

INSPECTION REPORT

THORNER'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Litton Cheney, Dorchester

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113804

Headteacher: Alison Johnstone

Reporting inspector: Dr Pauline Buzzing OBE
15849

Dates of inspection: February 12-14 2001

Inspection number: 197714

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Schoolhouse Lane Litton Cheney Dorchester
Postcode:	DT2 9AU
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Truscott
Date of previous inspection:	29/09/97

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15849	Pauline Buzzing	Registered inspector	Science; art, music; equal opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements; Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well are pupils taught; Leadership and management;
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
28014	Peter Buckley	Team inspector	Mathematics; design and technology; information and communication technology; provision for children in the Foundation Stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20230	Jenny Clayphan	Team inspector	English; geography; history; physical education; special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thorner's Primary School is a small Church of England voluntary aided village school, set in the Bride Valley, a rural area of outstanding natural beauty. It is smaller than the average primary school, with 106 pupils currently on roll, and the school serves the surrounding villages. Pupils come from a mixture of professional families, and from those involved in the agricultural industry. There are no pupils from ethnic minorities, and all pupils have English as their first language, and a British cultural heritage. There are 23 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, and this is broadly in line with the national average. Three of the pupils have statements of special educational need. This is well above the national average. Two pupils are eligible for free school meals, well below the national average. The pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thorner's is an effective school. Test results fluctuate from year to year, as the cohorts of pupils are small, and the performance of individual pupils has too significant an impact on the results to make statistical analysis of individual year's results reliable. However, over the past three years, results in the core subjects are above average. The quality of teaching overall is good. It is consistently good in mathematics and physical education, in Class 1 and Class 4, but examples of good teaching were seen in all the classes. The headteacher's leadership is good, and she is well supported by her deputy and by the governing body. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Over the last three years, the pupils' performance in the National Tests at age 11 are above the national average;
- In work seen, standards in mathematics throughout the school, and standards in physical education in Key Stage 2 are above those expected;
- The pupils attitudes, personal relationships and personal development are very good;
- Teaching and learning are good overall;
- Links with parents are a strength of the school
- Leadership and management in the school are good.
- Links with other schools are very good.

What could be improved

- Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory, and assessments are not used effectively in most subjects to guide the planning of future work;
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below those expected at the end of Key Stage 2;
- The school's strategy for literacy, particularly in writing, is not fully embedded across all subjects of the curriculum, and is not fully challenging higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1;
- Results in science throughout the school for higher attaining pupils are not as good as they should be;

The school's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses, but these areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in the autumn of 1997. Since that time, test results overall are above average, and there has been satisfactory improvement overall in addressing the key issues of the report, but progress has been good over the past four terms since the advent of the current headteacher. Planning has improved significantly; learning intentions are clearly stated in lessons. The curriculum is now driven by a two year rolling programme, which ensures ensure that all pupils cover what they should, without undue repetition. This means that the mixed age range classes work well. The headteacher monitors the curriculum effectively, so that the National Curriculum is satisfactorily covered. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, and the accommodation for the children who are under five has been developed. The outdoor area is small, but plans are in place to increase this, and the indoor provision is good. Procedures for assessment are not in place in all subjects, so that information from assessments cannot be used to plan further work. An exception is

mathematics, where there are good procedures, and assessment is used effectively. As a result, the pupils' achievement is now good, and standards have risen so that they are now above those expected at the end of both key stages.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2001
English	A	A	A	A
Mathematics	A*	A	B	C
Science	A*	C	D	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The school's results are above average overall over the last three years. There were only 12 pupils in last year's Year 6, so analysis of the results must be treated with caution, since the performance of individual pupils has a significant effect on the overall figures. The school's concentration on English and mathematics is reflected in the results. In science, although the results show that 92 per cent of pupils gained at least the expected Level 4, the percentage attaining the higher, Level 5, was well below the national average. Thus, when the average points' score is calculated, the science results are below the national average, and well below the average for similar schools. This also reflects the concentration on English and mathematics, and the allocation of amounts of time for science in each year group that are below the recommended minima. This has now been rectified to some extent.

At the end of Key Stage 1, using average points scores, the school's performance in reading is well above the national average, and performance in writing and mathematics is above average. However, in comparison with similar schools, results in reading are above average, whereas results in writing and mathematics are below average, even though every pupil attained at least the expected Level 2 in writing and in mathematics. This is because relatively few pupils attained the higher Level 3. Performance in science is well below the national average and, again, reflects an under-emphasis on the subject.

In work seen in both key stages, there are strengths in speaking and listening, in reading, and in mathematics, so that the pupils are reaching standards above those expected for their age. In physical education in Key Stage 2, they also exceed the standards expected. Standards in English are judged to be average overall, as writing is a relative weakness, and is not fully developed in all subjects of the curriculum. When pupils come to record what they know, their standards do not match those in other aspects of their English work. Standards in science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history and music are average at the end of both key stages. Standards in ICT and physical education are average at the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in ICT are below average at the end of Key Stage 2.

The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points over the last five years is below the national trend, but the improvements in mathematics indicate that the slippage in that subject has been arrested and the school is likely to reach its target for 2001. The trend in English is steadily upwards and the school is on course to reach this year's target.

The pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, but they achieve well in mathematics and physical education, whereas achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils are enthusiastic about coming to school and work with great interest.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils show respect for the feelings and values of others, and take responsibility when it is offered.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average, and the school has no unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good overall. It is consistently good in the reception/Year 1 class (Class 1) and in the Year 5/6 class (Class 4), and in mathematics and physical education. There are particular strengths in the teachers' planning, and their knowledge and understanding is good in most of the subjects they teach.

Expectations are very high in the Foundation Stage. Most aspects of teaching are good in the Foundation Stage, and in Key Stage 2. The result of the good teaching is the good level of concentration, interest and independence the pupils show in their learning. The school meets the needs of all its pupils, and the quality of their learning is good overall, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory, and in mathematics, teaching is good. Higher attaining pupils are better served in mathematics and in Classes 1 and 4 than elsewhere in the school.

Some 34 lessons were observed: 97 per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better, 50 per cent is good, and 6 per cent is very good. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, a Key Stage 2 geography lesson, the tasks set were not matched closely to the needs of the pupils, so that they lost interest and did not make enough progress. Two very good lessons were seen: in Class 1 and Class 4. Literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily taught, though the impact of the National Literacy Strategy has yet to feed through fully in writing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Science, and the foundation subjects are allocated amounts of time that are smaller than those recommended
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well supported by their teachers and by classroom assistants

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is good. Provision for moral development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. The school provides well for the pupils' personal development, but procedures to track their academic performance are unsatisfactory in the majority of subjects, so that the results of assessments cannot be used to plan further work.

The school works very well with parents, and links are very effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads well, supported by her hard working deputy. The role of the subject co-ordinators is under-developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors had strong links with classes and with subject co-ordinators, and carry out their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. All members of staff and governors are now involved in evaluating the school's performance.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value informally, but does not adopt this as a policy.

