

INSPECTION REPORT

SYLVAN FIRST SCHOOL

Poole

LEA area: Poole

Unique reference number: 113692

Headteacher: Mrs J T Bunting

Lead inspector: Mrs J E McNeil

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 2nd February 2005

Inspection number: 268021

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: First
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 4 - 8
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 282
School address: Livingstone Road
Parkstone
Poole
Postcode: BH12 3DT
Telephone number: (01202) 743 064
Fax number: (01202) 716 360
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr S Clarke
governors:
Date of previous 10th February 2003
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This large first school admits pupils between the ages of four and eight. It is situated in an area that is socially and economically very mixed but overall has an above average level of social need. Pupils are taught in ten single-age classes and one mixed age Years 1/2 class. The vast majority of pupils are from a white British heritage. Of the small number of pupils from other ethnic groups, all but four speak English fluently. The number of pupils joining the school at times other than the usual time of admission is above average and is particularly high in Year 2. One-fifth (56 pupils) are currently on the register of special educational needs. This is similar to most other schools, but is a significantly lower figure than in previous years. Of these, 36 are at the lower stages of the register. Ten of the pupils at the higher stages receive part-time support within the school's 'nurture group'. The number of pupils with statements of special educational need (two pupils) is below average for the size of school, but is set to increase to seven pupils before the end of term. The main needs catered for are learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The pupils' attainment on entry to the reception class is below average overall. The vast majority of pupils have had some pre-school experience before joining the school.

The school received two awards in 2004. 'Healthy Schools' status was gained and 'Activemark' was awarded in recognition of the school's efforts to keep the pupils active and fit.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
30711	Mrs JE McNeil	Lead inspector	Science Music English as an additional language
9646	Mrs G Osment	Lay inspector	
15306	Mr S Bugg	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Physical education
17343	Mrs S Morris	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs
32104	Mr M Sandercock	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Standards are below average in English and mathematics and as expected in other subjects. The pupils achieve satisfactorily as a result of sound teaching. The school is well led; the headteacher is firmly focused on ensuring that all pupils do as well as they can. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership and management of the school are good; the headteacher provides clear educational direction.
- The school is inclusive; pupils from differing backgrounds and needs are valued and well supported.
- Pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve well and make a good start to their education.
- There is insufficient teaching of good quality.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in writing.
- There are very effective procedures for assessing, recording and tracking the pupils' progress.
- The behaviour of a few pupils adversely affects the learning of others in some lessons.
- There are insufficient teaching assistants to support pupils' learning in the afternoons.
- The school very successfully encourages parents to be involved in their children's learning.

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection in 2003, when it was judged as underachieving. Standards of work in Years 1, 2 and 3 are slowly improving. Pupils of all capabilities now achieve appropriately in most subjects, although there is still some underachievement in writing. There is no longer a decline in standards once pupils reach Year 3. Most teaching is satisfactory. The deputy headteacher's leadership of the Foundation Stage has significantly improved provision for the youngest pupils. There are now satisfactory guidelines for teaching all subjects. The school now has very effective procedures for reviewing its performance.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils of all capabilities achieve satisfactorily overall, the result of improved planning and assessment. The Year 2 national test results for 2003 and 2004 show improvement on those of previous years. In 2004, the improvements were most marked at the higher Level 3, particularly in writing and mathematics, addressing previous underachievement of the higher-attaining pupils. Current standards in Year 2 in reading and mathematics are below

average, and in writing, the pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Standards in Year 3 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics but the pupils now make sound progress. Standards and achievement in science and information and communication technology have improved and are now in line with expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 3. In most other subjects, standards are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily, except in geography, history and music.

Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and, except in writing, are on course to meet expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. This is the result of good teaching and effective planning.

Pupils' personal qualities are developed well and most have satisfactory attitudes to learning. Relationships are good. The majority of the pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. However, a few pupils disrupt lessons because of their inability to control their behaviour. **The pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good.** Attendance is satisfactory and the pupils arrive at school on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school gives a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is sound overall and all groups of pupils learn satisfactorily, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as a second language. There is a shortage of teaching assistants in the afternoons. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage. However, there is wide variation in teaching quality across the school. Too much teaching is no better than satisfactory and some is unsatisfactory, such as when teachers do not effectively manage the challenging behaviour of a few pupils or where they either do not make their expectations clear or use a sufficient range of strategies to engage the pupils. Assessment procedures are very thorough and support the pupils' learning well. Subjects are well planned, although there is insufficient time allocated to teaching geography, history and music. Pupils are well cared for and receive good support and guidance. There are good procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils. The school has very good links with parents. The induction procedures for children entering the reception classes are very effective.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher has a clear educational vision and is the driving force behind improvements. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, whose teaching is a strength of the school. The school now has very effective procedures for reviewing its work and planning for improvement. Subject leadership is sound. Subject leaders have worked hard to improve the provision for their subject and have addressed almost all the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. Governance of the school is good. The governors provide good support and are beginning to challenge the school's performance and provide more strategic guidance. They ensure that statutory requirements are met. The school's budget is very well administered.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents think very highly of the school and appreciate all that it offers their children. They have the highest regard for the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Most pupils like their school, although more than a third of the questionnaires reveal concerns about behaviour. Inspectors found that most pupils behave well but agree that some lessons are overly disrupted by the poor behaviour of a few pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching.
- Further raise standards and pupils' achievement in writing.
- Manage the behaviour of a small number of pupils more effectively.
- Increase the number of teaching assistants in the afternoon.
- Ensure that the curriculum for geography, history and music is covered in sufficient depth.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are below average in English and mathematics and in line with expectations in most other subjects by the end of Year 2 and Year 3. At the last inspection, too many pupils were working below the level of which they were capable. **Achievement is now satisfactory overall.** Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage.
- There has been steady improvement in improving the standards of the higher-attaining pupils in English and mathematics.
- Standards in writing in Key Stage 1 are not high enough.
- There is no longer a decline in standards once pupils reach Year 3.
- Standards and pupils' achievement in science and information and communication technology (ICT) have improved.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in geography, history or music because insufficient time is available to cover planned work in sufficient detail.
- There are missed opportunities to enhance pupils' achievements in English and mathematics through work in other subjects.

