

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC COMBINED SCHOOL

Oakdale, Poole, Dorset, BH15 3QQ

LEA area: Poole

Unique reference number: 113832

Headteacher: Maurice O'Brien

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 6th to 9th June 2005

Inspection number: 267869

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed primary
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 5 to 12
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 495

School address: Devon Road
Oakdale
Poole
Dorset
Postcode: BH15 3QQ

Telephone number: 01202 676207
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Sean Rolston

Date of previous inspection: 8th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St.Mary's Catholic Combined School is situated in the town of Poole in Dorset. It is a voluntary aided, middle deemed primary school for pupils aged 5 to 12 (reception to Year 7). It is much larger in size than most other primary schools. There are 495 pupils on roll (229 boys and 266 girls). The school about the same size as it was at the time of the previous inspection, and is currently over-subscribed. The numbers entering the school after the reception year, and those leaving the school before Year 7, are well below average. About 60 per cent of pupils live locally, with the remainder coming from a wide, surrounding area because it is a Catholic school. Most pupils travel to school by bus or private car. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in the reception year is average. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds, but 19 per cent of parents preferred not to declare their ethnicity. The overall percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups is average. There are currently no pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Employment rates in the local area are above the national average. At some 5 per cent, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Some 12 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average. Most pupils on this register have moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, or specific

learning and speech difficulties. At just over 1 per cent, the proportion of pupils having full Statements of Special Educational Need is below average. The school had Beacon School status from 2001 to 2004 and in recent years has gained a number of awards such as Activemark Gold (2003), Healthy Schools and F.A. Charter Mark (2004) and Artsmark (2005).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17556	Michael Miller	Lead inspector	Art and design Geography History Information and communication technology
32698	Steve Barker	Lay inspector	
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Design and technology Mathematics Personal, social, health and citizenship education
3751	Trudy Cotton	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Physical education Science
18498	Denise Morris	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Modern languages: French Music Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St. Mary's Catholic Combined School is a **very good** and **very effective** school with many excellent features. This is because of its ethos, and the quality of teaching, which very securely underpins the pupils' very good learning and achievements. It therefore provides very good value for money. The headteacher and governors are focused very well on maintaining high standards and achievement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's high expectations and aspirations for its pupils, its sense of purpose and teamwork.
- The pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their very good working relationships with others.
- The very high quality and impact of the school's provision for its pupils' personal development.
- Some very good assessment practice is not developed fully throughout all subjects.
- The school's very good curriculum and excellent opportunities for curriculum enrichment.
- The very good teaching and excellent work by support staff securely underpin pupils' learning.
- The very good provision in the reception year and in English, mathematics and science.
- The school's excellent approach to the care, welfare and support of its pupils.
- The excellent links the school has forged with its parents and the local community.
- The library facilities, to support personal study, are unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 3 to 7.

Improvement since the previous inspection, in March 1999, has been good overall. There has been good improvement in raising the quality of teaching, behaviour management and the school's procedures for health and safety. There has been very good improvement in the opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of multi-cultural issues. However, in spite of the school's best efforts, the physical accommodation for the school's library remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **very good**. Their attainment on entry to the school in the reception year is average overall. Pupils make very good progress right from the Foundation Stage through to Year 7. Pupils' attitudes are excellent and their behaviour is very good. Punctuality and attendance are very good. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Pupils' English language and literacy skills are well above average across the school. Their competency in mathematics is well above average by Years 2 and 6, and very high in Year 7. Their use of information and communication technology (ICT) is good throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted or talented, achieve very well.

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*	A

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

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

In the 2004 national tests and assessments for Year 2, pupils' attainment was well above average in reading and in the highest 5 per cent nationally in writing and mathematics. Standards in the 2004 Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics were well above average. They were in the highest 5 per cent nationally in science. When compared with the pupils' results at the end of Year 2, attainment was above average in English and mathematics and well above in science.

Inspection judgements are that, by the end of the reception year, children attain well above expected levels overall in all areas of their development. By Year 2, standards of attainment are well above average and expectations, and pupils' achievement is very good, in English, mathematics and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. They are above average, and achievement is good, in all other subjects. By Year 6, attainment is well above average and expectations, and pupils' achievement is very good, in English, mathematics, science, physical education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. They are above national expectations, and achievement is good, in all other subjects. By Year 7, standards meet expectations, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory, in design and technology. Attainment is above expectations, and achievement is good, in ICT, art and design, French, geography, history and music. Standards are well above average and expectations in English, science, physical education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Attainment is very high, with exceptional achievement, in mathematics.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. The curriculum is very good and curriculum enrichment is excellent. The school's resources for learning are very good overall. Arrangements for the pupils' care and welfare, health and safety are excellent, as are the support, advice and guidance provided for them. Partnership links with parents and links with the school's local community are excellent. Educational links with other schools are excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good**. Governance is good overall, with some important strengths in the work and involvement of the governing body. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is very well supported by other staff. The leadership and management of other key staff are very good. Governors challenge and support the school very well. The governing body meets fully all its statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

In discussions with inspectors, and through the questionnaires, pupils express very positive attitudes towards the school and want to do very well. In particular, they talk about their enjoyment in learning. They appreciate the very good working relationships within school. They appreciate the way they are listened to and the opportunities given to become involved fully in the life and work of the school. However, older pupils would like to see improvements in the school's library facilities. Overall, parents are very well satisfied with

the school's provision for their children. This is because their children express real enjoyment in learning. Parents are particularly appreciative of the school's ethos, where every child matters, and the way in which this is firmly rooted in the Catholic faith. Inspectors agree with the views of the pupils and their parents.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- develop further assessment practice in the foundation subjects to sharpen not only targets for pupils, but also reporting to parents as to how their children may improve;
- continue efforts to improve the library facilities for pupils in Years 3 to 7, in support of learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards¹ of attainment are **well above average and national expectations** overall. Pupils' achievement² is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in national tests and standards are well above average.
- Standards and achievement are well ahead of expectations in the Foundation Stage³.
- Pupils make very good progress overall as they move from year to year.
- Pupils with a special educational need are very well supported in their achievements.
- The school uses its performance information well to set challenging targets for its pupils.
- The use of different forms and styles of writing by pupils, across other subjects of the curriculum, is an area for further development.

Commentary

1. This is a school which enables its pupils to make very good progress from reception to the time they leave in Year 7, across the range of National Curriculum subjects. This is because of the school's ethos⁴ and high expectations of its pupils. Therefore, pupils respond through excellent attitudes to lessons, and teaching is very good overall. This results in very good enjoyment in learning. Pupils achieve very well because lesson intentions are clearly explained and shared with them. Pupils understand the criteria for success and consequently they know what to aim for and how to gain their targets.
2. Children enter the school, in the reception class, with overall standards in line with expectations, but their mathematical understanding, personal, social, and speaking skills are above average. Overall, pupils' competency in, and use of, English language and literacy skills is well above average across the school. Pupils' competency in mathematics is well above average by Years 2 and 6, and very high in Year 7. Their competency in, and use of, information and communication technology (ICT) is good, and improving, throughout the school.
3. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in lessons. They work very well towards the individual targets in their individual education plans. They benefit from the very good teaching which they receive and the excellent support provided by the teaching assistants. This ensures lessons are tailored carefully to the pupils' needs and that work is similarly matched to help them succeed. Gifted, talented, or gifted and talented pupils achieve very well and attain very high standards across many subjects. They benefit from very good extended activities, which challenge them to think carefully and achieve success.

¹ Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

² Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

³ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and finishes at the end of the reception class year. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

⁴ In this context 'ethos' refers to the characteristic spirit or attitudes of the school as a community.

4. Overall, since the previous inspection, the school's trend for improvement has been above that seen nationally for pupils by Years 2 and 6. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, either by Years 2 or 6, as pupils overall are well above average when compared with other boys and girls nationally in their age group. The school makes very good use of all the performance data at its disposal, both within the school itself and from the local education authority. Consequently, the school sets itself suitably challenging, but realistic and achievable, targets which it meets well. Nevertheless, as a result of very good self-evaluation, it has identified the performance of pupils in writing, particularly that of boys, as an area for further improvement. Inspectors have identified subjects where additional and alternative strategies to enhance writing work may be employed.

Foundation Stage (Reception Year)

5. Children achieve very well overall in the reception class. This is because they are keen to learn and teachers plan for a wide range of exciting experiences, which meet the pupils' learning needs very well. By the end of the reception year, the children attain well above expected levels overall in the early learning goals⁵ in all areas of their development and are very well prepared for the National Curriculum. Provision is very good in each of the main areas of learning: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; children's knowledge and understanding of the world; their physical development; and in the creative areas of learning.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)

6. In the 2004 national tests and assessments for Year 2 pupils, attainment was well above average in reading and in the highest 5 per cent nationally in writing and mathematics, when compared with all schools nationally. When compared with similar schools⁶, results were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. These standards reflect the way in which the school enables its pupils to continue to make very good progress through Years 1 and 2 and build on the very firm foundations established in the reception year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.5 (17.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	17.5 (16.0)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	18.8 (18.3)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. Overall, standards are well above average, and pupils' achievement is very good, by Year 2. Inspection judgements, based on the work and lessons seen during the inspection, are that standards of attainment are above average and national expectations, and the pupils' achievement is good, by Year 2 in science, ICT, art and

⁵ Early learning goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with the following six areas of learning: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning, for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

⁶ Results are also compared with those obtained by pupils in similar schools; that is those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. They are well above average and expectations, and pupils' achievement is very good, in English, mathematics and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course.

Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6)

8. In 2004, standards of attainment in the Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics were well above average, and for all the core subjects⁷ combined. It was very high, in the highest 5 per cent nationally, in science. When compared with the pupils' results at the end of Year 2, attainment was above average in English and mathematics and well above in science. Standards continued to be well above average overall, reflecting some very good progress by the pupils.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.0 (29.3)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.3 (28.9)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.5 (31.0)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 70 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

9. Overall, standards are well above average, and pupils' achievement is very good, by Year 6. Inspection judgements are that, by Year 6, standards of attainment are above national expectations, and the pupils' achievement is good by Year 6 in ICT, art and design, design and technology overall, French, geography, history and music. They are well above average and expectations, and pupils' achievement is very good, in English, mathematics, science, physical education and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course.

Key Stage 3 (Year 7 only)

10. Overall, standards are well above average, and pupils' achievement is very good, by Year 7. Inspection judgements are that, by Year 7, standards of attainment meet national expectations, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory, in design and technology. Attainment is above expectations, and pupils' achievement is good, in ICT, art and design, French, geography, history and music. Standards are well above average and expectations in English, science, physical education and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Attainment is very high, with exceptional achievement, in mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils develop **excellent** attitudes to learning and their behaviour overall is **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **very good**. The promotion of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning and all aspects of school life.

⁷ The core subjects are English, mathematics and science. Other National Curriculum subjects are known as foundation subjects. These are: art; design and technology; geography; history; information and communication technology; modern foreign languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of a locally agreed syllabus.

- Pupils are encouraged to take greater responsibility as they progress through the school.
- All aspects of school life contribute to the excellent personal development made by pupils.
- Attendance is well above the national average.

Commentary

11. Pupils' attitudes are a strength of the school. Pupils consistently demonstrate exceptionally high levels of commitment to their learning and to all aspects of school life. They enjoy their learning. They are anxious to participate in class discussions and take a very active part in extra-curricular activities and the school's long-standing track record of generosity to a wide range of charities. The success of the school in enabling pupils to develop such exceptional attitudes to learning is summed up in the school's preface to its recent book recording the pupils' work on the Make Poverty History campaign. When describing their pupils, the school writes, "They have taught us that if we step out, they will step out with us. If we risk, they will risk with us. If we are challenged, they will be challenged with us".
12. Commitment to support the national Make Poverty History campaign has brought the entire school community together to raise awareness. Furthermore, it has involved pupils in cross-curricular learning about world poverty. Numeracy and literacy lessons were themed around world poverty issues in a Make Poverty History week and visitors were invited to the school to enrich the curriculum. The drama and dance production by Year 6 and 7 pupils, which involved other pupils, parents and the whole parish in a moving and inspiring event, has left a lasting impression and a desire to make a difference throughout the school. The continuing involvement of pupils in this project has made a major contribution to their personal development.
13. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils consistently meet these expectations and behave very well overall. Behaviour improves as pupils mature and by the time they reach Year 7 behaviour is excellent. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and, as they move up through the school, their willingness to accept greater responsibility is evident through their involvement in daily routines. During the inspection, a wet lunchtime break saw Year 7 pupils take responsibility for supervising the wet-play activities of other year groups. They all took their role very seriously, applying themselves to the task with commitment and care. By the time pupils reach Year 7 they demonstrate considerable maturity, take on a significant level of responsibility throughout the school and act as superb role models for younger pupils. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted or talented, behave very well in lessons and have very positive attitudes to all that the school provides. The children in reception are very happy to come to school, settle in well and work and play together harmoniously.
14. The school gives pupils' personal development a very high priority. The school's curriculum, assemblies, emotional and personal relationship education, and all aspects of school life, contribute very significantly to providing pupils with exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The pupils, who consistently support the school's ethos by demonstrating a desire to give, choose the charities supported by the school. This also contributes significantly to strengthening pupils' personal development, specifically with regard to multicultural education, an area which has been improved considerably since the previous inspection.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003-04

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.3	School data:	0.2
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.

15. Pupils are keen to come to school and want to learn. This is reflected in the school's high attendance figures. Punctuality is very good and what little lateness there is results mainly from local traffic congestion. The school encourages and promotes well the regular attendance of its pupils and has very effective procedures in place to monitor both attendance and punctuality. Exclusions involve only a very small number of pupils, all boys, who have been excluded, for good reason, on a number of occasions. The school provides good support for those pupils who are excluded.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year - 2003-04

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	310	42	0
White – Irish	8	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	2	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	78	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum is very good and curriculum enrichment is excellent. The school's resources for learning are very good overall. Arrangements for the pupils' care and welfare, health and safety are excellent, as are the support, advice and guidance provided for them. Partnership with parents and links with the school's local community are also excellent. Educational links with other schools are excellent.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good** overall across all year groups. The assessment of pupils' work is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school creates an environment where pupils find work exciting and interesting.
- Overall, very good levels of challenge stimulate the pupils' learning well.
- Learning assistants make a major contribution through their support of pupils and teachers.
- The school's ethos, where every child matters, is a lynchpin in the support of pupils' learning.
- Assessment supports learning very well in the core subjects and in the Foundation Stage.
- Assessment linked to improvement targets, and reporting, is not fully established in the National Curriculum foundation subjects.

Commentary

16. The school is very successful in promoting pupils' learning because it has taken to heart the maxim that 'every child matters'. Consequently, it is putting into practice very well those principles through which careful attention is paid to individual pupils' needs, motivation and learning styles. The pupils themselves comment very positively about their enjoyment in learning and the interesting lessons. Teachers have high expectations that their pupils can achieve well and the pupils have similar expectations that they will be able to learn well. There is a very positive learning and teaching partnership at the school. Pupils are both challenged and supported very well. This is because there is a coherent and corporate approach to school improvement. This also involves an overall excellent contribution from support staff. Furthermore, teachers pace lessons well to ensure time at the end to reflect on, review, consider and discuss effectively pupils' work and achievements. This not only values pupils' efforts, but also puts a lesson's activities into context very well for future work and development.
17. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers are skilled at managing pupils' learning and ensure tasks and resources are relevant to the pupils' abilities. Teachers make very good use of the learning support assistants to support and monitor these pupils' work, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs learn very well. Provision for pupils who are gifted or talented is very good. Pupils are identified carefully and their individual needs are met very well in lessons.
18. The school has very good assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science, which provide useful information about pupils' attainment in optional and national tests. This information is shared well with pupils and parents and is used to set targets for future learning. Teachers track test results effectively over time to ensure progress. The school makes very good use of the analysis of test results in English, mathematics and science to identify strengths and areas for improvement in learning. Assessment is very good in the reception classes, where it is used very well to support and develop learning. Here, day-to-day and regular assessment helps teachers very well to plan the next step in learning. Any children having difficulties are quickly identified and supported.
19. The use of assessment in the National Curriculum foundation subjects is satisfactory overall and meets the nationally recommended requirements⁸. However, assessment and recording in the foundation subjects, such as in art and design, design and technology, geography and history, do not consistently show the development of skills progression, particularly for older pupils in Year 7. Nevertheless, ICT is currently piloting a new assessment system, more closely linked to National Curriculum levels, which the school is considering for adoption in the foundation subjects. New and effective assessments in physical education, linked to pupils' 'get up and do' book, encourage pupils to self-assess effectively and set personal targets. Pupils' work is marked regularly and consistently and, when at its best, supports improvement in learning very well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 64 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor	Poor	Very poor
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⁸ These are based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's benchmark information designed to compare end of key stage tests and teachers' assessments with those of similar schools nationally.

				y		
10 (16%)	28 (44%)	22 (34%)	4 (6%)	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.