Staffing is good, and resources for learning are satisfactory. Accommodation in classrooms is satisfactory, but the school's hall is too small for whole classes of the oldest pupils to learn physical education at the same time. Outdoor physical education facilities are inadequate, as the netball court is too small, sloping and dangerous. Though standards in the subject are above those expected, the poor accommodation prevents physical education from being an area of excellence.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think their children make good progress and behave well; • There is good teaching in the school, and pupils are encouraged to work hard; • The school is well led, works closely with parents, and is approachable; • Parents receive good information on the progress that their children make. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents is concerned about the amount of homework set for the pupils.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents. They think the quality of reports on the pupils' progress could be improved by including targets. They agree that homework could be more effectively used in some subjects, but think it is used well in mathematics.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The number of children admitted to the school each year varies widely and some year groups are very small. The current group of reception children, for example, numbers only eight. This year, the children's attainments on entry to the school are broadly as expected for their age, as measured by the local education authority's baseline assessment. Scrutiny of past years' assessments shows this to be true overall, although girls' attainment on entry is slightly higher than that of boys in language and literacy. However, in most year groups, they show the full range of abilities. This year, their physical development is slightly above average. In mathematics, communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and personal, emotional and social development, the children are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals laid down in the new Foundation Stage. In the physical area of learning, they are likely to exceed these.
2. By the end of their time in the school, the pupils' results at the end of Year 6 in the National Tests for 2000 are well above average in English, above average in mathematics and below average in science. These figures use average points, and must be used with caution because, with small cohorts of pupils, inevitably the performance of individual pupils has a disproportionate effect on the overall picture, and there is considerable year to year variation. However, the figures also show that over the last three years, the performance of the pupils in all three core subjects exceeds the national average for their age group. The trend in the results is below the national trend, and this is caused by a downward trend in the results in mathematics and, particularly, in science.
3. In terms of the percentage of pupils reaching the average Level 4, the school is above average in English and in science, but below average in mathematics. The school's results for its higher attaining pupils have been good in mathematics and English – half of the pupils attained the higher, Level 5 in mathematics, and 58 per cent attained Level 5 in English. They are less good in science, where only 17 per cent of these same pupils reached the higher level, well below the national average, and this pulled the average points' score down. Since all but one of the pupils reached Level 4 in science, the school is clearly doing well to get the vast majority of pupils to the expected level for their age. However, the focus on numeracy and literacy over the past two years, and inadequate time devoted to science have resulted in results that are lower in science than in the other two core subjects.
4. The school exceeded its target in English, but did not reach its target in mathematics in 2000. One pupil missed Level 4 by a single mark and, with each pupil accounting for eight per cent, this was significant, and the school would have reached its target. Improvements have been put in place in mathematics in the form of regular and careful assessment, and the monitoring of planning. This, together with the good quality of teaching in the subject means that the school is on course to meet its target for mathematics this year. The target for English is lower, reflecting the language difficulties of some of the Year 6 pupils who have special educational needs, and the school is likely to meet this target also.
5. The test results show that there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in the tests at the end of Key Stage 2. In the Key Stage 1 results, the girls out-performed boys in the three year period overall. No significant difference in standards was observed between the sexes during the inspection.
6. The Key Stage 1 test results for 2000 are well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. Mathematics results show significant improvement. However, in comparison to similar schools, the results are above average in reading, but below average in writing and mathematics. This, again, is because higher attaining pupils do not do as well in some subjects as in others. All the pupils reached the expected Level 2 in writing and mathematics but, whereas in reading, 44 per cent of the pupils reached Level 3, the figures were six per cent in writing and 25 per cent in mathematics, and this pulled the average points score down.
7. In work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are average in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education. However, standards in

mathematics are above expectation by this stage, and this represents an improvement. The previous inspection report judged that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were average for pupils aged seven in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, music, and physical education. Standards were above average in reading, ICT and art. They are still above average in reading, but are now average in the other two subjects.

8. At the time of the previous inspection, the standards reached by the particular cohort that was at the end of Key Stage 2 were higher than is currently the case. The present Year 6 numbers 22 pupils, seven of whom have special educational needs; this is a high percentage. In work seen, standards are judged to be above average in mathematics and physical education, and average in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history and music. Standards are below those expected in ICT.
9. Standards in speaking, listening and reading are above those expected at the end of both key stages. The pupils talk confidently and listen intently; in assembly, for example, they describe to the rest of the school what they have been doing. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other, and speak clearly, using a wide vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils read fluently from a variety of books, but even lower attaining pupils show signs of reading with good expression, gaining increasing understanding of what they read. The quantity of work, in the books submitted for analysis, was not large but did cover a satisfactory range of topics. Standards in writing are at the expected levels, but few pupils write at a level that is higher than this.
10. In mathematics, pupils at the end of both key stages are currently working at levels that are above average. The current work indicates that nearly all pupils in Year 2 are working at the national standard for seven-year-olds and that many exceed this. Similarly, in Year 6, most pupils are already confidently working at the average level for eleven-year-old pupils and some are exceeding this.
11. Standards in science – at the national expectation at the end of both key stages – benefit from a good emphasis on investigative work, though higher attaining pupils are capable of reaching higher standards by the end of both key stages than they currently do. Too often, they are set the same task as the rest of the class, and they find it easy to keep up, instead of being challenged with more demanding work. The small amount of time on the timetable devoted to science is a factor here. The school has recently made improvements to resources and to time allocations in order to address this issue, but has yet to adopt a suitably rigorous system of assessment to track the pupils' achievement in science and to try to raise it beyond a satisfactory level.
12. Standards in ICT are below where they should be at the end of Key Stage 2. The previous report indicates that the pupils' standards exceeded national expectations at the end of both key stages. Unfortunately the school has fallen behind with developments in the subject, and has outdated hardware that is not capable of running the software used to support current national guidance in the subject. As a result, while standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are average, the standards of the majority of pupils by the age of eleven, are below average.
13. At the end of Key Stage 1, the foundation subjects have sustained the judgements made at the time of the previous inspection, even though the time allocated to the foundation subjects has been severely limited because of the emphasis on English and mathematics.
14. The school has not yet fully explored ways in which literacy and numeracy can be developed in other subjects of the curriculum, and the tight time allocation given to all subjects, apart from English and mathematics, makes it difficult to embark on extended writing. Consequently, though standards of literacy and numeracy are at least satisfactory in all subjects, they are not as high as they could be in the foundation subjects.
15. At the end of Key Stage 2, the improvement in standards in physical education make this a strength of the school, though limitations on accommodation prevent it from being developed into an area of real excellence.
16. Most pupils make satisfactory progress through their time in the school. They achieve well in the reception/Year 1 class, and in the Year 5/6 class, and satisfactorily in the other two classes. Pupils who