Commentary

1. Children in the Foundation Stage join the school with below average capabilities overall. They enter with very low literacy skills. The current pupils are on course to reach the expected level in most areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year, except in writing, where they are not. At the last inspection, children were achieving appropriately - they are now achieving well. The good improvement is the direct result of the deputy headteacher's very good leadership of the Foundation Stage.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.3 (15.3)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.2 (13.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.7 (15.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 83 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2003 and 2004 show that standards are below average but are improving. A key factor in this is the school's energies to improve planning and assessment. Standards in 2004 were below average overall in reading, writing and mathematics. There was good improvement in the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 3, particularly in writing and mathematics, where an average proportion of pupils achieved this level. Current standards in Year 2 are below average in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are well below average and pupils are not achieving as well as they should. In the main, this is because there is a high number of pupils with special educational needs and particularly high pupil mobility in this year group.

3. Standards in Year 3 are below expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Given the pupils' starting point on entry to Year 3, pupils of all capabilities are now achieving appropriately. This represents improvement since the last inspection when too many pupils were working below the level of which they were capable.
4. Standards in science are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 3, representing good improvement since the last inspection when they were below average. This improvement is due to the increased range of opportunities for investigational work. In the end of Year 2 assessments, in 2004 the vast majority of pupils achieved the expected level for their age, with an above average number achieving the higher Level 3. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to attain expected levels, with an average number set to achieve Level 3.
5. This inspection also focused on standards in ICT, a weakness at the last inspection. There has been good improvement and standards are now average by the end of Year 2 and Year 3. Pupils of all capabilities achieve appropriately. This is the result of greater staff competence and confidence in ICT and more focused teaching of ICT skills in the new computer suite. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to improve their ICT skills through work in other subjects.
6. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as a second language achieve satisfactorily as a result of good focused teaching and sound support in class. Pupils make sound progress when withdrawn for additional teaching support in the nurture group, although the challenging behaviour of a few limits the progress that could be made. Achievements are reviewed regularly, with parents, teachers and other professionals contributing to the individual education plans.
7. Standards in most other subjects are in line with expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 3 and pupils achieve satisfactorily. No overall judgements were made about standards in music. However, it is clear that pupils do not achieve as well as they could in geography, history and music because the schemes of work are not being covered in sufficient depth. There are missed opportunities to enhance pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy through work in other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**. Pupils' personal qualities are developed well. The attendance rate is **satisfactory** and the pupils arrive at school on time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a small number of pupils whose behaviour adversely affects the learning of others in some lessons.
- Pupils' personal development is good because the school gives a high priority to nurturing it.
- The school's procedures to monitor attendance are good and have a positive impact on pupils' attendance.

Commentary

8. The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, which is not as good as at the previous inspection. The majority of the pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the

school. However, there are a few pupils who lack self-discipline and, despite the best efforts of teachers and other adults, some lessons are disrupted because of their inability to control the pupils' behaviour. This was clearly seen in a Year 1 literacy lesson when the pace slowed because of the many interruptions that the teacher had to deal with. The school has a clear moral code that is demonstrated through the use of rewards and sanctions but these systems do not deter some pupils from behaving inappropriately. Although the headteacher has a strong commitment to inclusion, the exclusion rate is higher than at the last inspection. Exclusions are handled sensitively and re-integration is planned carefully.

9. Sometimes, the activities that teachers plan do not enthuse and engage the pupils, for example, in an unsatisfactory Year 2 mathematics lesson the pupils were noisy and not working on the set task when they were estimating and weighing every day objects. However, when teachers organise interesting lessons that challenge pupils, they behave well and are able to make very good progress in their learning. This was obvious during a very good Year 2 physical education lesson as the pupils played tag rugby.
10. Relationships are good throughout the school, even where there are pupils with emotional or behavioural problems. Pupils are tolerant of each other and most are able to work together successfully. Incidents of bullying are rare and parents say these are dealt with appropriately. Since the last inspection, a lot of work has gone into planning how pupils can be encouraged to become more independent. Independence is one of the school's core values and progress can be seen in this area, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in the use of response partners during lessons. Spiritual development was judged to be satisfactory in the last report but this has improved due to the opportunities provided for pupils to reflect in assemblies; 'circle times'; and personal, social and health education and other lessons. Through the school's inclusion policy, pupils are gaining respect for others and an understanding that everyone has different needs. There is good provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems within a small nurture group. These pupils benefit from regularly set small targets to encourage their development. The various visits that pupils make and the visitors into school are helping pupils to appreciate their own culture, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to gain insight into the cultural diversity of this country.

Attendance

11. Last year, attendance rates were low in comparison to other schools but they have improved due to the good systems that the school has put in place. Registers are marked promptly and correctly and checked daily. Parents are contacted if no reason for absence has been received. Parents are reminded in newsletters of the importance of regular attendance and the school works closely with the education welfare service to support families, where necessary. Certificates are issued each week to the class with the best attendance rate and this is clearly motivating the pupils to come to school regularly and on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.8
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.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
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White – British	239	15	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	29	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 **sound**. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. There is a very good partnership with parents and the school works closely with the local community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory overall**. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and Year 3. It is good in the Foundation Stage. Improvement since the last inspection is sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The deputy headteacher provides a very good role model for improving the quality of teaching.
- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and insufficient teaching of good quality.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of work are not sufficiently shared with the pupils.
- Pupils' learning in some lessons is disrupted by the poor behaviour of a few.
- Assessment practices are very good and good use is made of assessments to target needs.

Commentary

12. Much attention has been given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Despite the overall judgement of satisfactory being the same as that made at the time of the last inspection, there have clearly been some improvements. For example, teaching in the Foundation Stage has improved and is now good. Poor teaching has been eliminated and a higher percentage of lessons are either good or very good. Examples of good teaching are now evident in most classes. However, much of the good and very good teaching was seen in the Foundation Stage, where the deputy headteacher provides a very good role model. His teaching is a significant strength of the school. Teachers have a better understanding of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and plan effectively in other subjects. A greater variety of teaching methods is used to help pupils learn more readily. All adults working in school have good relationships with pupils.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 57 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	7 (12%)	14 (25%)	31 (54%)	5 (9%)	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.

