacher helped pupils to develop their critical thinking by grappling with concepts such as 'ambiguity', 'half-truth', 'opinion' and 'bias'.
54. Considerable emphasis is given to the development of pupils' reading skills. Parent and voluntary helpers augment the school's own provision, providing valuable one-to-one sessions with pupils. These sessions are used particularly well to help pupils who do not receive the same level of parental support at home as other pupils and for pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have a 25-minute reading session each day after lunch. Whilst this undoubtedly promotes good reading habits, and the teachers and assistants in most classes use their time profitably during these sessions by running guided-reading sessions for specific groups of pupils, the time is not used as productively as it could be by the majority of the pupils reading on their own. There is little guided work during these sessions and pupils do not always select books to read which broaden their existing repertoire or present significant challenge.
55. Although writing is the least well developed of the four key skills, good progress is nevertheless evident as are the fruits of various initiatives, which the school has implemented in its efforts to improve the quality of writing. In all classes, there is a regular focus on spelling, where words that pupils are required to learn are carefully differentiated according to pupils' ability. This practice could be sharper, however, as some pupils are still given words to learn with which they are already familiar. Regularly assessed pieces of writing help to provide teachers with a clearer picture of how well pupils are doing. Common writing formats and techniques help to develop pupils' awareness of how to set about their writing. The quality of presentation does not always match the quality of the content, and the loose-leaf format and lack of extended projects, particularly those in subjects other than English, do not encourage a greater awareness of presentation. Joined-up handwriting is not taught until a

fairly late stage, and few pupils in Year 2 have developed a clear and consistent joined-up script.

56. The subject co-ordinator has recently observed a number of lessons and the school regularly carries out a scrutiny of pupils' work. However, the scope of this scrutiny is very narrow and does not allow the staff to pick up trends in pupils' work or highlight areas of general weakness, such as the quality of marking, which would help to bring more consistent improvement across the board. Whilst teachers write encouraging comments, they are not critical enough, in most classes, and do not indicate sufficiently often where pupils have made mistakes or how they could improve their work. This applies even more to the written work which pupils have produced in subjects other than English. Teachers do not give pupils enough time to go back over their work to make improvements. As a result, pupils do not learn as much as they could from their mistakes and do not always have a clear enough idea of what they need to do to improve. At present, the school devotes a very large amount of time to the teaching of English, but some of the lessons are inordinately and unnecessarily long. Pupils achieve little more in these sessions than could be achieved with a slightly greater sense of urgency in an hour or less.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. The use and development of pupils' language and literacy skills across the curriculum are satisfactory, but could be improved. Throughout the school, there are some good examples of writing which pupils have produced for work in subjects other than English. However, the school is not yet flexible enough in its planning of the curriculum to exploit ways of developing key language and literacy skills through all subjects. As a result, opportunities are missed to consolidate the good teaching and learning which takes place in most English lessons and thereby raise standards even further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well over time because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- There is good emphasis on problem solving.
- Good leadership has helped to raise standards and improve pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and have good attitudes to learning.
- Numeracy skills are not developed consistently through the teaching of other subjects.
- Current timetabling arrangements result in some lessons being too long.
- Assessment procedures are not always rigorous enough.

Commentary

58. Even though the school's results at the end of Year 2 have fallen over the last two years and were below the national average in 2004, they are nevertheless higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school has analysed its results for the last two years carefully and has taken appropriate steps to address identified weaknesses. Inspection findings support the school's analysis that standards in the current Year 2 class are now above average and that pupils are achieving well.
59. Results in mathematics at the end of Year 6 have improved more than in most schools since the last inspection and were well above the national average in 2004. Almost all pupils achieved the nationally expected standard, and over 40 per cent achieved the higher Level 5.

Inspection findings indicate that these high standards are likely to be maintained by the current cohort of pupils in Year 6, and this represents very good achievement over time.

60. Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good and pupils in each year group achieve well. Lessons are planned carefully to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities and this has a positive impact on standards. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants and achieve as well as their peers. All lessons have clear learning objectives, and teachers use their questioning skills effectively to develop pupils' thinking skills and to ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in the lesson. Praise is used effectively, and teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution to learning. All teachers have good subject knowledge and encourage pupils to use appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Each lesson concludes with an opportunity for pupils to explain how they have completed their tasks and to think about and discuss the strategies that they have employed. These opportunities are very effective in developing pupils' thinking skills. Pupils' enjoyment of mathematics lessons and their positive attitudes to the subject contribute well to their learning.
61. As a result of imbalance within the current planned timetable, numeracy lessons are often too long. For example, in Years 3 to 6, lessons are planned to last for a minimum of an hour and a quarter and often even longer. This is too long to maintain pupils' interest and involvement and actually slows the pace of some lessons. During the week of the inspection, for instance, a good lesson in Year 6 would have been very good if it had been concentrated into a shorter timescale, whilst a teacher in Year 4 sensibly ended the lesson after an hour because she felt that her pupils had achieved all that they were capable of achieving. The shorter lessons observed during the inspection generally had good pace, especially when teachers challenged pupils to finish their work within a set time limit.
62. There is good emphasis on problem-solving throughout the school, and this is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils did not always apply their skills to everyday situations. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop their investigative skills by using their knowledge in practical situations. In a very good lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils investigated how a fixed number of eggs could be stored in a variety of different packing cases. Once they had placed the eggs appropriately, they were challenged to explain their strategy by means of a simple written representation. Such investigations have a positive impact on learning because they capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
63. Good leadership has contributed to the very good standards that are seen by the end of Year 6 and the subject has been managed well. The co-ordinator has overseen the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, improved resources and monitored planning and curricular delivery. There is now an increasing emphasis on mental mathematics and effective concluding sessions to each lesson. At the time of the last inspection, the most able pupils were not challenged and this is no longer the case. The school is now more successful in analysing performance data to monitor progress, particularly in respect of pupils with special educational needs. Their progress is monitored closely by the co-ordinator for special educational needs, and additional support is targeted appropriately so that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. However, assessment procedures are not always rigorous or consistent enough, as, for example, the co-ordinator has no performance data for this current year.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory, although numeracy skills are not developed consistently through the teaching of other subjects. There are occasions when pupils use mathematics as part of their work in other subjects and, consequently, learn the practical application of their skills. In Year 2, for example, pupils had measured how far a person could jump as part of their science focus on exercise, whilst other classes had applied their mathematical knowledge to develop tables, graphs and charts as part of their work in information and communication technology. However, teachers do not give enough attention

to planning how key skills in mathematics can be used and developed in other curricular areas.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Greater focus on science has resulted in good improvement in the subject since the last inspection.
- Good-quality teaching enables pupils to achieve very well.
- Good opportunities are provided for experimental and investigative science to support pupils' learning and understanding.
- The co-ordinator provides strong leadership and has accurately identified areas for improvement.
- There are relative weaknesses in marking, assessment and links with other areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

65. The teachers' assessments in science at the end of Year 2 were above the national average in 2004. These assessments coincide with the inspection judgement that standards of the current Year 2 are above average. The school's national test results in science at the end of Year 6 have improved much more than in most schools since the last inspection. The results in 2004 were well above the national average. The inspection findings show that standards are well above average. Pupils of all capabilities achieve well at both key stages and very well over their time in the school.
66. The improvements in science have come about because the subject has received a higher focus and teachers have gained confidence in using and adapting the established scheme of work, with the help of the local science advisor. All areas of the curriculum are covered well, and there are particularly good opportunities for experimental and investigative science. This ensures that pupils' learning is effective and that they acquire a good range of scientific knowledge besides developing their interest and curiosity well.
67. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in lessons varied from very good to satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge and provided high levels of challenge in a stimulating manner so pupils wanted to learn and thoroughly enjoyed their lessons. Pupils are encouraged to observe closely, make predictions and suggest why things happen. This allows the pupils to discover for themselves and, when they make mistakes, to learn from them. In the lessons where learning was only satisfactory, tasks were too prescriptive, the pace was slow and activities were not carefully matched to the pupils' abilities and interest. In some instances, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to ask their own scientific questions or to devise their own investigations. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are often well supported by teaching assistants to ensure they achieve well.
68. The co-ordinator has very clear ideas and high aspirations and provides strong leadership. She is a very good role model to colleagues and regularly monitors pupils' work and the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. She has improved resources and encourages staff to plan more open-ended activities to support pupils' learning. She has accurately identified a number of weaknesses. These include the need to improve the quality of teachers' marking, to provide better assessment opportunities to track the progress of individuals more closely and to develop more links with other curricular areas, including information and communication technology, to improve further the school's provision in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have led to improvements in the school's provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection.
- The school does not have enough resources to enable pupils to make full use of information and communication technology to consolidate the skills they have learnt.
- Pupils have good basic skills, which they use well in the areas of exchanging and sharing information and finding things out.
- Information and communication technology is not yet used widely enough as a tool for learning in all subjects of the curriculum.