were in Year 6 in the summer of 2000 performed as expected, when their Key Stage 1 results from 1996 are compared to their Key Stage 2 test results in 2000, showing that their achievement was satisfactory. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress for their abilities in English and mathematics lessons and satisfactory progress in other subjects. This represents good achievement overall, since English and mathematics form such a large and crucial part of their learning. Their individual education plans are used effectively by teachers and well-informed classroom assistants to help pupils learn.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. As at the time of the previous inspection, the pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are strengths of the school. The pupils' attitudes to school are very good, so that they quickly become involved in all the activities provided for them, and work with great interest. Almost all parents who returned the questionnaires confirmed that their children like coming to school. The oldest pupils, for example, showed outstanding enthusiasm for the tasks they had been set in a dance lesson, where their attitudes were excellent, resulting in intense concentration, good levels of standard and progress.
18. Standards of behaviour are good overall. In some lessons, behaviour is very good. The youngest children showed this when they listened with interest to two of their number who described some out-of school visits. They took turns to speak and to listen, and asked sensible questions of the two speakers. At the top of the school, in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, when the pupils were trying to make the number nine, using up to four operations, they worked enthusiastically, collaborated well at times, and behaved sensibly, so that they made good progress. This good behaviour extends beyond lessons, and the pupils behave well around the school and in the playground. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
19. There is an absence of all kinds of oppressive behaviour, and the pupils have very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. No bullying was observed during the inspection and parents at the parents' meeting insisted that occurrences were very rare. In the isolated cases where it had occurred, the school had handled issues swiftly and sensitively.
20. The pupils' personal development is very good. They show respect for the feelings, beliefs and values of others, and they take responsibility when it is offered to them. In a paired reading session, Year 6 pupils worked with Year 2 pupils, who read aloud to them, and were very enthusiastic about doing this. Where there are opportunities for them to carry out helpful tasks, such as operating the overhead projector in assembly, or helping to clear up, they are quick to volunteer.
21. Relationships in the school are very good. Teachers and pupils have good-humoured relationships, and these are reflected in the pupils' relationships with each other. Parents describe how Year 6 pupils walk the Year 2 pupils to church at the start and end of term services. These good relationships mean that the maximum time can be devoted to learning. Pupils and their teachers share an understanding of why they are in the classroom, so that they focus on learning. In a Year 5/6 geography lesson, the pupils rose to the challenges the teacher offered, and were amused by the brisk pace and regular time limits set. They focused on their learning and made good progress.
22. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning, and their behaviour is usually good because they are very well integrated into classes and participate fully in the learning opportunities. Pupils with physical or behavioural difficulties are treated with firm sympathy and are supported appropriately to promote the pupils' development well.
23. Attendance is above the national average, and pupils are punctual, so that lessons start promptly, and the maximum time is devoted to learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good overall, and this matches the judgement made at the time of the past inspection. It was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of the lessons seen. Some 56 per cent of teaching is good or better. Six per cent of the lessons observed were very good. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is always at least good, and there is a high percentage of good teaching in the Year 5/6 class. Examples of good teaching were seen in all classes. Teaching is good overall in mathematics and in physical education, resulting, in both cases, in above average standards by the time the pupils reach the age of 11. The teaching in English and geography is satisfactory, but no judgements can be made on teaching overall in science, art and design, design and technology, history, information and communication technology and music, because small numbers of lessons were able to be observed in these subjects during the inspection. The school teaches English and mathematics only each morning, with the result that all the foundation subjects and science have to share the afternoons. Consequently, with only three afternoons in the inspection, only one or two lessons were observed in most of the foundation subjects and in science.
25. Where teaching is good, the teachers' expectations are high. In a creative activity in the Foundation Stage, the youngest children mixed their own colours and used a variety to make their sand pictures more interesting. The teacher expected them to cope with this, and introduced specific art terminology to them, so that they used the word 'texture' accurately. The high expectations are well supported by good planning. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have helped throughout the school, here, and the pupils clearly benefit from structured teaching. This is evident in other subjects, too: a well-planned ICT lesson for Year 6 pupils had clear, progressive steps for the pupils to work through as they explored spreadsheets.
26. This clarity is a feature of the good lessons. Clearly declared learning objectives in the Year 4/5 class, where pupils were converting kilograms to lbs., meant that the teacher could summarise the learning at the end of the lesson, where a good plenary session established what the pupils knew in relation to the objectives of the lesson. Pace is another positive feature that distinguishes the good lessons from those that are satisfactory. Brisk introductions and the sharpness of focus in the mental mathematics sessions gets most mathematics lessons off to a good start. Most of the Year 5/6 lessons are conducted at a particularly good pace. An English lesson opened briskly, for example. The teacher gave a quick review of narrative poetry to introduce a session that expanded the pupils' knowledge of a variety of poems well, so that they used the experience to write their own poems. The pace in a Year 5/6 geography lesson on rivers was kept up well by frequent changes in activities – short, punchy video extracts, worksheets, writing, drawing a diagram – all were fitted into the lesson with timed deadlines. In purposeful lessons like these, the management of pupils looks easy, but the teachers' skilful handling of individuals and matching their tasks to the pupils' needs is well done, so that they learn effectively. They treat the pupils with respect, and that is what they receive in return.
27. The learning support assistants make good contributions to the pupils' learning. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics lessons, where they follow up the teachers' good planning of a range of activities, by keeping the pupils on task, helping to maintain a good pace to the learning, and asking well-targeted questions. In a design and technology lesson, where a group was making slippers, the learning support assistant questioned the pupils on their choice of materials and provided suitable advice and support in developing the pupils' skills, so that they made good progress.
28. On the whole, teachers meet the needs of all the pupils in their classes, so that learning is effective, but sometimes there are parts of lessons that restrict the higher attaining pupils, who are limited by the over-use of worksheets. These pupils are able to work at open-ended tasks and are capable of setting out their own work.
29. Overall, the pupils' learning skills are good. They acquire skills, knowledge and understanding because of their good attitudes and levels of concentration, which they maintain in some lessons, even though they sit on the carpet for quite long periods and the sun streams into some classrooms. Their interest leads them to make good levels of effort. Their willingness to be involved was clear, for example, in a history lesson for Year 1 pupils when they discussed pictures of toys they had seen on their visit to the toy museum. They talked with their partner about which one of a pair of toys was the older, and explained why, then wrote about them or drew them and labelled them with a single word. Year 4/5 pupils become totally engrossed in their task in a physical education lesson, as they produced sequences in pairs, involving a hop, skip, balance and roll. When some pupils were chosen to demonstrate their sequences, they showed even greater levels of concentration during the performances than in practice. Other pupils watched carefully, and improved their own performances as a result. In this lesson, it was a pity that the pupils' learning was limited by the small size of the hall, so that the whole class cannot take part in the lesson at the same

time, for safety reasons. Six children have to sit out at any one time, and this limits the amount of time each person spends learning.