13. Despite sound improvement overall, there is still too wide a variation in teaching and in learning across the school. This was also recognised by some parents at the pre-inspection meeting. Too much teaching is no better than satisfactory and standards are unlikely to rise substantially until more teaching is either good or better. In addition, there is still an element of unsatisfactory teaching. Whilst teachers identify appropriate learning objectives for their lessons, they do not always make their expectations sufficiently clear in the quality or quantity of work required. In some literacy lessons in Key Stage 1 and Year 3, the learning objectives are not shared with pupils in a language they can understand.
14. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations for work and behaviour. Pupils are given interesting tasks, which have been clearly explained. They are actively involved and listening time is short. Teaching assistants are effective in teaching well-planned activities to an identified group so that pupils work with enthusiasm, behave well and produce work of good quality. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 numeracy lesson where pupils of all abilities made good progress because of well targeted support. In contrast, where teaching is unsatisfactory an insufficient range of strategies is used to engage the pupils and tasks are not sufficiently challenging. Teachers do not make their expectations clear and, as a result, pupils quickly lose interest and become restless and noisy.
15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as a second language is satisfactory, both within classes and when withdrawn for additional teaching in the nurture group. Teachers adapt work or provide support so that these pupils can access all parts of the curriculum, enabling them to make sound progress. Teaching assistants are supportive and patient, providing good precision teaching of basic skills and keeping good records of the progress pupils make. A few pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties sometimes disrupt lessons, despite support from teachers and teaching assistants. Whilst the positive praise and reward system works well for the majority of pupils, the sanctions do not deter some pupils from behaving inappropriately. Insufficient action is taken to minimise the impact of this situation on other pupils.
16. Assessment practices have greatly improved since the last inspection, particularly for tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Those pupils making insufficient progress are quickly identified and a good programme of well-focused teaching enables these pupils to catch up with their peers. A good new system of marking is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve. Teachers spend a great deal of time marking work thoroughly. Sometimes, there are too many written comments for the younger pupils but Year 3 pupils find the comments useful and try hard to do what the teacher suggests. Homework is regularly set and makes an important contribution to the pupils' learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **broad and meets statutory requirements**. Provision for pupils in Key Stage 1 and Year 3 is satisfactory and for children in the Foundation Stage it is good. The accommodation is good and there are adequate resources for all subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good quality planning in the Foundation Stage.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to make links in their learning across subjects and through the use of ICT.
- Coverage of the curriculum for history, geography and music is unsatisfactory.

- There is an insufficient number of teaching assistants to support the teachers' delivery of the curriculum in the afternoons.
- Parents are kept well informed about what their child will be learning.

Commentary

17. The school has developed a well-planned curriculum, which meets all statutory requirements, including provision for religious education. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage has improved and is now good. Activities are supported by a good range of resources that promote children's interest, but there remain too few opportunities for children to initiate their own learning. Planning in Key Stage 1 and Year 3 is more thorough than it was, in particular, for literacy and numeracy. Teachers plan more rigorously in year teams and there is regular monitoring of planning by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The amount of time allocated to teaching hours each week is now in line with most other schools. However, there is still insufficient time to adequately cover the curriculum for history, geography and music in Key Stage 1 and Year 3. The recently introduced 'fruit time' initiative is yet to be linked into the curriculum plans.
18. There is good equality of access in all curriculum areas for all pupils, irrespective of their needs or backgrounds. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, both within classes and when working on individually planned work in the nurture group. Specific individual education plans are devised, which set clear targets for improvement. Teaching assistants are effective in engaging the pupils with planned learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons that take place in the morning. However, there is an insufficient number of teaching assistants to support the teachers' delivery of the curriculum in Key Stage 1 and Year 3 classes in the afternoons. This means that the teachers have to cater for a particularly wide range of abilities as well as provide support for those pupils with emotional and behavioural problems. Pupils who speak English as a second language benefit from using adapted or specialised resources, which aid understanding and enable these pupils to participate fully in lessons.
19. The planning and resources to teach ICT are much improved from the time of the last inspection. The ICT suite provides dedicated teaching time for pupils to practise and improve their skills. Good opportunities are provided within the suite for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning in English. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is not sufficiently developed.
20. The school provides an adequate range of extra-curricular activities and uses visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum. Members of the Jewish and Hindu faith communities share their key beliefs, which help pupils' develop a greater awareness of others in the wider community. Good links have been established with the community, which enhance pupils' learning. For example, 'Barclays' Buddies' provide increased opportunities for pupils to practise their reading skills and there is regular input from the Dorset Music Service. There is a good range of opportunities for parents to share in their child's learning, for example, through the termly curriculum newsletters, celebratory assemblies and weekly workshops in the Foundation Stage.
21. The school has good accommodation and satisfactory resources overall. The music room is appropriately resourced and attractively set up. The library has an adequate range and quantity of fiction and non-fiction books. However, there is no timetabled

use and it remains underused, as was reported at the last inspection. The outside play area for the Foundation Stage children is much improved, now used for much of the day to enhance all aspects of children's learning. There is a wide range of resources and games for pupils to use at playtimes, which contributes towards pupils' personal, social and physical development.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure the care, guidance and welfare of the pupils are **effective**. Achievement and personal development are monitored well. The involvement of the pupils in the school's work and development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are well cared for and they are happy in school.
- Assessment procedures are very thorough and give pupils a good understanding of how they can improve their work.
- Very good procedures to settle pupils into school ensure they are ready to learn.

Commentary

22. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents said they are very happy with the caring nature of the school. Through the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire and during a meeting with members of the school council, the pupils expressed positive views of their school, particularly that their teachers are fair to them and there are adults to go to if they have worries. Health and safety and child protection procedures, first aid and other medical support are thorough and ensure that staff and pupils work and play in a safe environment. Training for behaviour management has taken place since the last inspection with the very good support that the school receives from the Longspee outreach service. The school was also criticised before for having too few members of staff having training in restraint but this has been addressed. Breaks and lunchtimes are well managed and supervised appropriately and it is a responsibility of the school council to ensure that no one is left on their own. Pupils are learning to keep themselves safe and healthy through participation in the 'Healthy Schools' programme and the good personal, social and health education programme. The school nurse, community police, road safety and fire officers, the Life Education van and a visit to the Streetwise Safety Centre support these programmes well.
23. There are good systems in place to monitor pupils' personal development. Their achievements, both in and out of school, are acknowledged at the weekly Celebration assemblies and pupils and parents are proud of the Sylvan S.T.A.R.S. certificates and lapel badges they receive. The school's procedures to track pupils' academic achievements have improved since the last inspection. The headteacher and her key staff have a very good overview of the progress that pupils are making. Marking is thorough and, by using the 'two stars and a wish' system, gives pupils good guidance on how to improve their work. Questionnaire responses indicated that most pupils feel that their teachers show them how to make their work better. Pupils are becoming more involved in setting their personal targets. Most teachers refer to the learning objective at the beginning of a lesson but too few re-visit it at the end as a check to see how much the pupils have learned. Through questionnaire responses, most pupils said they learnt new things in lessons and that they are expected to work hard.
24. All of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire believe that there are good arrangements for settling their children into school. Induction procedures are very good and the youngest children settle quickly into school routines. Senior managers visit the main feeder pre-school groups and they offer home visits. Parents are invited to meetings before their children start school and to workshops each week to see what their children are learning.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **very effective** partnership with the parents. Links with the community and other schools are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school very successfully encourages parents to be involved in their children's education.
- Parents are very well informed about what is happening in school and how well their children are doing.
- Good partnerships with other schools help to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