20. Teaching is very good overall in the Foundation Stage. Excellence was seen particularly in the areas of pupils' social and language development. The staff in the reception classes understand very well how young children grow and learn, and plan very effectively for a curriculum suitable for young children. Consequently, the children are very keen to learn and concentrate very well. They are confident in making their own choices and decisions about their learning.
21. Inspection judgements are that in Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are good in science, ICT, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. They are very good in English, mathematics and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course.
22. Overall, inspection judgements are that in Years 3 to 6, teaching and learning are good in ICT, art, design and technology overall, French, geography, history and music. They are very good in English, mathematics, science, physical education and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course.
23. The inspection judgements are that in Year 7, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in design and technology. They are good in ICT, art, French, geography, history and music. They are very good in English, science, physical education and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Teaching and learning are excellent in mathematics.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good** overall and there is an **excellent** range of opportunities for enrichment. The school's accommodation and resources for learning are **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very wide range of rich activities and excellent varied experiences are offered to all pupils.
- There is an excellent equality of access and opportunity for all pupils.
- There is excellent participation in a very wide range of sporting activities.
- There is an excellent match of support staff to the curriculum.
- The present accommodation for the library is inadequate.
- The accommodation in the specialist music room is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

24. Planning for the curriculum is very good, either related to national strategies or the adopted commercial schemes. All subjects are covered and all statutory requirements are met. This includes the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage, where there is a successful balance between teacher-directed experiences and activities the children choose themselves. This makes for a happy working atmosphere in the reception classes. The provision of modern foreign languages for older pupils is good. Very good use is made of national guidance for literacy and numeracy. Teachers' timetables show that all subjects are given a fair allocation of time. The school's provision for all areas of

the pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. The school prepares its pupils very well for their next stage of education. The ways in which the school enables all groups of pupils to become involved in its life and work are often outstanding.

25. Although no career education lessons were seen in Year 7, planning for this new National Curriculum requirement is satisfactory. However, good links to develop this subject area are being forged with the careers service and there are excellent contacts with secondary schools. The school is developing its links with local businesses and industry very well in order to enable further improvement. Good evidence for such partnership links was seen through design and technology, where a local engineer was involved in a Year 7 project. Art is making a positive contribution through its links with local galleries.
26. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Procedures are in line with the Code of Practice⁹ and pupils' achievements are carefully documented. Pupils are given relevant modified tasks in literacy and numeracy, which meet effectively their needs helping them to achieve very well. Pupils who need support for their social, emotional and behavioural needs are also very well supported. There is an excellent match of support staff to the curriculum. Working closely with teachers, these staff provide excellent support for pupils with special educational needs. This impacts very well on their very good achievements and excellent inclusion in the day-to-day life of the school.
27. An excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is available for all pupils, which supports, in an excellent manner, pupils' learning outside the school day. Involvement in clubs, and in particular sporting activities, is strength of the school. Some pupils help with organising and supporting events. Not only does this make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development but also helps enhance the excellent ethos in the school. There is a very good range of arts, drama and music activities. Music in particular is supported by very large numbers of pupils learning and playing very successfully a wide range of musical instruments.
28. Although accommodation is good overall, a music room has unsuitable heating and ventilation and this adversely affects pupils' learning. The accommodation in the library is unsuitable for older pupils. It does not provide suitable facilities for their independent and collaborative study. This was an issue at the previous inspection. Although the school is doing its best to overcome this problem, it cannot completely do so within the current buildings. Learning resources including the match of teachers to the curriculum are very good overall. The school building is cared for very well. Displays are visually pleasing and used very well to enhance the pupils' learning. There is a very strong team of staff, including visiting specialists, technical, administrative and classroom support staff who play an excellent role in supporting the day-to-day teaching. The very extensive range of parents and visitors to the school enhances the curriculum a great deal through the very wide range of experiences they offer. There has been considerable recent investment in ICT facilities and, as a result, classrooms now have interactive whiteboards which are used very well to enhance teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

⁹ Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare and safety are **excellent**. The school provides **excellent** support, advice and guidance for pupils and the steps taken to involve children in the work and development of the school are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent working relationships between staff and pupils underpin the school's ethos of care.
- Procedures for monitoring personal development are outstanding.
- Pupils know they have a strong voice in shaping their school.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good care.

Commentary

29. The strength of working relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils ensures all pupils feel, happy, secure, valued and cared for well at all times. Staff regularly teach each other's classes for certain lessons and take a wide range of sport and other extra-curricular activities. This ensures pupils are well known to more than just one member of staff. Pupils are very confident there is always an adult on hand to talk to if they have any concerns. Staff demonstrate consistently that they care for all pupils and show genuine interest in pupils' lives both in and out of school. Children and pupils with special educational needs are cared for very well. Special needs assistants attend teachers' planning sessions and produce resources regularly to give very high levels of support to the pupils in their care. They demonstrate clearly that they know pupils exceptionally well and form close bonds which support pupils' learning and development. Very comprehensive induction procedures for children entering the reception year ensure pupils start school with confidence and the secure knowledge that a friendly face will greet them.
30. Procedures to ensure pupils and staff work in a safe and healthy environment are very good. Staff discuss potential hazards consistently with pupils and ensure that lessons such as physical education and design and technology are always conducted with rigorous regard to safety issues. Child protection is given high priority at the school. Regular training is undertaken and procedures are very effective and well communicated to all staff.
31. The school has exceptionally rigorous procedures in place to monitor pupils' personal development. These procedures, and the effective use of assessment of academic progress, ensure pupils consistently receive excellent support, advice and guidance. Pupils are confident in the knowledge that teachers monitor their progress consistently and provide them with a first-rate range of effective strategies to improve their learning.
32. The school has a number of initiatives to ensure pupils have a very good voice in their school. The school council is very effective in ensuring pupils' views are sought regularly by the school, are highly valued and in many instances acted upon. In discussions with inspectors, pupils cite with confidence how their views have been represented at the school council and have led to changes in school practices and procedures. Pupils are highly influential in deciding on which charities to support. The extensive work relating to the national Make Poverty History campaign has its roots in pupil requests to do something positive after seeing a video in a Year 7 geography lesson.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has an **excellent** partnership with parents. Links with the community are also **excellent** and those with other schools and colleges are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works in close partnership with parents to support pupils' learning.
- Exceptional links with the community make a sustained and substantial contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.
- Partnerships with secondary schools ensure a smooth transition for pupils.
- The school's outstanding commitment to charities contributes to very strong links with the wider community and to the pupils' sense of responsibility.
- Reports to parents do not consistently provide effective guidance on how pupils should improve their learning.

Commentary

33. The school works very closely with parents to ensure that their children's learning is central to the partnership. Many parents help at school either by visiting classes regularly to assist teachers or to enrich the curriculum by sharing with pupils the skills and expertise of their professions. Parents receive comprehensive information on curriculum issues and are given very good advice as to how to support their children's learning at home. Parents' workshops on literacy and numeracy ensure parents are fully conversant with how these key elements of the curriculum are taught and can be supported through learning at home. Links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Parents think very highly of the reception classes, value the induction arrangements and are pleased their children are happy to come to school.
34. The school keeps parents very well informed, through regular newsletters, on all aspects of school life, from visits and sporting events to charity updates and aspects of healthy lifestyles. Progress reports to parents provide very detailed information on personal development, what has been studied and what their children can do. However, there is a lack of consistency between year groups in providing pupils and parents with guidance on the next steps pupils need to take in order to improve their learning.
35. The school has a very active and supportive parent-teacher association. In addition to bringing the school and parents together for social events, this association organises work parties to keep the school grounds in pristine condition and ensures effective links with the local parish. Furthermore, it raises funds to support a wide range of subjects, such as through the purchase of musical instruments.
36. Links with the local and wider community make a sustained and significant contribution both to pupils' personal development and to the taught curriculum. The school operates several weeks a year when the normal timetable is suspended and themed weeks are put in place. For example, a recent Hindu week saw Indian dancers, musicians and hand painters come to visit the school. Pupils' learning is significantly enriched by such experiences. The links the school has forged, and the well thought through partnerships, sustain the school's excellent work in ensuring pupils' personal development, particularly in the area of multicultural awareness. Links with local business have provided a very good variety of benefits to the school. This ranges from help with the outdoor environment to involving reception children and Year 7 pupils with a local luxury boat design and manufacturing company, in a design and technology project, to produce a sun canopy for the infant playground. The school has a consistent

record of generosity to a range of charities. These links make an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development and to the school's overall ethos.

37. The school has forged very effective links with its main partner secondary school, to which the majority of pupils go after leaving St. Mary's. Close liaison between teachers and their secondary school counterparts ensures not only a smooth transition but also a seamless curriculum from one school to the other. Year 7 pupils benefit very well from sample lessons in German taught by secondary teachers as well as taster days in English, mathematics and science. Furthermore, pupils attended the local secondary school to share with students, in every year group, their assembly on Make Poverty History. The school and its pupils have subsequently published a major booklet on their work relating to the global action campaign to 'Make Poverty History'.
38. Very significant links with other local schools have been forged, and established, over the years. Excellent examples of such links are seen not only through the work of the school's advanced skills teacher, but also the involvement, through the local education authority's network, of other key teachers at the school. Furthermore, for a time during the last academic year, and because of the outward looking approach of the school, the headteacher was seconded to support another local school in special measures. Such links are providing major opportunities for both teachers and pupils at St. Mary's.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **very good**. Leadership is **very good**, management is **very good** and governance is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has an excellent, and practical, vision for the school's future.
- The senior managers and the staff team are excellent role models.
- There is an excellent commitment to inclusion and equality.
- There are very good self-evaluation procedures and monitoring of pupils' performance.
- The governing body has a good grasp of its responsibilities and influences the work of the school well.
- The school's resources are deployed very well in support of learning.