30. Each teacher was observed teaching English and mathematics. All the lessons were at least satisfactory: the teaching in mathematics was good, and the teaching in English was satisfactory, with good lessons in Class 1 and Class 4, and a very good lesson in communication, language and literacy was observed in the Foundation Stage. The teacher used a shared text so that the pupils could appreciate the rhythm of the story. She used her voice very well, and provided a range of activities and quick questioning of individuals, so that the pupils' interest was maintained and they made very good progress.
31. When appropriate, work for pupils with special educational needs is different from other pupils, and is clearly targeted to meet their needs. Individual education plans are drawn up by the Special Needs co-ordinator with input from the class teacher concerned, for pupils on Stage 2 and above on the school's special needs register and parents are well involved. Class teachers with help from the co-ordinator are responsible for plans for Stage 1 pupils. These plans are used effectively by teachers and well-informed classroom assistants to help pupils learn. They are written with clear and specific targets for learning and are reviewed and up-dated regularly so that pupils with special educational needs make good progress for their abilities in both literacy and numeracy lessons and satisfactory progress in other subjects. Additional support is provided by outside agencies, when necessary, and contributes effectively to the pupils' learning.
32. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed, in geography in Year 4/5. The pace of the lesson was slow, and there was not enough challenge in the tasks set to keep the pupils interested, especially since there were not enough atlases to go round. As a result, they lost interest and the pace of their learning dropped.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

33. The overall quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory and meets all statutory requirements. The curriculum is broadly based but, while balanced in the range of subjects taught at both key stages, the time allocated to teaching science and the foundation subjects is below that recommended by national guidance. This is a contributory factor in the fact that standards in science are lower than in the other core subjects, and the reason why standards seen in the majority of the foundation subjects are average, rather than better than this. The school has developed a two-year rolling programme of topics to ensure coverage of the programmes of study in the foundation subjects, which is an improvement since the last inspection. While medium term planning is increasingly based on national guidance, curriculum policies are dated and do not reflect Curriculum 2000. The subjects meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
34. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They are given as many opportunities as other pupils to be involved in all areas of the curriculum, but particularly in developing their skills in English and mathematics. Occasionally this may be in the form of individual withdrawal, but there is usually support in class. Pupils complete tasks set by their teachers, and these tasks are matched to targets set in their individual education plans. These targets are regularly reviewed and amended. Careful ability grouping for tasks in literacy and numeracy contribute effectively to the progress of pupils with special educational needs in these areas. These pupils make satisfactory progress in the foundation subjects, where assessment is not so clearly targeted.

35. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been effectively introduced. However, planning does not yet ensure that these skills are developed and used consistently in all subjects to be fully effective across the curriculum. There are examples, across the curriculum, of individual teachers doing their best to develop the skills of literacy and numeracy. In a Year 5/6 geography lesson, for example, the teacher paid good attention to key words in the pupils' work on rivers, but writing is not playing its full part in contributing to the work in the foundation subjects in most classes.
36. Allowing for the size of school and the distance that many pupils travel, a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities is provided. There are netball, French and chess clubs and individual instrumental tuition is offered in various venues throughout the local cluster of schools.
37. The curriculum successfully promotes the physical, personal and intellectual development of the pupils. Provision for personal social and health education is good. It is well planned through a scheme of work that includes sex education and drugs awareness. The caring ethos of the school always allows time to discuss and resolve individual problems. Circle time is effectively used in the class for the youngest pupils, but is not planned into the programme for the other classes. An annual residential visit for Year 5 and 6 pupils offers opportunities to develop personal and social skills. There is a strong Christian ethos in the school, and all adults provide very positive role models through the way they relate to each other. The Life Education mobile classroom visits the school to provide all pupils with support and guidance related to their age. For the youngest pupils, this is based on how to look after themselves, while oldest pupils consider the problems of `peer pressure` and issues surrounding drug awareness education. The curriculum promotes intellectual development by providing increasing opportunities, as pupils get older, for personal study.
38. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. The Friends Association not only raises funds, but members contribute by running events for pupils. They maintain the school swimming pool and this facility contributes to the pupils' good standards in physical education. The school has strong links with the parish church and this is an important feature in the life of the school. Not only do the vicar and lay preacher contribute regularly to effective collective acts of worship, but members of the church help towards pupils' development by, for example, hearing children reading, playing the piano in assembly and helping with cookery. Pupils also benefit from a variety of visits into the locality and through visitors coming into the school.
39. There are very good relationships between the school and partner institutions and there are a number of benefits provided through the local `cluster` of schools, for example, through the hosting of the `One World Band` to raise multi-cultural awareness and the many curricular initiatives. Links with the pre-school playgroup are well developed and these contribute to the smooth transfer of children who attend, into the school. The school liaises well with the local secondary school and Year 6 pupils are prepared effectively for transfer to their new school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

40. The school makes good overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a Church school there is a firm commitment to this provision and it is a strength that the school has sustained and developed since the last inspection.
41. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are good. Collective acts of worship meet statutory requirements, and allow for reflection and strong church links contribute to pupils' spiritual awareness through celebrating the main Christian festivals and worshipping in the parish church at the beginning and end of each term. Pupils expressed awe and wonder in response to a news item about a space module landing on an asteroid, but spirituality is not a planned feature in the teaching of subjects throughout the school.
42. The provision for pupils' moral education is very good. All teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils are encouraged to respect property and the school environment, which is tidy and litter free. Through developing very good relationships, adults encourage pupils to be consistently courteous and considerate. There is a culture of care throughout the school.

43. The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. The staff are very good role models. They set a very good example to the pupils in their relationships with each other and with the pupils. Teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to work together and discuss their activities. Pupils have responsibilities within their own classrooms, and as they get older, around the school. The school takes account of the different age ranges in each class: for example, Year 3 pupils attend the Key Stage 2 assemblies, whilst Year 2 pupils join the younger children. The pupils' close involvement in raising money for charities contributes to their understanding of citizenship. However, there are no opportunities for pupils, through for example, a school council, to extend these responsibilities in contributing to the future direction of the school.
44. Provision for cultural development is good. The school has strong links with the community and uses it well as a learning resource, such as a visit to the Dorchester Museum to see their display of toys and an artist and sculpture who visited to talk to pupils about mazes for the Abbotsbury Festival. African poems and stories were re-told to pupils by a native of that continent. Pupils participate annually in the local schools' music festival and enter local sporting competitions. The school is aware of its limited emphasis on multi-cultural education and through the local 'cluster' of schools is focusing on a 'One World' project that includes countries from three continents; Gambia, Chile and India.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The standards identified in the previous report relating to personal support, guidance and the welfare of pupils have been maintained. There are still some concerns relating to the recording and use of assessment.
46. Procedures for monitoring the pupils' academic progress and personal development are satisfactory overall, and result in satisfactory achievement overall. The personal support and guidance pupils receive is good.
47. Overall, procedures for ensuring the pupils' welfare and for child protection are good. All pupils are well known to all staff and this makes a very positive contribution to the care and personal support that pupils receive. The school does all it can to ensure the safety of the pupils. It has a health and safety policy and risk assessment is undertaken to identify any problems with the school building, an improvement since the previous inspection. At the end of the school day, members of staff check that all pupils travelling home on the school bus are wearing seat belts. Pupils are well supervised throughout the day, including lunchtimes. The school has good procedures for noting any accidents and the action taken in dealing with them. A concern that is to be dealt with soon is the state of the boys' toilets in the old part of the school; their condition is unacceptable. The school is also waiting for the completion of a new hard play area (netball court); the surfaces of other outside hard play areas are uneven and also require attention. The deputy head is the designated person for child protection; staff know what to look for in this matter and the procedures to be followed if they have concerns.
48. The pupils' personal development is monitored effectively in an informal way. Pupils are well known to all staff, something upon which parents commented very favourably at the meeting prior to the inspection. Any information about pupils is passed easily between staff, if appropriate and necessary. Staff work very hard to create a warm and caring atmosphere in school and this ensures that pupils feel safe and valued. The school has good arrangements for personal, social and health education and is now introducing work on citizenship.
49. Procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are good. The school has no formal rules, but sets high expectation of behaviour based on care and consideration for others. Pupils know these expectations and strive to live up to them. There are a few occasions where pupils do not reach the high standards set; these incidents are well recorded and are monitored by the head teacher. Pupils experiencing difficulties with their behaviour are well supported by the staff, who use consistent, agreed procedures. No bullying was observed during the inspection; the school has very good procedures to deal with it, if it happens. Both parents and pupils agree that, whilst there is very little bullying, if it occurs it is well handled. These procedures for monitoring bullying and behaviour have a positive effect in helping to promote and support the good atmosphere within school.