Commentary

69. Pupils are achieving the nationally expected levels in information and communication technology at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils of all capabilities make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Whilst pupils do not yet reach as high standards in this subject as in English, mathematics and science, there has been good improvement in recent years. Teachers and teaching assistants have improved their skills significantly, and they now have a much better understanding of the curriculum and of how to help pupils. The school has tackled effectively a key issue from the last inspection to improve its range of software so that all aspects of the curriculum can be taught. The school's central resource for information and communication technology, the computer suite, is a significant improvement on the meagre level of resources available at the time of the last inspection. However, the school is still under-resourced, and the lack of computers available for pupils to use within the classroom prevents pupils from following up work, which they have started in the computer suite or from using computers for specific tasks within a lesson.
70. Pupils' skills are strongest in the area of exchanging and sharing information and finding things out. They are competent in finding out information from the Internet, and gradually develop their skills in using a word processor to set out text and graphics as they move through the school. The progression in acquiring skills is seen clearly in their use of data-handling applications, as they move from the completion of simple bar charts in Years 1 and 2 to more complex charts and sophisticated interrogation of data in Year 5. By Year 6, pupils have sufficient skill to put together a simple multimedia presentation, but they have yet to develop discernment as to when and where to use the available features to best effect. From Year 2 onwards, pupils are quite confident using computers and have a good range of basic skills.
71. The quality of teaching and standards of learning are satisfactory. In some classes, teachers are still too reliant on following the set scheme of work, rather than evaluating what skills pupils already have and how they might integrate the teaching of new skills more effectively into work being undertaken in other subjects. There is also a tendency to spend too long on practising a basic skill and not enough time applying the skill and evaluating its effectiveness. For example, pupils in Year 6 were preparing presentations on the computer, but spent far too long experimenting with peripheral features and not long enough on the content and meat of their presentation. Where teachers present a greater level of challenge, pupils rise to the occasion. In Year 5, for example, the teacher had imaginatively placed the unit of work on databases into the context of work in science where pupils were investigating habitats. Through good questioning and a well-prepared introduction in the classroom, the teacher helped the pupils to deepen their understanding of how computers can be used as a powerful tool for research and investigation. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject, which contribute significantly to their learning. They enjoy working with computers, pick up new skills quickly and are keen to experiment. A lunchtime computer club, run by one of the teaching assistants, contributes to the learning of those pupils who attend.

72. The subject has been led and managed well. The co-ordinator has overseen many of the improvements, which have occurred since the last inspection and has identified pertinent areas for development for the future. She provides a good level of help for other staff, and there are appropriate arrangements for a technician to visit on a regular basis and deal with technical problems. She keeps abreast of what is happening in the rest of the school through scheduled scrutiny of a specific aspect of the curriculum, with work submitted from each class, and some lesson observations. The curriculum and procedures for assessment are satisfactory, but do not readily identify how the school is going to provide sufficient challenge for the growing number of pupils who are proficient in using computers and pick up new skills very quickly.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. The use of information and communication technology and the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum are satisfactory. There are some good examples of the way skills have been used to good effect in other subjects, such as the development of higher-order skills of interrogating data in science, and the production of some finished pieces of writing in English. Some teachers are making increasingly good use of the interactive whiteboards, which have recently been installed in Years 3 to 6, to enhance their own teaching and demonstrate how new technology can be used as an effective tool for learning. However, the regular use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning is not yet fully embedded in all subjects. Co-ordinators of individual subjects have not yet taken on the responsibility of identifying and determining how and when information and communication technology should be used in their subjects.