Commentary

39. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has an excellent vision and sense of purpose. A very good team of staff, who work very hard to ensure the school's success, supports him very ably. This is because staff regularly support each other and give their time freely to the very many exciting extra-curricular opportunities which take place each day. They all strive to help each pupil succeed as well as possible. Senior managers have a very clear view of their own responsibilities and roles, and carry them out diligently. They provide excellent role models for the whole school community and always have time to talk to pupils and help them solve any difficulties. This is reflected in the school's commitment to meeting fully the needs of each individual pupil. This has led to excellent opportunities for inclusion so all pupils have equality of access to the vast range of activities on offer. The Foundation Stage is excellently led and very well managed. The teaching and non-teaching staff work together very well and share very effectively planning and the evaluation of learning. Leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator is very experienced and monitors the provision very carefully.

40. Very good self-evaluation procedures enable the school to understand how well it is performing. Pupils' achievements are monitored diligently and are compared very well with prior performances. This ensures pupils continue to make very good progress. It also enables managers to identify very well the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This process helped to identify the need for a recent focus on whole-school improvements in writing, particularly for boys. Because of the very high quality programmes which have since been established, and the intensive training which staff have undertaken, standards in writing by both boys and girls are rising and are now well above average across the school.
41. Governance of the school is good overall. The governing body is committed fully to its work and has a good grasp of its responsibilities. It has ensured that all statutory requirements are met fully and it influences the work of the school well. Governors are very knowledgeable and have undertaken a wide range of training to improve their skills. They challenge and support the leadership of the school very well. There is a very good steering committee, which monitors standards and analyses results so that governors have a clear view of how well pupils achieve. Governors are very good at holding the school to account through the development planning process, although they are more dependent on the headteacher's vision for the long-term strategic view.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,232,594	Balance from previous year	163,615
Total expenditure	1,289,170	Balance carried forward to the next	107,038
Expenditure per pupil	2,620		

42. Financial management is very good. Finances are monitored carefully and spending decisions are linked closely to the priorities in the school's development plan. The apparently large carry forward into the 2005-06 financial year includes £20,000 prudently allocated for the school's targeted bid for new building works and £15,000 for the further improvement of ICT resources. In addition, there is £7,000 for ongoing repairs and maintenance and £5,000 for the payment of invoices received after the end of the financial year for 2004-05. Day-to-day administration and financial control are very good. The principles of best value are understood and applied very well. The school gives very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage¹⁰ is **very good** and is a strength within the school.

Commentary

43. Provision in the Foundation Stage is managed in two reception classes. Sixty children, most of whom are five years of age, attend on a full-time basis. The children are well settled and very happy to come to school, consequently their attitudes and behaviour are excellent overall. Standards of attainment overall well exceed expectations and the children's achievement is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Children with special educational needs are given excellent and skilful support. Provision in the reception classes makes a very significant contribution not only in establishing the ethos of the school but also in the development of the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
44. The very good provision in the Foundation Stage has been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers understand very well how young children grow and learn and so plan an exciting range of experiences to meet their needs. There is a successful balance between teacher-guided learning and the activities children choose for themselves. This enables teachers not only to plan work specifically for lessons, but also to follow the children's initiative as they explore and experiment freely through structured play.
45. Children start school with average attainment overall, but their mathematical understanding, personal, social and speaking skills are above average. They achieve very well and by the end of the reception year exceed well beyond the early learning goals in all areas of experience. Children capable of working at higher levels do so very well, particularly in reading and writing. This is because of the very good and on occasions excellent teaching and learning.
46. The leadership, management and organisation of the Foundation Stage are excellent. Continuous assessment is spot-on and so any achievement or difficulties are identified very quickly indeed. An imaginative outside play area, which is resourced well, provides for the successful free-flow of learning in and out of doors. Reception and Year 1 pupils have the opportunity to work and play together and this ensures a seamless transfer between the two stages.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are very happy and well settled.

¹⁰ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and finishes at the end of the reception class year. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

- Working relationships with adults and children are first-rate.
- Children are confident and enabled to make choices and decisions about their learning.

Commentary

47. Teaching, learning and achievement are excellent, and so the children exceed far above the expectations of the early learning goals by the end of the reception class. This is because the teaching and non-teaching staff provide a very happy and settled start to school life, which is much appreciated by parents. Teachers know the children very well and quickly spot and monitor any difficulties. The provision for children with special educational needs is a strength, with skilful support ensuring individual needs are met. The children behave very well and develop a growing sense of right and wrong. They are kind to each other, volunteering to ‘take care’ of children who have fallen over at playtime and sharing and taking turns on the large outdoor toys. Teachers listen to and value the children’s contributions. Consequently, children gain very well in confidence, make decisions and try out new ideas. They have exceptionally good levels of interest, concentrate on their own play and sustain involvement very well. For instance, in role-play activities in the ‘café’, not only do they work very harmoniously in a group, but also select and use resources independently.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in speaking and listening is very high.
- The children make very good progress with their reading and writing.
- There is very effective teaching and learning in teacher-guided and structured play.

Commentary

48. Teaching and learning are of a very high quality. These support consistently very good and therefore overall excellent achievement, particularly in reading and writing. The children progress from average skills and understanding when they start at the school to levels which exceed very well the expected standards by the end of the reception class. A successful focus on reading and writing in teacher-guided activities provides very effective links with the spoken and written word and excellent challenge for all levels of ability. Children write for a range of different purposes. They enjoy sequencing the story of ‘*Mrs Wishy Washy*’, develop good pencil control and learn how to write their own sentences and stories. They experiment very well with their early writing skills in role-play experiences in the café by writing menus or in the doctor’s surgery by letters to sick patients. Progress with reading is very good. The children turn readily to books for enjoyment and have a good knowledge of letters and their sounds. A significant number read simple stories with understanding. The children are very good listeners and confident, enthusiastic speakers with keenness to ask and answer questions. The reception team makes very good use of assessment to track achievement and guide future learning in language and literacy.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of a wide range of mathematical experiences.
- The children develop very good number skills.
- There is a clear focus on developing mathematical knowledge through play experiences.

Commentary

49. Teaching and learning are very good. Children in the current reception classes are on course to well exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage and their achievement is very good. The children successfully count and recognise numbers to 10 and beyond. They begin to relate addition with combining two groups of numbers and subtraction to 'taking away'. For instance, when playing dice games and producing their own 'sums', such as $5+6=11$. The children learn effectively how to form their numbers correctly and to count, order and find the missing number to 10 and above. They explore number and shape in a most practical way and recognise and use basic shapes and alternating patterns in work in art and with construction toys. Practical experiences, such as planting sunflowers and experimenting through water play, successfully develop mathematical language such as 'taller than' and 'shorter than', 'full' and 'empty'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are clearly based on enabling first-hand experiences for the children.
- Very good teaching encourages observation and exploration.

Commentary

50. Teaching and learning are very good and enhanced by the well managed free-flow of learning experiences in and out of doors. The children are on course to well exceed the expected standards by the end of the reception year and their achievement is very good. Children choose to explore through water play and begin to classify reflectively animals which live in and out of the water. Others explore effectively the properties of sand and discover that wet sand 'holds together' better than dry. The children learn about living things and are very enthusiastic about monitoring the growth of their sunflower plants. The whole-school focus on action against poverty widens the children's knowledge of other cultures and the plight of children less fortunate than themselves very well. The children's skills with the computer and programmed toys develop well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for physical development is focused well both in and out of doors.
- Physical skills are planned and developed very well.
- The children work confidently in lessons.

Commentary

51. Teaching and learning are very good and the children are on course to exceed well the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The children achieve very well, and develop skills progressively, because lessons are well managed. In outdoor experiences the children move and work confidently with each other. They guide and pedal wheeled toys and develop increasing control when rolling, throwing and catching objects. Their very good behaviour and listening skills promote learning very well in lessons in the hall. The children respond quickly to commands and are aware of health and safety issues when exploring large apparatus, including rope ladders. They travel around, over and through balancing and climbing equipment. For example, a small group enjoyed recreating the movements of a favourite action song as they 'glide like swans' and 'slide like worms'. In everyday lessons, a range of experiences with cutting, gluing and sticking ensures the development of greater dexterity with finer physical skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The impressive way in which all children are enabled to develop their creative skills.
- The display of children's work helps create an imaginative environment for learning.
- Children are enabled to develop their sense of wonder very well.