50. Whilst the school has no concerns about the level of attendance, it does sometimes involve the educational welfare officer who effectively deals with anything brought to her attention. Registers are marked correctly, and reasons for absence are identified.
51. At school level, the headteacher and staff analyse the results of National Tests and match them against the prior attainment of individual pupils. They know that last year, in the National Tests at age 11, all the pupils performed as well as expected, relative to their Key Stage 1 results in 1996. This information is shared with governors.
52. The school does not have adequate procedures for assessment in all subjects. This is unsatisfactory, because it is currently unable to use the results of assessments to plan further work. The exception to this is mathematics, where there are good procedures. Pupils are tested half-termly, and the results are fed into future teaching. As a result, achievement in mathematics is good, and standards are rising. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy has meant that systems for assessment in the Foundation Subjects have not been developed and, though the pupils' achievement is satisfactory in all subjects, apart from ICT, judgements are not sharp enough to increase achievement levels and thus raise standards. This is particularly crucial in science, where higher attaining pupils do not do as well in science as they do in either mathematics or in English. Though the school has increased the time for science, and has put in new resources for the subject, it is not tracking the achievement of pupils to ensure that the improvements are having the desired impact.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITS PARENTS?

53. Parents have very positive views of the school. Those returning the questionnaire and attending the meeting prior to the inspection expressed a number of very positive opinions. They say their children like coming to school, behaviour and teaching are both good, pupils are expected to work hard and the school is approachable. They expressed concern about activities outside the classroom and homework. Inspectors agree with the positive comments made, but feel that, within the constraints of a small school and the transport difficulties, the provision of extra-curricular activities is good and that homework is used well to support and promote the pupils' learning.
54. The school provides parents with a good range of information. A regular newsletter keeps parents informed about what has been happening in school and gives advance notice of forthcoming events and activities. Pupils have recently produced the second edition of the 'Thorner's Gazette', with help from a parent who inserts the pictures and illustrations. This contains reviews, reports and interviews, the most recent one with the inspection team's leader. This publication is good in providing parents with their children's views on what is going on and what is important to them. Most letters are sent to parents on a needs basis, generally by class, and contain details of trips and events relevant to that class. Reports are sent annually in the summer term. They are of sound quality overall, and some are good. These good lessons give good details in all subjects about what pupils know and understand and what they can do with confidence. They also detail what pupils need to do to improve and how to build on what has already been achieved. All reports contain a brief personal section on the pupils' attitudes and development. Although parents are asked to sign the reports and make any comments, there is no provision for pupils to make any comment. Currently, curriculum information is not sent to parents, but this is under consideration by the school.
55. Most parents with any concerns come into school at the start or end of the day to talk to a member of staff. However, some children come to school on transport provided by the local education authority. In these cases, parents will often telephone the school with any concerns. Many parents also make good use of the home-school book to maintain contact. The use of this book indicates that many parents show a good level of interest in their children's work both at home and in school. Parents are invited to termly meetings with teachers; attendance at these is good. Parents are expected to come to at least two each year; parents of pupils in Years 2 and 6 are encouraged particularly to come to the spring term meeting prior to the SATs tests in May; this gives the school a good opportunity to talk to parents about these tests. The school occasionally holds meetings about areas of the curriculum; the most recent was on the numeracy and literacy hours; attendance was satisfactory. The school consulted with parents about the home school contract and amendments were made taking their views into account; most have signed it. The school has consulted with parents over, for example, the provision for music within school. The results have been acted

upon. Further ideas being investigated are an after school club and exercise classes along with computer tuition for parents.

56. The school is fortunate in having an active 'Friends' association. Besides organising social events for parents, two annual activities raise considerable sums of money for the school. Recent purchases funded by the 'Friends' include musical instruments, playground equipment, bibs for the netball team and much needed science equipment to support the curriculum. A number of parents and other members of the community come in to school regularly to provide help in the classrooms. This includes sewing, reading, cookery, and design and technology. The school is very grateful for this help. Parents with particular expertise sometimes use this to support particular areas; for example, the local policeman has checked the safety of transport provision and the vets among the parents have supported aspects of science.
57. The school's partnership with its parents has maintained the good levels described in the previous report. It does much to foster and promote the learning of the pupils and their parents' involvement in it. There is good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs, who are encouraged from the beginning to be fully involved with the education of their children. Parents are involved in the review process and the revising and setting of new targets. This is appreciated by parents who are well satisfied with the provision.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The leadership of the headteacher ensures that there is clear educational direction for the school. Over the four terms since taking up the post, she has focused the attention of staff and governors on standards in the school, so that all those with key management responsibilities now understand the importance of data. They are all familiar with documents that give the school valuable information in assessing its performance. As a result of this, the school now monitors its performance well. There are small numbers of pupils in each year group, so that statistical analysis is of limited value because of the impact the performance of individual pupils has on the overall percentages, but the school tracks carefully the standard of each pupil to see whether appropriate progress has been made.
59. Monitoring also results in plans for action, but these are not always carried out sufficiently quickly. The decline in results for science in the National Tests that pupils take at ages seven and 11, for example, can be related to the small amount of time allocated to science on the timetable, and the school has, rightly, increased this allocation, though it is still low. However, the absence of effective assessment in science means that they have little idea of whether additional progress is being made as a result, or whether the amount of time or the way it is used are producing the kind of improvement envisaged. Waiting until the results are published this year leaves no time for amendments to be made for the current Year 6.
60. The role of the co-ordinators is not fully developed. The school has focused on English and mathematics over the past few years, and the other subjects have assumed lesser importance. Co-ordinators do not have the chance to see planning in their subjects, nor are they able to evaluate where development is needed because of the absence of effective systems for assessment of the pupils' progress. The exception is mathematics, where the co-ordinator is the headteacher, who does see the planning, and where there is also a system for assessment, resulting in current standards that are above those expected.
61. The school's aims and values are reflected in its work overall. However, the shortage of time given to foundation subjects, and to science means that it is difficult for pupils with talents in those subjects to 'reach for the highest possible standards in work', as the school aims state they should.
62. The governing body leads well and makes a good contribution to the shaping of the school's priorities for development, which are appropriate. Strong links between subject areas and classes in the school, and the governing body mean that individual governors are well informed about the school's life: co-ordinators and class teachers value the links and use them positively.
63. There is good, shared commitment to improvement. The teaching and support staff work as an effective team, and the range of expertise on the staff and in the governing body offers good capacity for success. All are concerned to improve standards and provision in the school for the benefit of the pupils. The

mutually supportive atmosphere has been successful in inducting new staff into the team, though there are no formal, written procedures for doing so.