HUMANITIES

74. During inspection, it was not possible to see any **history** lessons, and only one **geography** lesson was observed. Consequently, no judgement could be made on provision. An examination of pupils' work, displays and discussion with the subject co-ordinator indicate that the school uses an appropriate scheme of work to ensure that the statutory curriculum is followed. However, inspection evidence indicates that insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of these subjects and resources are unsatisfactory, with the result that pupils only have a superficial understanding of the topics covered. This has an adverse impact on pupils' overall progress and attainment, and pupils do not achieve as well as they do in English, mathematics and science. Although there is some cross-curricular work in Years 3 and 4, teachers miss opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of geography and history through the teaching of other subjects. This is particularly the case in using research skills in information and communication technology and in literacy, where there is insufficient emphasis on getting pupils to record their work or produce quality pieces of creative writing which would aid their learning. Good use is made of visits to give first-hand experiences to support learning in both subjects. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. As a result, teachers lack the necessary information to plan future work to match to the age and ability of individual pupils. The role of the co-ordinator has not been sufficiently developed for either the new co-ordinator or her predecessor to have been instrumental in leading change and innovation in the provision of geography and history.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

75. This area of the curriculum comprises **art and design, design and technology, music and physical education**. A full report is provided for physical education. Not enough was seen of the work in other subjects to make overall judgements on provision, teaching and learning and pupils' achievements. One lesson was observed in Year 5 in art and design, but it was not possible to observe lessons in either design and technology or music. Discussions were held with the co-ordinators for each of these subjects. The school provides some good experiences in art and design but insufficient time is given to design and technology and music to enable pupils to acquire an adequate depth of knowledge, understanding or skills.

76. Good-quality **art and design** displays were seen in most classrooms and around the school and a portfolio of work was provided by the art co-ordinator. Pupils throughout the school study the work of well-known artists and incorporate the techniques into their own work. For example, in the lesson in Year 5, pupils analysed the techniques that artists, such as Picasso, Duchamp and Delaunay, had employed to reflect movement within their paintings. Pupils then worked enthusiastically with pastels to produce their own pictures based on movement within sporting activities. Pupils in other years broaden their knowledge of famous artists through studying the work of people, such as Macke, Matisse and Emil Nolde. The subject is led well by a knowledgeable and committed co-ordinator, who has ensured that the curriculum time allocated to art and design is enriched by creative arts and multi-cultural focus weeks and a regular art club, which is led by an enthusiastic teaching assistant. These additional opportunities are very popular with pupils. The co-ordinator has an action plan for future development that includes a commitment to achieving the national 'Artsmark', monitoring standards of teaching and learning throughout the school and the development of assessment procedures for art and design.
77. **Design and technology** projects are planned in every year group and some good links to other curricular areas have been established. For example, pupils in Year 2 make lighthouses using their scientific awareness of electrical circuits, whilst pupils in Year 1 make musical instruments. However, there is little evidence that projects have design briefs and written evaluations or that designing and making skills are developed in a systematic manner. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership, although there has been little scope for developing the subject as the school's priorities for development have been elsewhere. He has an action plan that includes a commitment to increasing cross-curricular links with other subjects, but has yet to develop assessment procedures or planning and evaluation records for design and technology projects.
78. The temporary co-ordinator for **music** acknowledges that this is a subject that that needs developing. There is no teacher on the staff with particular expertise in music and some teachers lack confidence in teaching the subject. As a result, elements of the music curriculum, such as composing, appraising and performing are not developed to a satisfactory standard. However, the school has recently implemented a new scheme of work designed to support the non-specialist musician in an effort to bring about improvements in teaching. When given opportunities, pupils enjoy singing and participate with enthusiasm. For example, in one assembly, pupils in Years 1 and 2 continued to sing the hymn even when there were problems with the accompanying CD. Some curriculum enrichment takes place, such as peripatetic woodwind tuition and a planned multi-cultural week that will enable pupils to participate in music and dance from other countries. The co-ordinator is not complacent about the current situation and recognises the need to improve provision in this subject area.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in swimming.
- The spacious school hall provides a very good base for physical education lessons.