Commentary

52. Teaching and learning are very good and so the children achieve very well and exceed the expected standards for children in the Foundation Stage. Opportunities for the children to create imaginatively in role-play are planned and resourced well. Children experiment very effectively with a wide range of materials and take pride in the lively displays of their work. A small group engrossed in bubble printing made well-considered predictions about whether the bubbles would dry out on the paper. Music making is fun. All children have the opportunity to play an instrument and have the ability to keep a steady beat as they join in tunefully with favourite songs.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 (Years 1 and 2), 2 (Years 3 to 6) and 3 (Year 7)

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in English, resulting in standards which are well above average.
- Very skilled teaching ensures pupils make very good progress in all aspects of English.
- There is excellent support from teaching assistants for pupils with special educational needs.
- Excellent inclusion means all the pupils in the school have equal opportunities in English.
- There are excellent procedures to monitor and analyse how well pupils achieve.

Commentary

53. Standards in English are well above average overall and the pupils' achievement is very good. In 2004, the national tests showed that pupils' standards in Years 2 and 6 were well above average in reading and writing and were above those found in similar schools. Inspection evidence concurs with these findings, showing that standards have been maintained since 2004 and remain well above average. Standards in Year 7 are well above expectations.
54. Very good achievement, in all year groups, results in the high standards observed. Standards in speaking and listening are well above average and pupils across the school achieve very well. In Years 1 and 2, pupils talk confidently to the class about their work. They show very good awareness of the rules of conversation and take turns very well. They are helped by the very good use of the 'talking buddy' strategy which enables them to have consistent practice in speaking and listening. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils are challenged well in class to present their work aloud to others. Very good questioning by teachers means that pupils' thinking skills are constantly extended, promoting very good attention, concentration, listening and responding. Pupils' use of vocabulary is imaginative and varied. For example, in Year 4, pupils were very polite and responsive as they discussed advertisements for different products. They shared their ideas readily in small groups, making very good progress in speaking and listening and using very diverse vocabulary. The oldest pupils in Year 7 are confident, polite communicators. They were engrossed in their poetry lesson, discussing issues of racism, fairness and empathy, showing very good knowledge of the historical aspects of the black Americans' fight for equality. The pupils offered opinions freely, which showed very mature language skills.
55. Pupils' reading skills are of a very high standard. This is because of the very good provision for reading in each class. The consistent approaches to ensuring an early awareness of word sounds in the youngest classes help pupils to develop a very good starting point for reading. This is continued through very good opportunities to read on a daily basis so that, by the time pupils reach Year 2, they attain standards well above average. Pupils enjoy books and take them home regularly to share with parents and carers. Throughout Years 3 to 6 pupils are encouraged to develop their reading skills through very good, guided reading sessions and by using books to gather information about their work. They explore vocabulary daily, so they are constantly learning new words. Year 7 pupils attain standards which are well above those expected in reading. They are confident, fluent readers, reading with expression and feeling. Pupils of all abilities have very good access to reading books which are suitable for their needs.
56. Writing skills are a current focus for development. Many very good strategies have been introduced to extend pupils' abilities and develop the content of their writing. For example, in Years 1 and 2, very good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to enable pupils to move words around and create a compound word from two other words. Pupils showed very good writing styles as they made their own lists of rhyming words and wrote simple limericks. The very good input led to high standards in writing. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 attain standards well above average in writing. They use dictionaries and thesauruses very well to improve their contributions and they write for a very wide range of purposes. In Year 5, for example, pupils used drama to empathise with characters. This strategy was very successful in promoting thinking skills, which resulted in high quality diary writing with a very varied and evocative vocabulary and neat fluent style. Year 7 pupils achieve very well in writing and their skills are well above expected levels. There are many very good examples of pupils' written

responses to poems, current affairs and texts. In their written responses to the poem '*Song for a Dark Girl*', pupils showed they were able to select the essential features and convey what they perceived as the poet's pain and trauma.

57. The quality of teaching in English is very good and there are many excellent features which help to promote the very good learning. Teachers plan lessons very well and provide very good resources and texts to stimulate interest and raise standards. Questioning is a key feature of many lessons, helping to improve all aspects of English. This was exemplified in a Year 1 guided reading session, where very good questioning helped to extend pupils' understanding of the text '*Mrs Mog's Cat*', and led to very good progress in reading. The use of teaching assistants, particularly to guide pupils with special educational needs, is very good. This results in excellent support in literacy lessons for this group of pupils and ensures they achieve very well. These pupils are included fully in lessons due to some high quality differentiation of tasks. Consequently, inclusion in English is excellent, helping to raise self-esteem, confidence and standards.
58. Leadership and management of English are very good. The subject leader is very skilled in the subject and monitors provision very carefully. This has resulted in some excellent analysis of standards, which has helped to identify key strengths and areas for development. The accommodation for English is satisfactory, but it is affected by the unsatisfactory library, which does not play as important a part in provision as it should. This is due to its situation in the school, the lack of space and facilities. Consequently, older pupils, in particular, rarely use it and it does not contribute well enough to their achievements. Standards and achievement have been successfully maintained since the previous inspection and improvement has been satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Literacy skills are used well in other subjects. By Year 7, pupils use diaries well in geography to write about a virtual cycle ride, achieving above average standards in writing. In science, pupils in Year 6 use writing well, for example in describing an experiment concerning the absorbent qualities of a kitchen roll. In Year 7 science, very purposeful learning took place as pupils made a leaflet about risks during pregnancy. However, the amount of extended writing in humanities overall is not as sufficient, particularly for the highest attainers.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve standards above those expected because of good teaching.
- The practical approaches to learning are a major strength.
- The good curriculum is enriched by the very good annual visits to France.
- On occasions, the highest attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged.

Commentary

60. Standards in French are above those expected of pupils by the end of Year 6 and in Year 7. Pupils achieve well in the subject and enjoy the experiences which are provided for them. Younger pupils in Year 5 learn to count fluently and talk confidently about

themselves using a suitable range of vocabulary. They achieved very high standards in their French lesson as they talked about the fruit they liked best. By Year 6, they extend their language skills through good, focused practical tasks in which they learn about the French culture and way of life. They successfully answer simple questions about themselves and their school lives, using good vocabulary and with good accents.

61. By Year 7, pupils are fluent in a range of contexts. They answer the register in French, ask and answer questions about given themes and write to French pen friends. They benefit from the good expertise of the teaching and gain in confidence. Teachers work hard to provide resources which engage pupils and encourage them to try out new words. However, just occasionally, there are not enough tasks to extend the more able speakers.
62. Teaching and learning in French are good. Teachers have good skills in the subject and make very good use of a range of practical experiences to promote pupils' learning well. For example, Year 7 pupils were practising buying objects in euros from a French café, set up in the classroom, and achieved well as they asked for items and worked out the cost. Excellent teaching was seen in Year 5, where pupils were able to choose their favourite fruits and undertake a survey in French.
63. Leadership and management of French are good. There is a clear scheme to guide practice and a good overall view of the provision. Assessment procedures are effective and the good links with the secondary school ensure continuity in learning. The French curriculum is enriched by the very good links with a French school and the annual trips by Year 7. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about the forthcoming visit and showed they had good awareness of life in a French school, highlighting differences with their own daily lives. The good quality of pupils' learning and progress has been maintained since the previous inspection and improvement has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Supported by very good teaching, pupils achieve very well as they progress through the school.
- By the end of Year 7 standards and achievements are very high.
- There is a very good coverage of the entire National Curriculum in mathematics.
- Teachers and support staff show an excellent command of the subject.
- The recording of the progress of individual pupils against the weekly plans is under-developed.

Commentary

64. Attainment in mathematics is well above average overall and pupils' achievement is very good. In the 2004 national tests and teacher assessments, standards by Year 2 were well above average, in the highest 5 per cent when compared with all schools nationally and with similar schools. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress and respond very well to the increasing complexity of the subject. Consequently, in the Year 6 national tests in 2004, standards remained well above average. Inspection judgements are that standards are high and achievement very good by Years 2 and 6. Before they leave the school at the end of Year 7, pupils

progress even further, attaining very high standards and achieving exceptionally well. Similarly, pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. This is because they receive very good support from their teachers and excellent help from learning support assistants.