64. The special education needs co-ordinator is well informed, caring and carries out her responsibilities effectively. She maintains an accurate register and ensures that individual education plans are up-to-date and appropriately detailed. She reviews them regularly, usually once a term, but sometimes more frequently. The staff are well informed of their pupils' targets. The nominated special needs governor is interested, knowledgeable and meets regularly with the co-ordinator to discuss developments in this area.
65. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. All are appropriately trained. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, though there are some shortcomings in geography and in art.
66. Accommodation in the school is good in classrooms. They are light and airy, with adequate facilities for art and wall space to enable teachers to create interesting learning environments. The hall is too small for the school's requirements in physical education, and this has a negative effect on standards and progress. In a very good Year 6 lesson, for example, six pupils had to sit out at a time to allow room for others to move safely. The teaching in this lesson was very good; the behaviour and attitudes were excellent, but pupils were not able to take advantage of the full length of the lesson. Out of doors, the netball court is smaller than it should be, and the surface is uneven and sloping. Despite this, the netball team won matches during the week of the inspection. Though standards in physical education are above those that are expected, the school is being denied the opportunity to turn this into an area of excellence because of unsatisfactory provision. Work has already started to surface a level area and provide a full sized netball court, which will remedy the situation out of doors.
67. Overall planning to support the school's educational development is satisfactory. Subject co-ordinators are allocated a budget against agreed development needs. Resources are provided in line with priorities in the school development plan. In the last two years priority has been given to literacy and numeracy and only recently have purchases of personal computers been made, to raise standards in ICT. The school's current relatively high under-spend was planned for the refurbishment of the pupils' toilets. However, the diocese has agreed to cover these costs so that the headteacher and governing body are now in a position to accelerate spending in line with priorities in the school development plan.
68. The arrangements for financial control are now sound and the many recommendations of the last audit report of March 1999 have been fully addressed. The Local Authority has provided good quality training in the use of new technology for the school's administrative officer and she provides valuable support to the headteacher and the governing body. However, the wider use of new technology, for example, to maintain the pupils' records or develop teachers' routine planning is not evident. Specific grants, such as the government provided 'standards fund', are used effectively for their designated purposes. Governors show satisfactory awareness of the principles of best value in an informal manner in much of their decision-making, but the practice is not yet carried through as a policy in all areas. They are aware that the Local Authority has produced comparative costings of groups of schools and have considered these. The school currently gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to take the school forward, and improve the provision for pupils in the school, the headteacher, governors and all staff with management responsibilities at Thorner's Primary School should;

- (1) ** Increase the impact of assessment on the pupils' achievement through the school by:
developing procedures for assessment in all subjects;
using the information to guide the planning of future work;
including targets in the pupils' reports.

(Paragraphs 11, 45, 52, 59, 60,96,104,119,124,130)

- (2) ** Raise standards in ICT in Key Stage 2 by:
providing training for all staff to increase confidence and skill in teaching the subject;
making sure that opportunities to use ICT to support learning are threaded through the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 8,12,52,108,112,119,124,125,129,130,)

- (3) ** Ensure that the school's strategy for literacy, particularly for writing is fully embedded across all subjects of the curriculum by:
ensuring that there is adequate time for the pupils to develop their writing skills in a variety of subjects;
monitoring carefully the progress of higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 and providing a challenging range of tasks for them.

(Paragraphs 6,9,14,35,78,82,84,100,117,119)

- (4) Raise standards in science, especially of higher attaining pupils by:
monitoring carefully the progress that pupils make;
ensuring that higher attaining pupils are set challenging tasks;
reconsidering the time allocation for the subject.

(Paragraphs 2,3,11,33,52,59,61,84,98,99,100,102,104)

In addition, the governors may wish to consider including the following lesser issue in their action plan:

Continue to press for improved accommodation in physical education is unsatisfactory and limits the standards the pupils can attain.

(Paragraphs 15,29,66,139,141)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	6	50	41	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	106
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	23

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	5	11	16
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	5	5	
	Girls	11	11	11	
	Total	15	16	16	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (92)	100 (100)	100 (92)	
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)	
Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	5	5	
	Girls	11	11	11	
	Total	15	16	16	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (92)	100 (100)	100 (92)	
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)	

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	6	6	12
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	3	6	
	Girls	5	5	5	
	Total	10	8	11	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (93)	67 (86)	92 (86)	
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)	
Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	3	3	3	
	Girls	5	5	5	
	Total	8	8	8	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (86)	67 (93)	67 (93)	
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)	

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	106
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR–Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.1
Average class size	26.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	104

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	184,446
Total expenditure	172,849
Expenditure per pupil	1,695
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,899
Balance carried forward to next year	22,496

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	106
Number of questionnaires returned	68

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	35	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	50	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	44	16	4	1
The teaching is good.	63	34	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	34	4	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	19	1	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	49	1	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	51	40	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	59	37	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	37	6	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	33	33	1	10

Other issues raised by parents

Several parents attached comments to their questionnaires. Almost all praised the school and its teachers. Some amplified their concerns about extra-curricular activities, and one or two mentioned that they would like to be alerted more speedily if there seems to be a problem with their child's work, rather than waiting until a consultation evening.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

70. The school has a mixed age class of reception and Year 1 children in a spacious, well-equipped classroom leading to a small but secure area adjoining the school playground and playing field. The secure area is too small for many activities, and the school has plans to enlarge this to further enhance the physical and creative areas of the curriculum. Pupils enter the school in one intake in September and attend for mornings only for the first term. At the time of the inspection, there were eight reception age children in the class and eleven Year 1 pupils. A well-planned programme introduces the new children and parents to the school and ensures that positive relationships are quickly forged with families. Links with the local playgroup, from which some children come, are well developed. However, some pupils have no pre-school experience, and this means that these children have additional needs when they start school. The local authority baseline assessment indicates that children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly average with a particular strength, this year, in physical development.
71. Since the last inspection, good improvement has been made by extending the size of the classroom, providing a secure outdoor area, improving the quality and range of resources and providing an overall stimulating and inviting area. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. The teacher has high expectations and leads her lessons in a lively manner that motivates children to work hard and maintain concentration for long periods of time. She keeps challenging the children to extend their knowledge and vocabulary and seizes every opportunity to reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher uses learning support assistants and other adults effectively to support group and individual children's learning. They are always well briefed and know how to guide and encourage the children. The curriculum is securely based on national guidance for the foundation years and children are on course to reach or exceed the Early Learning Goals by the appropriate age. This represents a good level of achievement.

Personal, social and emotional development.