Commentary

25. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting were overwhelmingly positive and show that parents have great confidence in the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Parents feel that their views are taken into account, that any concerns they may have are dealt with promptly and they are informed of the outcome. The take up of invitations to assemblies, performances, workshops and meetings is high and the school association, 'Friends of Sylvan', supports the school effectively through fundraising. The headteacher canvasses the views of the parents via questionnaires and, in response to parents' views about homework, a workshop was set up, homework is now set regularly and parents and pupils are very supportive of it.
26. Very good written information is provided in the form of newsletters and parents are sent curriculum overviews so they can see what their children will be studying. Meetings are organised for parents to see how literacy, mathematics and science are taught and invited to 'keeping up with your children' courses. They take part in science week and creative arts days and are welcomed into the reception classes each week to see what their children are learning. The inspection team agrees with the parents that the information they receive about the progress their children are making is good. The annual reports contain good information about what children know, understand and can do and about their attitudes and behaviour, plus they set targets for improvement. The termly parent/teacher consultations are well attended and discussions about National Curriculum levels and progress towards targets take place.
27. Through the Rossmore pyramid of schools, the oldest pupils are well prepared for their move to Branksome Heath Middle School. Year 3 pupils took part in a pyramid musical celebration at the Lighthouse Art Centre and they are invited to an induction day at the middle school. Year 3 teachers work closely with the Year 4 leader to ensure that pastoral and special educational needs information is shared. All pre-school children are invited to attend a pre-school club, 'Little Stars', led by the Foundation Stage teachers, which helps the youngest children to settle successfully into the reception class. The headteacher's commitment to inclusion includes close working relationships with local special schools. For example, the nurture group 'Sparkles' visits Montacute each week for a greetings 'circle time'. The outreach teacher from Longspee supports and trains teachers in behaviour management strategies and a teacher from Winchelsea is helping teachers to track the performance of pupils, for example those with very low levels of literacy. The school has established good links with the community. For example, there is a good range of visits to places of interest in the community and wider afield. Many visitors support pupils' learning during lesson times, for example, visitors from members of the Jewish and Hindu faith help pupils to understand the

part that religion plays in the culture of different countries and the effect that people's beliefs have on the way they live.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure the pupils get a better deal. She is very ably supported by her deputy. Governance is good and subject leadership sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, well supported by her governing body, has a clear vision for the school.
- The deputy headteacher is a very good role model for improving the quality of teaching.
- The school's self-evaluation processes are very rigorous.
- The day-to-day administration is very good.
- There is a very strong commitment to including all pupils; however, this is not always well managed.

Commentary

28. The steady improvement in the school's effectiveness since the last inspection is attributable to the clear direction, drive and tenacity of the headteacher. She has put in place a raft of initiatives to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection and has had some success in addressing the pupils' underachievement and in slowly improving the quality of teaching. She has been very well supported by her deputy, whose teaching is a significant strength of the school. Inspectors agree with parents who responded to the parents' questionnaire and those that attended the meeting that leadership of the school is good.
29. School improvement planning is comprehensive and appropriately focuses on addressing a wide range of teaching and learning issues. There is regular detailed evaluation of progress. Implementation of the plan is leading the drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is best at the Foundation Stage, where the deputy headteacher has been instrumental in driving the improvement forward. Progress has been slower in Years 1 to 3. In part, this is because staff have struggled to embed the required changes into their teaching at the same time as endeavouring to address the complex individual needs of some pupils within their class.
30. The school now has very effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance. Performance data is analysed in depth; there is regular, very detailed feedback on lesson observations and on subject leaders' evaluations of progress in their subjects. In undertaking this work, the school has found it necessary to document aspects of its performance in great detail. This has been time consuming for the headteacher and key staff, and not always sufficiently productive.
31. The governance of the school is good. The governors fulfil their statutory duties and have a determination to ensure this is a fully inclusive school. They have undertaken good quality training provided by the local education authority. They have also made a number of adroit appointments to the governing body since the last inspection. They undertake their duties with intent and provide the headteacher and subject leaders with good support. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and

weaknesses and have been active in requesting support so that they are able to meet the needs of the school's most challenging pupils. They are also beginning to challenge the school's performance and give careful consideration as to how best to spend the monies at their disposal.

32. Subject leadership is sound. Subject leaders have worked hard to improve the provision for their subject. They provide good feedback to the headteacher and to their link on the governing body. They have addressed almost all the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. However, whilst there are examples of subject leaders as a good role model for teaching and learning, there are too many subjects where subject leadership, whilst sound, is not sufficiently impacting on further raising standards. The headteacher is the co-ordinator for special needs. She provides good leadership and management, and ensures that statutory requirements are met.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	843,721	Balance from previous year	56,127
Total expenditure	869,183	Balance carried forward to the next year	29,505
Expenditure per pupil	2,936		

33. In most respects, the school's budget is very well administered and the principles of best value are applied effectively. However, the current arrangements agreed by the governing body, whereby the most challenging pupils are re-integrated into their class in the afternoons while the level of teaching assistant support is reduced, is having a significantly adverse impact on the quality of learning in a number of classes. The school's Finance and Administrative Assistant makes a high quality contribution to the smooth running of many aspects of the school's life. The day-to-day administration, including the oversight of expenditure, is very effectively managed.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher provides very good leadership and sets a very good example through his classroom practice. The quality of teaching is good overall and children of all capabilities achieve well, although there remain inconsistencies between classes. In line with Borough policy, the children start school in the September before they are five. Very good procedures are in place to ensure a smooth transition from pre-schools into school. A staged programme of full-time attendance is introduced, with the older children starting after the autumn half term and the younger children at the start of the spring term. Teachers and support staff work well together, and children who have special educational needs and those in the early stages of learning English are well integrated into all activities. Children's learning is well planned and a wide range of interesting activities is provided which are matched to their needs. Children's learning is carefully assessed and monitored, although there are some inconsistencies between the judgements that teachers make. The accommodation is now good and there are adequate resources for all areas of learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good and children achieve well.
- Staff reinforce personal and social skills in all lessons.
- Most children have positive attitudes; they are confident, enthusiastic learners and show appropriate levels of independence in their learning.
- There remain too few opportunities for children to decide the course of their learning.
- Pupils behave well; 'golden rules' are promoted effectively.