65. Across all year groups, very effective use is made of the wide range of the mathematical opportunities. Consequently, the pupils develop very secure skills in using different methods of calculation. Pupils across the school are always prepared to respond to a challenge. From a young age the majority show a great deal of enthusiasm for using their number skills in calculations of an increasing complexity, allied to the wide range of mathematical problems they are given to solve. Their attitude to their work in mathematics is very good. Samples of work and lessons seen show there is a very good coverage of all aspects of the subject. Pupils enjoy investigating mathematical situations and solving problems with shape and measurement. They interpret very well data, reading with high levels of accuracy a wide range of graphical presentations which they have prepared.
66. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are very good in Years 1 to 6 and excellent in Year 7. This high quality teaching is reflected very well in the very high standards the pupils achieve. Across the school, all teachers show an excellent command of the subject and there is an excellent promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils. Overall, assessment is very good. In particular, there are strengths in the use of assessment to record the skills the pupils acquire over time and the sharing of standards and targets with them. Lesson planning is very good. Work is underpinned very well with a well-detailed weekly plan. However, in most classes this plan does not provide sufficiently well for teachers to make notes and evaluations at the end of each lesson in order to influence the following lesson. Support staff record very well on a daily basis the progress of the pupils they are supporting. Teachers give very good explanations and there is a high level of involvement and challenge to the pupils through progressively developed questioning. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards, although some teachers are not yet secure enough to involve pupils in their use.
67. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is an excellent clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations by all staff. Information on pupils' performance and progress is reviewed regularly, analysed and the necessary action taken. The accommodation and resources provided for the subject are very good. The scheme of work devised for Year 7 pupils has been adopted by the local secondary school. This, through the very good links made with the school, supports well the continuity of study for pupils as they progress in their secondary education. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because standards and the quality of teaching and learning have improved overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Pupils have very good numeracy skills. In lessons, they use these skills effectively to support their work in other areas. Consequently, the use of mathematics is very good for pupils up to the end of Year 6 and is excellent in Year 7. Data is used well and effectively, for example to produce graphs in science. Such use is also well supported in ICT because of the good range of ICT software available for pupils to use. Pupils calculate monetary values well, using euros, in French. Their mathematical skills are also applied well in geography, when using map references.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make very good use of practical work in science to help pupils learn well.
- In Years 5 to 7, pupils tackle investigations confidently and in a scientific manner.
- Pupils have a good understanding of a good range of scientific knowledge.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use different forms of writing in science.

Commentary

69. Standards are above average overall. By Years 6 and 7, attainment in science is well above average. This reflects the results in the Year 6 national tests in science in 2004, which were in the highest 5 per cent nationally. Pupils capable of reaching the highest levels are now doing so and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment by Year 2 are above average. This is lower than the 2004 teacher assessments, which were well above average, but similar to present teacher judgements for the current year group. Fewer pupils are expected to reach the higher Level 3 this year.
70. Achievement in science is very good overall. It is very good by Years 6 and 7 because the subject leader has considerable expertise and has focused teaching and learning around practical experiences and investigations. Pupils tackle their work confidently and are beginning to think like scientists. Very good and occasionally excellent teaching provides high expectations and challenge for pupils of all abilities. Achievement is good overall by Year 2. This is because, at times, average and higher attaining pupils undertake the same level of work and marking does not always show pupils how to improve. Nevertheless, in Year 1, very good achievement is evident in the depth of the pupils' study of plants and animals and in their developing understanding of magnetism.
71. Throughout the school, successful efforts to provide investigations in class and to improve scientific enquiry are driving up standards. This is particularly evident in lessons in Year 1 and Years 5 to 7. Older pupils pose scientific questions, such as, "Which washing up liquid performs the best?". They gain a very good grasp of how scientists carry out investigations, consider what needs to be controlled and measured, and predict and evaluate their findings well. Open-ended tasks enable higher attaining pupils to experiment freely and to attain the highest levels. Skilful adult support also ensures less confident learners have help to enable them to succeed. In an excellent lesson in Year 7, pupils responded in a mature way to a topic on reproduction and accessed the Internet effectively to widen their knowledge and understanding of the benefits of painkillers during childbirth.
72. Overall, teaching and learning are very good in Years 3 to 7. Teachers encourage and engage their pupils very well and help them to think for themselves. In Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are good with some very good aspects. Learning is fun and so pupils work productively. In all year groups, the scrutiny of pupils' written work shows a very good understanding of a range of scientific knowledge. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use different forms of writing to communicate this learning. Providing the same level of worksheet for average and higher attaining pupils sometimes sets a ceiling to achievement. Nevertheless, teachers ensure data is used well in science lessons and presented clearly in graphs and bar charts.

73. Leadership and management in science are very good. The subject leader has a very clear vision for the subject and gives a positive lead to colleagues. A well thought out action plan provides a pathway for improvement, with the monitoring of teaching and learning throughout the school being highlighted. Information from test results is used well to track pupils' progress. The development of portfolios of pupils' work is not, as yet, in place to provide further guidance for teachers in their assessment of work, particularly against National Curriculum levels, in science. Improvement since the previous inspection, particularly the attainment of higher ability pupils, has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned lessons and interesting activities result in very good levels of pupils' motivation.
- The recording of pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels, in order to set targets for improvement, is an under-developed element of the otherwise good assessment procedures.
- Very good leadership ensures standards and achievement are being raised.
- Very good management is underpinning whole-school initiatives for further improvement.
- The use by older pupils of the classroom facilities for ICT is under-developed.
- Support staff make a very significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning.

Commentary

74. Standards are above national expectations by the end of Years 2, 6 and 7. Standards, and pupils' achievement, are rising not only as a result of the school's well-considered investments in resources for ICT, but also as a result of the willingness of staff to improve their professional expertise in the subject. Overall, levels of attainment have shown good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils make good, secure progress as they move through the school and consequently overall achievement is good in all year groups. Pupils' attitudes to the subject, and their enthusiasm to be involved in the use of ICT, are very good. Their achievements and progress are enhanced very well through their co-operation and support for each other in lessons, particularly when working in the computer suites. Very good elements of learning were seen in lessons because of pupils' willingness to experiment with software and their confidence in the use of ICT. Furthermore, basic computer skills are being developed well for the younger pupils and reinforced securely for older pupils.
75. Teaching is good overall across all year groups. This is because lessons are planned and organised very well by both teachers and support assistants. Therefore, pupils understand well the objectives for lessons and what it is they are aiming to achieve by the end of a session. Consequently, learning is good overall in all year groups. Where teaching and learning are very good, questioning by teachers and assistants is focused very effectively on helping pupils to think through, and solve, ICT problems. Their quality of learning is enabling them to develop their computer operating skills well in order to meet ICT demands in a modern world. By Year 7, pupils are well prepared for the requirements of the National Curriculum at secondary level. ICT work is assessed well overall in order to provide individual targets for pupils' improvement. Discussions

with pupils show they know well what it is they must do to improve. Nevertheless, particularly with older pupils in Year 7, assessment is not related specifically enough to the required National Curriculum levels. However, the ICT subject leader is currently developing the use of a program which will enable teachers to take this next step in the further development of their use of assessment to support learning.

76. Leadership is very good because, both formally and informally, the subject leader provides high quality advice and guidance for other staff, which supports them very well in their work and planning. Consequently, a very good curriculum for ICT has been established securely and this is now contributing significantly to the raising of standards and pupils' achievement. Management is very good because of the high quality of the subject leader's planning for, and monitoring of, the subject. Furthermore, the leadership and management of the school's development project to enable 'E-confident pupils and staff' are of high quality. The management of ICT is enhanced further through the excellent work, support and skills of the school's ICT technician. Improvement since the previous inspection, when the school was criticised for the lack of effective use of ICT, has been very good. The consistent nature of the good and very good elements identified within the subject, and the very good resources for ICT, make a significant contribution to the overall very good provision offered for the pupils.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. The use of ICT to enhance and support pupils' learning is good across the school. Pupils' standards in ICT, when applied within other subjects, are above expectations. This is because the school has invested well in ICT equipment, software and training for its staff. The two ICT suites are used regularly each week by all classes and the activities undertaken are planned for well across a range of subjects. Teachers all have laptops, which are linked to interactive whiteboards or 'smart-boards'. Pupils in Reception and in Years 1 and 2 use these well and confidently, both individually and in pairs. However, although the laptop-linked smart-boards are used well by teachers of Years 3 to 7, their regular use by pupils remains under-developed. Overall, ICT is an area which continues to be a key focus of the school's development planning and is poised very well for further improvement.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An interesting and stimulating curriculum is provided for the subject.
- Pupils respond very well to the challenges offered by the subject and have very positive attitudes towards their work.
- Teaching is focused well on the development of the pupils' key skills as historians.
- Reports in Year 7 are not linked sharply enough to specific targets for improvement.
- The support of literacy through the use of different styles of writing is not yet developed fully.
- The supportive leadership of history contributes well to the development of humanities subjects.