72. Children in the class are happy and settled. The quality of teaching is good and they have quickly learned the rules and conventions associated with the classroom and school life. The teacher sets high expectations of what pupils should do for themselves. The use of circle time contributes to their development by providing structured opportunities to share views and experiences about issues of immediate concern. A great deal of time has been spent on organising the environment, and activities are provided to enable children to make choices and decisions and develop independence. They record their choice of activity when they have completed a given task and have their own individual targets, which they strive to achieve. They play and work happily together and know the rules associated with taking turns, tidying up and listening to others. They undress and dress themselves for physical education, and the majority are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the age of five.

Communication, language and literacy

73. Although the baseline scores indicate a broadly average intake, within the group there is a wide range of ability in communication, language and literacy. The teacher provides good teaching and many purposeful activities, which make valuable contributions to this area: for example, children recount their news and learn to sing a large repertoire of rhymes. This helps them to practise putting words into sequence as well as aiding their pronunciation. They are starting to copy words and sentences. They follow text, making plausible guesses at covered words and letters. They are beginning to know initial letter sounds and letter names. They follow, predict and retell the sequence of a story when reading, 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'. They appreciate the rhythm and repetition of the story and contribute actions to enhance the story as the teacher reads. Children recognise their names and many can write them well. They enjoy books and delight in taking them home to read together with flash cards and initial sounds books. Comments in children's home contact book indicate a high level of support and encouragement of reading. Boys and girls handle the books carefully and understand that print is read from left to right. They talk enthusiastically about the pictures and most are beginning to read words. They develop their imagination and language

through role-plays as, for example, the imaginative role-play area, which is currently a puppet theatre. They are beginning to recognise many clearly displayed captions and display notices in the classroom. The teacher takes every opportunity to reinforce communication skills and reading and writing play a big part in lessons. Her consistent approach and emphasis on learning new vocabulary is successful in leading all children to meet the Early Learning Goals expected by the age of five.

Mathematical development

74. Day to day use of number is used effectively by the teacher to encourage children's development of mathematics. Children enjoy their work with numbers responding quickly and with a good degree of accuracy in their mental maths work. They can count on, given a random number below twenty, and know numbers less than and more than a given number. They know how many children there are in the class and work out not only how many are present but also how many of those are either boys or girls. They identify coins, rolling a coin die, and matching the coin on the die with real money. They understand matching one to one and are beginning to understand that a five pence coin is equivalent to five one pence coins. The teaching is good, and number songs and daily routines reinforce counting activities. As a result, the children learn quickly and make good progress so that they attain the Early Learning Goals by the age of five.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

75. Children are gaining good understanding of the world in which they live through their topic about toys. They talk about how toys move, following a visit to Dorchester museums to see a toy collection. They look at pictures of 'push, pull' toys. On the investigation table children make discoveries using magnets. They understand that tape recorders record and play back sounds. They use computers to make drawings, showing developing mouse control. They use the school and its surrounds to gain an awareness of places in relation to each other. Boys and girls have good opportunities to use a variety of construction kits to make their own models. Consistently good teaching enables the children to have a good balance of formal investigation and guided play This helps them to discover new knowledge and make good progress based on their prior attainment to reach the Early Learning Goals.

Creative development.

76. Teaching in this area of learning is good. The teacher organises the curriculum well and provides the children with regular planned opportunities for music, play dough, paint and a range of materials. As a result the current pupils are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the time they are five. They respond well to activities such as making sock puppets and papier maché puppets. They explore different textures through sand painting, and understand changing the shade of a colour. They develop their three dimensional skills when they make collages of a landscape. In music, children respond to songs with actions and use instruments. They know a variety of rhymes and jingles and are beginning to develop a sense of time and rhythm through clapping and moving to music. They play singing games, for example, 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes', matching their actions to the pace of singing. The role-play area is currently a puppet theatre and there is a rail of clothes for children to use for dressing up.

Physical development.

77. In the area of physical development, the teaching is good. Children achieve well and in most cases exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach five. Children have many opportunities to develop fine motor skills as they handle small tools such as pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, glue sticks and scissors. They frequently put together and take apart construction materials and work with jigsaws and other tabletop equipment. These activities are making a significant contribution to their physical development. Regular planned times in the hall provide a structured time for responding to music through dance, and using floor space and apparatus to develop their large physical muscle skills. They use small apparatus for throwing and catching. They have other opportunities for physical development, such as, working together with older children in the class with a parachute and a local outdoor activities centre visited the school, setting up activities specifically for the younger children.

ENGLISH

78. The school has maintained its good results in English since the last inspection. In 2000, the pupils' results in the National Tests at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above the national average for reading and above the national average for writing. All pupils reached the expected level in reading and many reached a higher level. This compares well with results from similar schools. All pupils reached the lowest expected level for writing, which was a very good achievement, although the percentage reaching a higher level was similar to the national average. These results are not as high as those from similar schools. In 2000, at the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' standards in English were also well above the national average. All pupils attained the expected level and many attained at a higher level. The results are well above those from similar schools.
79. In work seen, the standards of attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages are average overall. Their standards are generally above average in speaking, listening and reading, and average in writing. Standards in the current Year 6 are not as high as they were last year because there is a larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs that relate to language. Standards are average overall, and a significant minority are starting to work at the higher level.
80. Throughout the school, the pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. They speak clearly and confidently using a wide vocabulary. Pupils listen carefully and ask well-framed questions in order to clarify and extend their understanding. They enjoy using appropriate vocabulary and by the end of Key Stage 2, they savour words such as 'syllable, haiku' and 'epitaph'. They show sensitivity for words and a quick understanding of rhythm or metre in poetry as they listen to it or read it.
81. Standards in reading are above average. The school rightly considers reading to be a particular strength, and this is true for several reasons. From an early age, pupils are well supported by their parents who encourage regular reading at home. Pupils throughout the school read frequently and regularly and those who need extra help receive high quality support. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 read fluently from a variety of books, including instructions for grooming horses! These pupils read avidly, offer detailed analyses of characters, and make intelligent deductions. Lower attaining pupils are confident and read with good expression, showing increasing understanding of what they read. They are confident and fluent readers at their own levels, and they are very supportive of each other in group reading sessions. There is a delightful weekly session where pupils in Year 6 share reading with pupils in Year 2. Both groups benefit from the activity in a wide variety of ways.
82. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils are reaching the expected standards in writing, but there is little evidence of work at a higher level. Higher attaining pupils are starting to write confidently and in increasing detail. Lower attaining pupils are starting to write fluently. Most pupils use capital letters and full stops correctly, and by the end of a lesson about speech marks all the pupils understood their function. The pupils' handwriting is becoming more careful and regular, and many are beginning to use joined handwriting. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress for their abilities.
83. Standards in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 are average, but a significant minority are starting to work within the higher level. Pupils write for a wide range of purposes. There are several examples of thoughtful, detailed stories written on computer and carefully made into books. Pupils enjoy the challenge of composing poetry in a variety of styles, and they use the required rhythms of syllables accurately. The pupils' handwriting and standards of presentation vary through the school. In some classes, especially in Class 1 and Class 4, pupils work tidily and are proud of their results, but occasionally pupils elsewhere are satisfied with less than their best.
84. The school's strategy for literacy is not fully developed in all subjects. There is a lack of evidence to show that pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 regularly practise their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. The inspection team judges this to be the reason for the difference in standards between writing and the other aspects of English. In Key Stage 2, some opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to write in a range of genre in history, geography and science. Instead there is too much use of worksheets that limit the development of writing skills. There is not much evidence below Year 6 that pupils use computers regularly when completing writing tasks.