Commentary

34. The personal, social and emotional development of the current intake was below what is expected for their age when they started school. As a result of good teaching and good reinforcement of these skills in all other areas of learning, children achieve well and most are on course to reach expected levels by the end of the Reception Year. They work confidently, can share resources and work independently without adult support. They show great interest and perseverance in what they are doing. Staff promote independence by ensuring resources are easily accessible for children. There is an improving balance in activities taught by adults and those initiated by children, although there are still too few opportunities for pupils to make decisions and plan their own learning.
35. Staff have established an environment where children feel comfortable and secure. The opportunity for parents to be involved in their child's learning at home and at the weekly writing workshops helps them quickly settle into school life. Where teaching is best, effective strategies are used to openly discuss feelings and solve problems, for

example, through the use of the class teddy. Such initiatives contribute well to children's positive attitudes and awareness of others. The 'golden rules' are well promoted and almost all children behave well and know how to be part of a social group. Good behaviour is regularly recognised and rewarded.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of good teaching.
- In whole-class sessions, there are insufficient opportunities for children to actively participate.
- The teaching of reading is very good and children are confidently memorising letter sounds.
- There are insufficient opportunities for children to write independently.
- There are inconsistencies in the teachers' assessments of writing across the classes.

Commentary

36. On entry to school, attainment in speaking and listening and reading was below average. It was well below average in writing. Most are on course to achieve expected levels by the end of the Reception Year, except in writing, where they are likely to be below average. All groups of children achieve well as a result of highly structured teaching. Where children are actively involved in whole-class sessions, the pace of learning increases. This was particularly successful in one class, but there were insufficient opportunities for children to actively engage in other classes.
37. Reading skills are taught very effectively and staff pay close attention to building up phonic knowledge. A commercial framework is used to develop children's understanding of letter sounds, with many children showing competence in blending sounds together to form simple words. In most classes, rhymes and 'ditties' are used effectively to encourage children to articulate sounds. Home/school reading, linked to the work in class, effectively involves parents in supporting their child. All children learn to listen to each other and to take turns in sharing. Adults use every opportunity to discuss children's work with them to extend their vocabulary. Children enjoy re-enacting stories in role-play areas and through using puppets.
38. Staff provide a well planned formal, structured approach whereby the children learn to form letters correctly, and practise spelling simple words. However, there is insufficient balance between this approach and providing more opportunities for children to engage in their own purposeful writing, for example, in role-play areas. Teachers provide good opportunities for children to understand that writing has different purposes. As a result, children make good progress and enjoy writing their own ending to a familiar story or devising a 'troll' menu. Children's writing is very thoroughly marked and highlights key successes and next steps for improvement. Whilst admirable, this system is very time consuming and its relevance for the children questionable. Assessments of writing are inconsistent across the classes, which results in some inaccurate judgements being made about children's attainment.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good balance between number, calculation, shapes, space and measures.
- Good teaching and engaging activities enable the children to achieve well.
- Clear links are made to the children's work in numeracy and ICT.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop mathematical skills independently.

Commentary

39. When starting school, children's understanding was below average. Most children are on course to achieve expected levels in number, calculation, shapes, space and measures by the end of the Reception Year. Most children make good progress in developing their mathematical skills. This is due to the structured teaching and good use of engaging resources and activities. Where teaching is best, lessons build on what children can do in an exciting, challenging way. Where such strategies are not used in whole-class lessons, interest lessens. Links to other areas of learning provide a context for problem solving, for instance, children enjoy finding solutions to fitting the characters from the Goldilocks story around a triangular table.
40. Most children already count to ten and beyond and enjoy 'blasting off' when counting back to zero. Their understanding of number and measures is further consolidated by the planned use of ICT, for example, in matching bowls to 'Daddy, Mummy and Baby Bear'. Children can locate large shapes placed around the room by recognising shape names and basic properties such as 'sides' and 'corners'. Such practical approaches to teaching promote enthusiasm and positive attitudes. However, there remain too few opportunities for children to practise and extend their skills independently.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide a good variety of first-hand learning experiences that capture the children's attention and interest.
- Good provision of ICT supports children in the acquisition of skills.

Commentary

41. On entry to school, children were below average in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children achieve well because the teaching provides a range of first-hand experiences and opportunities to investigate. Most children are

making good progress and are on course to achieve the levels expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Where there is good teaching, teachers carefully observe and assess children's learning and use this information to provide challenging activities. Through effective questioning, they help children make links to previous work and provide activities which encourage investigation and observation. Teachers' careful introduction of appropriate vocabulary enables children to describe their observations in detail. For instance, they notice the difference in oats as 'rough and hard' before becoming 'mushy' when made into porridge. Children show great enthusiasm for learning in the ICT suite. They already show good co-ordination in the use of the mouse, for example, in 'clicking and dragging' Goldilocks and the Three Bears into a kitchen scene and allocating each the correct sized bowl and spoon.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

42. This area of learning was not a focus of the inspection. However, there is now regular, planned access to activities in the outdoor area, a significant improvement since the last inspection. Within literacy time, activities such as making finger puppets contribute to children developing fine motor skills. Staff teach specific skills well, such as pencil control and cutting. Plans to install a climbing and balancing area by the summer term will further encourage children's physical development.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

43. This area of learning was not a focus of the inspection. However, musicians from the Dorset Music Service were visiting the children during the inspection. Through listening to the cello, the children were able to distinguish between high and low notes within the context of 'Daddy' and 'Baby' bear, making good links to 'Goldilocks', the text of the week. All children joined in enthusiastically using a range of percussion instruments to accompany the re-telling of the story. Such good opportunities support children developing positive attitudes to music.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading and writing in Year 3 have improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils now make sound progress in reading in all classes.
- A significant number of pupils are making insufficient progress in writing in Key Stage 1.
- In some lessons, the poor behaviour of some pupils adversely affects the learning of others.
- There is rigorous assessment and analysis of pupils' progress in reading and writing.
- Links between literacy and other areas of the curriculum are insufficiently developed.