Commentary

78. By the end of Years 2, 6 and 7, standards are above nationally expected levels. Pupils' achievement is good overall across all year groups. By Year 7, key historical skills have been developed well and pupils apply their creative imagination well in their work. This was reflected well in pupils' accounts of the life of a mediaeval knight. In the work scrutiny, there were some very good evaluations comparing the qualities of the first King Richard and King John. By Year 6, pupils' critical and evaluative skills are well developed. This enables them to look for and explain effectively the reasons for historical events and change. Pupils' summaries, and the notes they make on worksheets, provide a good overall record of their work and a useful basis for revision. However, the scrutiny of work shows limited opportunities, by Year 6, to develop different styles of writing in support of the pupils' literacy development. By Year 2, pupils are well focused in thinking historically and posing searching questions. In a good Year 2 lesson about holidays in the past, pupils worked well in groups, gleaning evidence from historical photographs of seaside resorts.
79. Teaching and learning are good overall in all year groups. In a very good lesson in Year 3, thoughtful planning and very effective questioning ensured a good pace to the lesson. There was very good challenge for all groups of pupils in the exploration of historical sources about Queen Boudicca. Through such work pupils are developing well as historians, particularly, for example, their awareness of potentially biased views concerning people and events in history. Learning is supported well by overall good assessment which effectively meets requirements up to Year 6. However, assessments in Year 7 are not linked securely enough to National Curriculum levels, as would be expected at the secondary stage. Consequently, targeting in reports to parents is not sharp enough. Nevertheless, discussions with pupils show they do have a good understanding of what they must do to improve. History assessment tasks in Year 6 provide good, in-depth opportunities for pupils to give reasons for their observations, for example relating to moral, cultural and social factors such as Henry VIII's marriages and life at the Court.
80. The subject leader for history was unavoidably absent, through illness, during the inspection. However, the subject leader for geography was supporting the humanities subjects well, on a temporary basis. Discussions show that the subject is being led and managed well. There are clearly good, productive, supportive working relationships between history and geography as humanities subjects. Consequently, there is a clear vision for the development of history within the school. Pupils are encouraged very well to become involved with the subject. The curriculum is good and supported well through trips and visits, such as to Corfe Castle. Display is good and celebrates pupils' achievements well. However, the subject does not maintain any assessed portfolio of pupils' work to provide a benchmark of standards for teachers or as an example for future pupils. There is good evidence of work in co-operation with other subjects, such as a contribution to literacy with Shakespeare-related work by pupils on the subject of the Princes in the Tower. Improvement overall since the previous inspection has been good, particularly in enabling the sustained concentration of pupils on their work.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils become self-motivated to achieve because learning is made interesting and challenging.
- Teaching is focused well on the development of the pupils' key skills as geographers.

- Leadership of the geography curriculum is good and enabling of pupils' achievement.
- The effective management of the subject is focused well on planning for improvement.
- Reports are not linked sharply enough, through assessment, to specific targets for improvement.
- The support of literacy through the use of different forms of writing is not yet fully developed.

Commentary

81. Standards of attainment are above national expectations by the end of Years 2, 6 and 7. Achievement is good in all year groups. The school's curriculum for geography is good and this plays an effective role in enabling pupils to make good progress, and reinforce learning, as they move through the school. By Year 7, pupils show above average understanding of geographical patterns and physical processes, and environmental issues are maturely and responsibly considered. In an effective lesson on sustainable development, pupils were also being prepared well for a visit, the following week, to France and the Cherbourg peninsula. In a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils were not only using Ordnance Survey maps very well to identify features of a river landscape, but were also making good deductions, as geographers, about the information gleaned. Pupils' work in Years 1 and 2 shows a good understanding of location and an above average awareness of the local environment.
82. Teaching is good overall across the year groups. This was illustrated well by the very good levels of challenge being offered to Year 4 pupils in a lesson comparing life in an Indian village with that of Poole. This contributed significantly to the pupils' awareness and understanding of the lives and characteristics of people from another culture. In all lessons seen, there was a fast pace to learning because pupils were self-motivated. Informed and knowledgeable teaching underpins well the pupils' confidence in learning. Learning is therefore good in each year group because it is made relevant at each stage of the pupils' development. Overall, pupils show very good attitudes towards the subject because the teaching makes lessons interesting.
83. Assessment for the support of learning is good overall. The information is used well in teachers' planning and to help develop effectively the next stage in pupils' learning. However, reports on pupils for parents are not sharp enough in their identification of targets for improvement. This is because assessments are not yet linked securely enough to National Curriculum levels, particularly in Year 7. However, the school has recently taken advice on the development of assessment tasks for pupils in the subject. Nevertheless, although assessment tasks, as for those in Year 6, are good in evaluating pupils' understanding of the subject, they do not yet focus sufficiently well on written explanations or evaluations. Furthermore, there are limited opportunities, across the year groups, to develop different forms of writing in support of the pupils' wider literacy development.
84. The subject is led well. The subject leader, although relatively new to the post, and to teaching, is thoroughly professional in approach. However, there has been as yet little time for the monitoring of learning and teaching across all year groups. Nevertheless, the subject leader is very keen to learn and secure further improvements in the pupils' achievements. The subject has developed a positive and encouraging profile around the school, but geography has yet to collect an assessed portfolio of pupils' work to provide examples of standards for teachers and as an example of the pupils' achievements. Management is good because initiative is encouraged and there is a clear focus on raising standards further. There is good reflection on what has been

achieved and how development planning can secure the further enhancement of pupils' learning. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good, particularly in respect of opportunities to study non-European cultures.

Religious education

85. Because St. Mary's Catholic Combined School is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school, the inspection of religious education and collective worship is carried out under Section 23 of the Schools Inspections Act 1996 (Denominational Education) by the inspector approved by the Diocese and appointed by the governing body. The Diocese therefore publishes a separate report for parents on these elements of the children's and pupils' education.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of key artwork skills underpins well the pupils' good achievement.
- The curriculum for art is stimulating and designed very well to challenge pupils effectively.
- The very good leadership of art has led to high levels of enthusiasm for the subject.
- The management of the subject is determined, thoroughly professional and highly focused.
- The development of evaluative writing within the subject has yet to be fully developed.
- The recording of pupils' attainment against National Curriculum criteria is an under-developed element of the subject's otherwise effective assessment procedures.

Commentary

86. The attainment of pupils is above national expectations overall by the end of Years 2, 6 and 7 and is improving. Achievement is good overall and sometimes very good. This is because the pupils are offered high levels of challenge in their work at the same time as being well supported to enable them to make good progress from year to year. In a good Year 7 lesson, with a focus on 'camouflage', pupils were being prepared well to undertake block and screen-prints for a bandana. Discussion with pupils showed good background research into visual effects from the natural world. This was being applied creatively in the pupils' choice and use of colour, not only for realism but also for a striking, fashion-related impact. Other work in Years 6 and 7 in the exploration of sculptural forms showed a good understanding of, and ability to manipulate, media such as clay. By Year 2, pupils are showing good skills in their observational work and in their explorations of materials and textures. This was seen in some very good group collage work, based on enlargements of observational work on flowers.
87. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Where learning is very good, this is because the background preparation by teachers enables the pupils to concentrate on the development of key artwork skills. Therefore, pupils have scope to apply their experience and techniques to very good effect. Furthermore, a good emphasis on the use of correct technical and artistic terms makes an effective contribution to the pupils' literacy development. Consequently, pupils across the school have very good attitudes towards the subject and their behaviour in art classes is

sensible and mature. Often high levels of excitement in learning help very well to stimulate not only pupils' creative imagination, but also their ambition to do well. The subject therefore plays an important and supportive role in developing pupils' self-esteem and thus contributes very well to the ethos of the school.

88. Assessment in the subject is good overall. Pupils are involved actively in the positive, critical assessment of their work, particularly at the end of lessons. The subject leader is gradually building up a very useful portfolio of pupils' work, which is used to provide examples in lessons. This portfolio contains some examples of individual pupils' work which are far above expected standards and represent some outstanding achievement. This work illustrates some excellent, specialist teaching and consequent learning for the pupils concerned. However, this portfolio has yet to be completed, moderated and related to National Curriculum levels, particularly for the older pupils. Nevertheless, this development is reflected well in the subject leader's thinking and planning for improvement. Furthermore, additional work is in hand to extend support for literacy through written, as well as oral, critical self-evaluation of their work by the pupils.
89. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader is a trained sculptor and brings a very high level of professional expertise, which is used very effectively to support other staff. Furthermore, there are very good opportunities for curriculum enhancement. Contacts with local artists and galleries enable some very exciting opportunities for pupils to which they respond with great enthusiasm and imagination. Consequently, artwork is used well throughout the school in support of other subjects. The management of art and design is very good. The subject leader is confident, perceptive, observant, and overall curriculum planning is very good. There are very high levels of ambition for the pupils' success, which are reflected well in their achievements. There is very good attention paid to the health and safety of pupils in their practical work. The consistent and improving nature of the good and very good elements within art contribute securely to the overall very good provision for the pupils in the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good overall, particularly regarding pupils' opportunities to develop their key technical skills and in the references to major artists when exploring their creative ideas.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy their learning in the subject and show very good attitudes towards their work.
- Teachers' command of the secondary curriculum is not as strong as that for the primary years.
- The support from teaching assistants helps all groups of pupils to be involved well in learning.
- Lack of opportunity for critical analysis adversely affects the achievement of some older pupils.
- The leadership of the subject is good and staff have high aspirations for the pupils.
- The subject leader has insufficient time to help develop other teachers' specialist knowledge.