Commentary

79. During the inspection, it was possible to observe a range of physical education lessons featuring dance, gymnastics and games. Pupils achieve well, reaching at least average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection, when there was some unsatisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. Standards in swimming are good. Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 have access to the local swimming baths during the year and, by the time they leave the school, almost all pupils achieve the national standard of swimming 25 metres unaided and many swim much further.

80. Pupils clearly enjoy the many opportunities that are provided for them to participate in additional team sports and sporting clubs, such as those for football, basketball, rounders, hockey, netball, and cricket. These varied opportunities are open to both girls and boys and involve pupils from Year 3 to Year 6. A highly committed teaching assistant organises many of these clubs, both during lunch hours and after school. In addition to clubs and activities, pupils in Year 5 have the opportunity to develop their outdoor education skills during a residential experience at an outdoor activity centre. The school has established close links with a number of local sports clubs, such as the Yeovil Tennis Club and Somerset County Cricket Club, and visiting specialists provide good tuition for pupils and curricular support for teachers.
81. In all of the lessons observed, the teaching was at least satisfactory, generally good and sometimes very good. Overall, the quality of the teaching and standards of learning are good. Teachers set the right tone for lessons by changing into appropriate clothing and through their willingness to participate in physical activities. They give appropriate attention to health and safety aspects, such as warming up at the start of a lesson and cooling down at the end. Most pupils enjoy this subject and demonstrate positive attitudes in physical education lessons and during lunchtime and after-school club activities. In a gymnastics lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils had a clear understanding of what was expected, responded appropriately and, consequently, made good progress. They co-operated happily in paired and group activities and enjoyed the opportunity to develop their own skills and to comment on the performance of their peers.
82. Although the school does not have its own playing field, the spacious school hall and large hard-surfaced outdoor area provide good facilities for pupils' participation in sporting activities and enable school teams to compete successfully against other schools in a range of team sports. Lessons that, in many schools, would have to be taught in the playground or on the school field, can be accommodated safely and effectively in the large school hall. For example, in a games lesson in Year 4, pupils had ample space to enable them to develop their racket skills and to participate in activities linked to tennis. The hall is also well used for club activities during and at the end of the school day. Learning resources for physical education are good.
83. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and management and ensures that all aspects of the curriculum for physical education are taught. She has introduced a new scheme of work for physical education that is specifically designed to support teachers by providing lesson plans that contain a clear programme of skills development. She has an action plan for future development that includes a commitment to monitoring standards of teaching and learning throughout the school and the development of assessment procedures for physical education.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

84. Although only one specific lesson in this curricular area was observed, the indications are that the school makes good provision for the teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship. There are timetabled lessons in almost all classes, and themes are integrated into other subject areas, such as science and literacy. In the lesson in Year 1, for example, pupils had contributed to their own class poem about friends, and the poem was then used effectively as a stimulus for discussion. The school meets statutory requirements in terms of sex and relationships education and drugs awareness, the co-ordinator having recently developed a policy and scheme of work for these aspects. The benefits and outcomes of this subject can be seen in the very good attitudes and behaviour that are observed throughout the school, which operates as a courteous, caring and harmonious community. The co-ordinators lead the subject effectively and have brought about recent improvements, which include the purchase of good resources and participation in projects such as 'Cool Milk' and the national 'Fruit and Vegetable' scheme.
85. Pupils are given opportunities to influence their own learning, such as when developing class rules and participating in charity work. As a result of suggestions from pupils, the school has purchased recently large board games to improve the quality of break-times. Pupils accept responsibility readily when given opportunities to do so. For example, pupils in Year 6 act as library monitors during lunchtimes. The impending introduction of a school council will extend pupils' opportunities to influence their own learning and will enable them to experience democracy at first hand.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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