Commentary

44. In the 2004 national tests for seven-year-olds, standards were below average in reading and writing, although pupils exceeded the targets set for them. Appropriate numbers of pupils attained the higher Level 3 in reading and writing, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Standards in Year 3 are below average in reading and writing, but improved since the last inspection, and there is no longer a decline in standards as pupils move through the school. However, there are variations in the standards of writing in different classes. For example, in one Year 3 class, standards are close to average. Standards in speaking and listening are in line with expectations in all year groups.
45. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of the current Year 2 pupils are likely to remain below average again this year but will dip in writing to well below average. This is partly due to a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs within the year group and a high percentage of pupils who are new to the school. Most pupils in Year 2 attain better standards in their class work than they do in the half-termly writing assessment tasks, which are completed without support.
46. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is below average in reading and well below average in writing. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory. In reading, the underachievement identified at the time of the last inspection has been addressed. Those pupils identified as under-performing in reading make good progress because of the good range of programmes designed to enable them to catch up. In writing, achievement is sound in Year 3 but there is still some underachievement evident, particularly in Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the nurture group, receive a high level of support to complete an acceptable standard and quantity of writing. The rigorous tracking of their progress ensures that the work planned meets their needs and they make sound progress. Pupils who speak English as a second language receive appropriate pictorial resources to aid understanding and, with good support, make satisfactory progress. In speaking and listening, pupils make sound progress in all classes. They are given plenty of opportunities to discuss, role-play and share ideas. Pupils confidently share their ideas with each other and their teachers. They are able to express themselves clearly and generally listen well to each other.
47. The quality of teaching is sound overall. One very good lesson was observed during the inspection, although the majority of lessons were satisfactory. Two lessons were judged unsatisfactory. In the very good lesson, the teacher modelled writing effectively and had high expectations of all the pupils. The teaching assistant very effectively provided focused teaching to a group of pupils. As a result, pupils made very good progress with their writing. Where teaching was less effective, and in some cases unsatisfactory, expectations for quantity of work and behaviour were not made sufficiently clear and a few disruptive pupils adversely affected the learning of others.
48. The quality of planning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. It meets the requirements of the National Strategy for teaching literacy. Teachers use an appropriate range of strategies for teaching reading and writing. The thorough marking of work gives tips for improvement but there is often too much information for the youngest pupils. Pupils in Year 3 are aware of how they can improve because the new marking system is well understood and useful to them. The pupils have been set challenging targets but these are too broad to be useful. Teachers and teaching assistants do not sufficiently refer to individual targets in a language that can be easily understood by young children.

49. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Successful use has been made of the school's performance data to focus attention on those aspects of English most urgently needing attention. Good improvements to assessment and target setting have increased teachers' understanding of pupils' relative strengths and weaknesses and what they must do next to improve. A comprehensive action plan is in place. The LEA has provided a good level of support and expertise to help rectify issues from the last inspection, and although there has been sound improvement overall, progress is slower than the school would wish.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. All classes have a weekly session in the ICT suite to enhance skills in literacy. There are a few good examples of links to ICT and history. For example, pupils in Year 3 were using the Internet to research the Aztecs and in Year 2, pupils were typing text into speech bubbles. However, there are insufficient links made with other subjects and many missed opportunities to enrich the curriculum in this way.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The higher-attaining pupils now make satisfactory progress in all year groups.
- Standards are below average in all years; a good number of pupils have weak basic numeracy skills.
- The quality of teaching is sound, although in a small number of lessons, it is unsatisfactory.
- The behaviour of a very few challenging pupils disrupts the learning of others in some lessons.

Commentary

51. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. By the end of Year 2 and Year 3, standards remain below average. However, standards have risen slowly in national tests at the end of Year 2 in recent years, although they are forecast to dip slightly this year. This is because there are more pupils on the school's special educational needs register in Year 2 than in other year groups. Many pupils, particularly younger pupils, are insecure in their basic numeracy skills and find difficulty in undertaking mental calculations successfully. Standards are slightly higher in Year 3, where a good proportion of pupils undertake all aspects of the subject with confidence. Data analysis indicates that girls have not attained to the same standard as boys in recent years. However, there is no evidence that this is currently the case.
52. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The underachievement identified at the time of the last inspection has been addressed. Pupils experience all aspects of mathematics in sufficient depth, in accordance with the National Strategy for Numeracy, with lessons carefully planned to cater for all the ability range. In particular, the higher-attaining pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in almost all lessons. Where there is underachievement, it is almost always because the teacher is unable to meet the demands of a very small group of challenging pupils while supporting the rest of the class. Pupils with special educational needs and those in the early stages of learning English make appropriate progress, in line with other

pupils. This is because there are sufficient teaching assistants to support mathematical activities and resources are particularly well matched to need.

53. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, the teachers use a variety of strategies to help keep the pupils on task. This includes games which make learning mental mathematical skills fun, timed challenges and very clear expectations of what is expected of pupils in the time available. However, in some lessons, particularly those at the end of the morning session, teachers do not use a sufficient range of strategies to help the pupils remain on task. As a result, some, particularly the youngest, find it difficult to retain their concentration to the end of the lesson. All lessons are planned at three levels in order to meet the various ability groups within the class and this is helping ensure the needs of the higher-attaining pupils are catered for. Invariably, relationships between teachers and pupils are good and all teachers consistently use the school's marking and behaviour policy to good effect. In too many lessons teaching assistants are not sufficiently engaged in direct teaching of small groups, including during the introduction and plenary sessions.
54. The subject leader is providing satisfactory leadership. Working alongside a skilled LEA practitioner, she has developed her monitoring skills to better evaluate the quality of mathematics teaching across the school. Together, they have rigorously analysed test papers and identified areas where pupils underperform. The action plan for the subject appropriately identifies the need to provide opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology programs to support their learning in mathematics. This is currently a weakness.