Commentary

90. Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good overall by Years 2 and 6. In an excellent Year 3 lesson, pupils were very successful not only in following up previous learning, but also made well above expected progress in their experiments with pneumatic systems. However, in Year 7 standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. This is because older pupils in Year 7, and sometimes in Year 6, are given insufficient opportunities to evaluate the processes for the products they are using. However, some above average work, involving initial design through the use of planning sheets, was seen in Years 6 and 7. This is preparing pupils well for an important element of the secondary design and technology curriculum. Across the school, pupils show very good attitudes to their work and there is a very good equality of opportunity for all.
91. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching and learning are consistently good up to the end of Year 5. In the best lessons seen, there was very good use of time. Learning through discovery was exciting because of the high expectations and challenge offered through the work planned for the pupils. Learning assistants also provide very good support for the pupils through their in-depth questioning of the pupils about their work. Teaching and learning remain good overall by Year 6 but are satisfactory in Year 7. This is because teachers and support staff do not show as much specialist knowledge or expertise in the secondary, as opposed to primary, curriculum demands of the subject. Consequently, there is too much emphasis on the making of the product at too early a stage. Nevertheless, good emphasis is given to the finish of a product and there are some common elements in the Year 6 and 7 curriculum which challenge the pupils well. However, there is insufficient focus relating to on-going evaluation and therefore pupils do not spend enough time identifying possible improvements. The procedures for and the use of assessment are satisfactory. However, sometimes opportunities are not exploited sufficiently well to explain to the pupils, particularly in Years 6 and 7, the levels they are achieving and what they can do to improve.
92. The leadership of the subject is good. The subject leader has a good understanding as to how the subject should be taught and there is a good sense of purpose for the further development of design and technology. However, management is satisfactory overall because there is insufficient time to monitor and evaluate teaching across the school in order to discern the uneven practice which exists in the older year groups and how it may be improved. Teaching the subject alongside art and design is causing confusion for some staff, particularly in respect of the specialist differences in design associated with the two subjects by Year 7. Overall, the accommodation and resources are good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There have been good improvements in teaching and in challenge for pupils through an improved curriculum. All health and safety issues have been resolved effectively.

Music

Provision in music is **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well when taught by the specialist music teacher.
- Standards are above those expected across the school due to the good range of teaching and learning activities.
- The music room is unsatisfactory.
- The number of pupils learning to play an instrument is very high and is a major strength.

- Enrichment through clubs provides excellent opportunities for pupils to make and enjoy music.

Commentary

93. In the work and lessons seen during the inspection, pupils achieve well in music lessons, leading to above nationally expected standards of attainment, and good achievement, by the end of Years 2, 6 and 7. Pupils achieve very well and attain standards well above those expected when taught by the specialist music teacher. This was exemplified in a Year 7 lesson where pupils made very good gains in composition and notation of a cyclic pattern, using African drums, because of the excellent expertise of the teacher. Pupils' attitudes to music are very good overall.
94. Pupils in Year 2 sing in tune and keep time well to music. They have a good sense of melody and expression. They enjoy their singing and benefit from good teaching. In Year 5 pupils were able to explain how sounds vibrate. They successfully recorded the rhythm of a piece of music and showed good understanding of pulse and metre. However, achievement was hindered by the unsatisfactory music room accommodation. This is too hot in summer and has no access to fresh air. As a result, during the inspection, many pupils found it too hot to sing or make music effectively and this led to some minor disruptions in learning. However, Year 7 pupils achieved very well as they worked in small groups to compose a pattern using bells and African drums and then performed it very well to the rest of the class.
95. Much of the specialist music teaching is timetabled towards the end of the school week and therefore took place after the inspection had finished. However, it was evident to inspectors, from listening to practices and rehearsals during the time they were in school, that music makes a very important contribution to the ethos of the school. Music clearly has a high profile in school life. Other evidence provided by the school, for example results in public tests and instrumental examinations, shows high levels of attainment and achievement for a wide range of pupils. Higher than average numbers of pupils are involved in school bands, groups and are involved with Dorset schools' orchestras. Such aspects of the school's musical life contribute significantly to the very good provision for the subject.
96. The quality of teaching and learning in music has many very good and some excellent features. Excellent teaching was seen in Year 7. In lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were good overall. The teachers work hard to keep pupils focused in some unsatisfactory working conditions in the music room. They use good warm-up activities and ensure that pupils of all abilities are included fully in lessons. The good scheme of work ensures that they plan progressive activities for pupils as they move through the school.
97. Many teachers at the school play an instrument and provide high quality role models for the very high number of pupils who are learning to play. Over 150 pupils undertake peripatetic musical tuition and have a mature and responsible attitude to their instruments. They benefit from very good teaching in these sessions and achieve standards which are well above those expected for their age. They also benefited from very good teaching as they played together as an orchestra during the inspection.
98. The leadership and the management of music are good. However, monitoring of lessons has been limited because the specialist music teacher is part-time. Nevertheless, the subject leader has a major impact on the work of the subject. The

excellent number of musical clubs and enrichment activities provide rich and stimulating opportunities for pupils to improve their skills and develop their awareness of music in their own and other cultures. The accommodation is a major weakness, which is having a significant adverse impact on standards and achievement across the school. Overall, the subject has developed well since the previous inspection and improvement has been good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well because of expertise from within and outside the school.
- Very well managed games lessons hold often excellent challenge for all pupils.
- There is high quality skills development throughout the school.
- There is excellent promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils within the subject.

Commentary

99. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good overall. By Year 2, attainment is above that expected nationally and achievement is good. By Years 6 and 7, pupils reach well above national expectations in physical education and their achievement is very good. The progress pupils make during their time in the school is very good. This is because the school has fostered a sporting atmosphere where all pupils, including those less confident and the 'hard to reach', take part actively in lessons. Experts from within and outside the school provide high quality skills development, which builds progressively year on year. This ensures there is excellent challenge for pupils of all levels of ability and pupils are enabled to achieve their best. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development.
100. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are good in Years 1 and 2, and very good throughout the older year groups. In an excellent Year 4 lesson, pupils working within teams concentrated very well on quick decision-making. They assessed their own performance very effectively, with one pupil suggesting, "I can hold the bat better and know how to stand to hit the ball". The expertise of the teacher and professional coach combined provided excellent challenge and pace to the lesson. On-the-spot praise and guidance help pupils improve their own performance. Lessons in striking and field games, such as rugby and cricket in Years 3 and 7, provide similar high levels of skill development. Teachers demonstrate techniques and skills effectively, enabling their pupils to learn new battling techniques in rugby and improve their fielding in cricket. Pupils are aware of the need to warm-up at the start of lessons and of health and safety issues on the games field. The pupils' keenness to learn, their very good behaviour and excellent attitudes mean lessons are fun and move at a good pace. Games lessons are planned and managed consistently very well.
101. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The new subject leader provides clarity of vision for the subject and is building successfully on the very good foundations already in place. New initiatives, linked to sporting activities at local and county level, provide a stimulus for learning. Pupils' own self-assessment and target setting in their 'get up and do' books clearly identify their success and help teachers to guide future learning well. Planning shows very good coverage of all areas of the curriculum, including dance and swimming. Provision in physical education benefits

significantly from a spacious sports field and good resources. Improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in attainment and achievement in Years 3 to 6, has been good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is taught through the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course.

Personal, social, health and citizenship education

Provision in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good progress has been made in developing a course in citizenship.
- An excellent range of opportunities is provided to enhance pupils' personal and social skills.
- The subject leader has been a very effective moving force in the success of the course.
- The relevance of the course to the pupils' lives has resulted in their excellent approach.

Commentary

102. Standards in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course are well above national expectations by Years 2, 6 and 7. Pupils' achievement and progress throughout all year groups are very good. The combined and very effectively interlinked programme of study covers, in an excellent manner, the required National Curriculum elements for sex, drugs and health education. It places a very strong relevant emphasis on behaviour and development as responsible citizens. There is a very good range of opportunities for pupils to practise aspects of citizenship and their very well developed personal skills. Examples are their very wide range of contacts with the community at large, the school council and older pupils acting as mentors for younger pupils. Pupils have a very wide range of opportunities to see how other citizens throughout the world live and work.

103. Pupils across the school have recently conducted an excellent study on world poverty, including meeting and talking with homeless people. They used their very good literacy skills very well to write about their findings, which are being published in a book. They presented these extensive findings to the Prime Minister through a personal visit to Downing Street and have received a handwritten response. Pupils' attitudes are excellent and, when spoken with, they show a mature and excellent concern for the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are very well prepared to make important decisions about how they should conduct their daily lives.

104. Teaching and learning are very good and pupils have frequent opportunities to explain and justify their emerging views. There is excellent encouragement and engagement of pupils and excellent expectation and challenge. Procedures for assessment are good and pupils have a very good understanding of how they can apply their very well learnt personal, social, health and citizenship skills. Teaching assistants and the many outsiders visiting the school are enlisted in an excellent manner to enrich the overall very good provision.

105. The leadership and management of the personal development and citizenship course are very good. This is because there is excellent clarity of vision and knowledgeable and innovative leadership by the subject leader. This supports the understanding of staff and outside helpers very well. Work in progress is very well supported by the dedication of the subject leader, who has put into place a scheme which deals very well with citizenship within the personal, social and health education course, the taught religious education syllabus and in the day-to-day life of the school. The subject was not reported on at the previous inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
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	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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