Mathematics across the curriculum

55. The use of mathematical skills across the curriculum is not consistently planned for. However, there are examples where skills are being used; for example, in designing and making packaging in design and technology and when measuring and recording results in science.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils now make satisfactory progress in all year groups.
- There is a clear focus on teaching scientific enquiry skills.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations.
- The higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently extended in their work.
- There is good coverage of the programmes of study.

Commentary

56. The results of the most recent teacher assessments show that an above average proportion of pupils reached both the expected level and the higher level, Level 3, which was an improvement since the last inspection when standards were below average. This is because the school has focused on increasing the extent to which

pupils learn about science through practical and investigative tasks. In all year groups, current standards are in line with expectations. The vast majority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily.

57. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the five lessons observed, there was good emphasis on being 'scientists'. Teachers make very good use of the 'science caterpillar', a key reason why the teaching of scientific skills has improved. This 'six step' method is followed in all classes, providing consistency and progression in how investigations are planned and carried out. Pupils' books show that investigations are a regular feature of most lessons and that pupils are building up their scientific knowledge in all aspects of science. However, as at the time of the last inspection, in teaching the different elements of science, teachers overly direct the investigations. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations from start to finish, make choices in the resources they need and learn from their mistakes. Most science is undertaken in the afternoons, when teaching assistants are not always available. Therefore, pupils mostly work in mixed ability groups, enabling pupils with special educational needs and who speak English as a second language to complete similar tasks to their peers. However, there are missed opportunities to fully extend the higher-attaining pupils.
58. Pupils' attitudes to science are satisfactory. In most lessons, they worked enthusiastically, sharing ideas and respecting the views of others. In one lesson, a minority of pupils with severe emotional and behavioural problems disrupted the concentration of others and, despite the best efforts of the teacher, learning was unsatisfactory.
59. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader has developed her role in monitoring teaching and learning and has a clear plan to further improve provision. However, it fails to mention improving the use of ICT to support learning in science. This was a weakness at the last inspection and remains so. Sufficient time is allocated to teaching science and planning is thorough, ensuring good coverage of all aspects of the curriculum. Assessment was a weakness at the last inspection. It is now satisfactory, with regular assessments of attainment being linked to the topics taught. The subject leader has introduced 'science week', heralded a great success, where pupils and parents participated in a range of activities, enhanced by visiting scientists. The school has also successfully worked to achieve the 'Healthy Schools' award.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in all classes.
- Staff expertise and resources have significantly improved.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

60. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 3 and have significantly improved since the last inspection when attainment was below

average. This is because the subject now has a much higher profile within the school, staff expertise is improved and there is more effective planning for the development of skills. As a result, pupils of all capabilities are now achieving satisfactorily in all classes.

61. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is better than it was at the last inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is more secure, the result of effective training and improved resources. Teachers give clear explanations and demonstrations. Where teaching is good, the systematic teaching of new skills steadily builds on the pupils' previous learning. There is sufficient time for pupils to emulate the skills demonstrated by the teacher in lessons, for example, in refining word processing skills in Year 2. However, the school misses opportunities for pupils to practise, extend and apply these skills to their work in other subjects. Pupils say they lack the opportunity to access computers to support classroom work and in most lessons observed, computers in classrooms remained unused. Pupils' attitudes to ICT are satisfactory. When working in the ICT suite, they mostly worked enthusiastically and co-operatively. Where teaching was insufficiently linked to the needs of the pupils, a minority of pupils disrupted the concentration of others.
62. By the end of Year 2, pupils know how to log onto the school's network in the ICT suite and can introduce 'autoshapes' to create speech bubbles and write a simple dialogue between two characters. Where these experiences are thoroughly planned, good links are made to the literacy curriculum. Most pupils show good mouse control and use paint programs to create designs based on the artists Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long. Year 3 pupils combine text and graphics, for example, to create a safety poster. They access the Internet to pose and answer questions on their history topic about the Aztecs.
63. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The deputy headteacher has recently been supporting the leadership of the subject, providing a clear and effective lead. The headteacher has monitored teaching and learning and together they have used this information to develop a clear improvement plan. Assessment was a weakness at the last inspection. It is now satisfactory and teachers have a clearer understanding of the competencies that pupils need to demonstrate at each level. Assessment is currently being revised, as part of a project with the local authority, with a view to using a tracking system that implements the use of 'I Can' statements as a way of involving pupils in tracking their own progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. The computer suite is timetabled so that each class not only has a dedicated ICT session but also an additional session linked to work in literacy. This is successful and pupils say they are 'like real authors' when they write stories using a word package and illustrate their story through importing pictures. Pupils in Year 3 value the opportunity to access the Internet to support their learning in history. Overall, such experiences are too infrequent and the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects remains unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography and History

65. These subjects were sampled. A few lessons were observed, discussions held with pupils and a very limited amount of recorded work analysed. Therefore, no overall judgement can be

made about provision in either subject. The evidence suggests that by the time they leave the school, the pupils' standards are in line with expectations in history but below average in geography. Pupils are not achieving as well as they should in either subject because they do not cover the full programme of work.

66. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching varied from unsatisfactory to good. Pupils particularly enjoy the work in **history** lessons and can recall relevant facts about past civilisations such as the Romans, Celts and Aztecs. They made good use of the Internet and reference books to research information. In **geography**, pupils do not have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of geographical concepts covered.
67. There are appropriate schemes of work now in place, appropriately addressed since the previous inspection. However, the time allocated to both subjects falls well below recommendations and pupils do not cover the work in sufficient depth. There is a satisfactory range of visits to enrich the curriculum and some limited examples of links with other curriculum areas. The subject leaders have ensured that there is an adequate range of resources available for the subjects. As yet, no assessment procedures are in place for either subject.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a planned multi-faith approach to the teaching of religious education.
- Teachers' expectations do not take sufficient account of the range of abilities within classes.

Commentary

68. By the end of Year 2 and Year 3, the pupils are attaining standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The majority are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities. Whilst standards are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection, the quality of whole-school planning has improved. As pupils move through the school, they acquire a growing understanding of Christianity and can make comparisons with other major world faiths. Visitors from members of the Jewish and Hindu faith communities share their key beliefs with the pupils. This is helping pupils to understand the part that religion plays in the culture of different countries and the effect that people's beliefs have on the way they live.
69. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the three lessons observed, there was appropriate use of questioning to encourage reflection on previous learning. In the better lessons, an appropriate range of teaching styles and resources were used. This aroused pupils' interest and willingness to contribute their ideas, for example, the Year 1 pupils giving reasons for their headteacher being a 'special person'. Teachers broadly plan to meet the range of abilities within their class. However, in practice, insufficient account is taken of the needs of the pupils, who mostly complete similar work.
70. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader is developing her role in monitoring teaching and learning and has planned to further improve provision. However, monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous to identify the quality or consistency of provision so, at times, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 complete the same worksheet. The school has developed a system of assessment and pupils'

attainment is checked against specific objectives. The subject leader is aware that the monitoring of assessment is an area for development once the new locally agreed syllabus has been introduced.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Only a few lessons were observed in art and design and music and none in design and technology so no overall judgements can be made about the provision in these subjects. However, the evidence of pupils' work and the range of learning opportunities provided indicate that art and design and design and technology are appropriately catered for but that there are weaknesses in the provision for music.

Art and design

71. In art and design, the work of all pupils is of a satisfactory standard. The quality of the work and the range of experiences are similar to that observed at the time of the last inspection. Pupils continue to produce collages in the style of Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long. They draw and paint chairs, having looked at the work of Van Gogh, and undertake a project entitled 'Can Buildings Speak?' In all years, the quality of the pupils' painting and printing is of a satisfactory standard. Pupils use colour with confidence and produce a range of lively paintings, both landscapes and interiors. Drawings and sketches, displayed around the school and in their sketchbooks, show a keen eye for detail, although much of this work lacks the analytical accuracy of most drawing by pupils nationally of this age.
72. The work undertaken in lessons is enhanced by an annual arts week. Last year, pupils made a large fish and a mermaid, and pupils and parents helped a local sculptor to produce pictures that are strategically displayed around the school. This ensures the pupils have the opportunity to undertake a small amount of three-dimensional work each year. Further development of the subject is not a priority for the school at present. The school's subject leader had been absent long-term at the time of the inspection.

Design and technology

73. The work displayed in classrooms and in their books indicates that pupils are attaining satisfactory standards. Staff plan appropriately, using the scheme of work recently updated by the subject leader. Pupils in Year 3 study, design and make boxes to be used for packaging. In Years 1 and 2, they make finger puppets. Other projects include making models related to the story 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. The quality of the pupils' design work and their final product is of a satisfactory standard. Designs are appropriately labelled and demonstrate that consideration has been given to their final designs. Evaluations show the pupils enjoyed the projects and have a developing sense of what works well.
74. In order to enhance the project for the pupils in Years 1 and 2, the school arranged for a puppeteer to visit the school to demonstrate her work. Evidence from the pupils' work indicates this was beneficial. Pupils were given a good range of materials to work from and this enhanced the quality of their work. Other projects planned for the year but not observed indicate that pupils will also have the opportunity to undertake a food project, for which a visit to a local supermarket is planned.

75. The subject leader provides good support to other staff. She has used external support to improve the scheme of work and has monitored some teaching identifying strengths and weaknesses. She is appropriately addressing the range of opportunities within the subject to enhance the pupils' literacy skills through aspects of design and technology work.

Music

76. The subject leader has addressed the issues from the last inspection. A commercial scheme for music has been introduced and appropriately resourced. This provides good guidance for non-specialist teaching staff and has increased teachers' confidence to teach music. The scheme provides access to two prepared lessons each week, affording good opportunities for the pupils to perform independently and as a group. However, the time allocated to teaching music is much less than that found in the majority of schools and is not sufficient to adequately develop pupils' musical skills or enable them to achieve as well as they should. Therefore, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall. In the observed lesson, despite the pupils making satisfactory progress in preparing for a forthcoming 'Snow Wolf' performance to the younger pupils, standards of performing and singing were below expectations overall.
77. The pupils' singing in assembly is satisfactory. Almost all pupils join in tunelessly and are particularly at home with action songs, but the singing lacks passion. There are appropriate opportunities to use background music to improve the pupils' knowledge of recording artists and composers as they enter the hall. There are no extra-curricular clubs in music at this time. However, a good range of visiting musicians provides additional musical experiences for all pupils. Similarly, the school provides appropriate opportunities for peripatetic guitar lessons, although these are at a cost.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good; teachers ensure pupils of all abilities are challenged in lessons.
- Pupils enjoy the lessons and the majority work hard to improve their skills.
- The revised scheme of work provides teachers with a good framework for developing the pupils' skills.
- In a few lessons, a small minority of pupils misbehave and disrupt the learning of others.

Commentary

78. Pupils attain average standards in lessons, both at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 3, and they achieve satisfactorily. In gymnastics lessons, they demonstrate appropriate skills when working on mats or on apparatus and some demonstrate good abilities when developing a sequence of movements. In games, pupils also attain appropriately, although younger pupils find basic ball skills, including catching and throwing, quite difficult. Whilst not observed, the school's records indicate, as at the time of the last inspection, that the standard of swimming in Year 3 is impressive.

79. In lessons, the quality of teaching is good and teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities are both supported and challenged. A feature of the teaching is the supportive manner in which both teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils with limited confidence to try new skills. Pupils are regularly praised and, in some instances, the whole class are encouraged to applaud the achievements of their fellow classmates. This means that pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those in the early stages of learning English, make at least sound progress. Teachers ensure lessons include both warming up and cooling down sessions and that sufficient time is allowed for pupils to practise new skills.
80. In most lessons, all pupils participate fully, although in a small minority, some do not. Where this occurs, teachers, including when supported by a teaching assistant, find it difficult to manage the class. In these lessons, pupils with challenging behaviour disrupt the learning of others. The school has invested wisely in employing the services of a physical educational specialist and this has helped improve the provision for the subject. For example, the scheme of work has been improved to provide a good framework for developing the pupils' skills. The successful award of 'Activemark' is appropriate recognition of the school's efforts to keep the pupils active and fit. The issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81. The pupils' personal development is taking an appropriately high profile in the school and is promoted well. Staff provide much informal support and guidance which helps the pupils to feel good about themselves, particularly those who find it difficult to cope at times. A good programme of activities in science helps pupils develop a healthy lifestyle and they have benefited from participating in the 'Healthy Schools' initiative. 'Circle time' and 'golden time' provide generous opportunities for pupils to interact with others, express their feelings and learn to respect the views of others. Good links with the community help pupils to develop their skills of citizenship. However, their experience of minority cultures and those in other countries is limited because there is insufficient coverage of the curriculum for geography and music.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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