85. The pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory overall. The progress of all pupils is scrutinised, and those who need it are given additional support. All pupils make good progress in Year 1. They speak clearly and confidently and they listen carefully. Their reading skills are developing well, and the more able pupils are beginning to write many words and sentences independently. The majority of pupils know their sounds and the names of the letters, and they all enjoy sessions where they spell words and their teacher writes them as a story. Progress in learning is steady through early Key Stage 2 and accelerates towards the end of the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs continue to be well supported so that they make good progress for their abilities.
86. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is consistently at least satisfactory, and is good at the beginning of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2. Teaching has been greatly influenced by the adoption of the principles of the National Literacy hour. Teachers plan carefully to emphasise key points in each lesson, fit them into what pupils already know and assess how much they have understood.
87. In good lessons, teachers start sessions confidently by using clear, simple language to explain the lesson aims to the class. This gets lessons off to a brisk start and helps pupils to pay attention and work hard. Pupils answer questions confidently and ask questions when they are uncertain. In some lessons, teachers skilfully direct appropriate questions to each year group so that learning proceeds at two levels: for example, in a Year 2 / 3 lesson, Year 2 concentrated on the speech in a shared reading text while Year 3 looked at the character of the main person.
88. In the good lessons, there are sufficient appropriate tasks to necessitate a brisk pace to lessons. This keeps pupils alert, interested and involved so that they make good progress in their learning; for example, the Year 5/6 class identified and contrasted six different types of short poem. Year 6 and some of Year 5 chose to compose their own poems following strict metre and the rest of Year 5 found a selection of poetry in the styles discussed, all in one hour. When they work in groups or independently, pupils work together well. However a few pupils in Years 2 and 3 find it hard to concentrate and do not achieve as much as they could. During this time, teachers work with each group and ask questions to find out how much they are learning. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and are well organised. If they have a classroom assistant, they plan together to ensure that all pupils are supported and this means that pupils who are slower learners make good progress for their abilities.
89. Nearly all lessons finish well. In the best lessons, teachers carefully review with the pupils what they have learned by asking key questions that reflect their planning. This helps to reinforce the pupils' new knowledge and furthers their speaking skills.
90. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Staff have been well trained to teach the literacy hour, and medium and short-term plans are satisfactory. Teachers agree targets for improvement with pupils and these are reviewed regularly. However, the policy for the subject is old and does not give up-to-date guidance, so that it does not match the good practice in the school. The co-ordinator's role is under-developed: at present she does not see the teachers' planning regularly, nor has she had the opportunity to monitor teaching. Resources are satisfactory overall, but many books in the reading scheme are old and dated, and there is a need for additional texts and large posters especially for Key Stage 2. The school library is small and only pupils in Key Stage 2 use it for research, but the school supplements its range of books by borrowing from the County Education Library Service.

MATHEMATICS

91. The 2000 results at the end of Key Stage 1 were above national expectations, and they continue, since 1997, an improving trend. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. The 2000 results at the end of Key Stage 2 are the above the national average and above the average for similar schools, based on the pupils' prior attainment. The number of pupils attaining the higher level is well above national averages. However, between 1997 and 2000 there has been an overall a slightly downward trend in attainment based on test results. Caution is needed in analysing National Curriculum Test results with a year on year, small and fluctuating in size, cohort of pupils. Inspection evidence of the current Year 6 pupils indicates that standards are rising, due in particular to brisk mental maths teaching and improved assessment procedures that focus on raising the attainments of individual pupils

92. In work seen, standards in mathematics have improved at Key Stage 1, so that they are now above average. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The base line assessment undertaken by children as they enter the school shows that their mathematical skills and understanding are average. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of eleven, their attainment is above national averages. This represents a good level of achievement over time.
93. Pupils in Year 1 confidently count to 20, can add on and count back from a given number. They count in tens to 100. Nearly all Year 2 pupils are confident in recognising place value in three digit numbers. They give the value of individual numbers and can order the digits to make larger or smaller numbers. They work confidently, investigating right angles and can explain that although a 50 pence coin has a corner it is not a right angle. They measure and record their work, but the worksheets they use are restrictive and do not always allow pupils the opportunity to develop skills in setting out their work. The current work indicates that nearly all pupils are working at the national standard for seven-year-olds and that many exceed this.
94. Pupils in Year 4 understand that capacity is measured in litres and millilitres and that mass is measured in kilograms and grams. They are conversant with imperial measures, for example, they know that a 2lb bag of sugar is approximately 1Kg. In practical work they use balances and compare their results using digital scales. Year 6 pupils take a target number such as nine, and from a random selection of 20 one and two digit numbers, use up to four operations to reach the target number. They are very familiar with inverse operations and when working with large numbers can confidently check their answers. Most pupils can order decimals to two and three places. In work on reflective symmetry they can sketch the position of a right-angled triangle after it has been translated by, for example, three units to the right and two units down. Higher attaining pupils use shape with more angles. Most pupils are confidently working at the level expected for eleven-year-old pupils and some are exceeding this.
95. The quality of teaching is good. Since the last inspection the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented and teachers have benefited from several actions the school took to improve the quality of teaching and, hence, raise standards. The training the teachers received for the Numeracy Strategy and Local Education Authority initiatives provided more structure in lessons. The staff visited a leading mathematics teacher to observe a numeracy lesson, and were influenced by the good practice they saw. Within the school itself, the headteacher, who is the subject co-ordinator, carefully monitors and evaluates the teaching, and analyses data in order to set targets.
96. As a result, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and provide pupils with challenge and fun in learning. Often work is at its most challenging in, for example, mental mathematics sessions with the oldest pupils, where there is an increasing degree of difficulty in the questions and a brisk pace is maintained. Least challenging are worksheets that do not provide opportunities for pupils to explore strategies, but require a simple answer. The teachers plan their work effectively, based on the National Numeracy Strategy, and cater well for the mixed age classes. Practical demonstration is used effectively, and results in good progress. A good example was in a Year 4/5 lesson, where pupils measured capacity in a variety of different sized containers comparing metric and imperial measures. This resulted in good quality discussion amongst pupils. Teachers use day-to-day assessments well and continually extend the knowledge of pupils. For example, pupils use a range of instant recall devices, such as `fans` and `whiteboards` to record their answers in mental maths, holding them up so that the teacher has an instant overview of progress.
97. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the standards pupils reach are assessed well and good quality analysis of the data is being shared with teachers. This is enabling them to know how well pupils are doing, the progress they make, and is a starting point for target setting. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching has been effectively improved through good monitoring and evaluation and the subject has a secure base for further improvement in standards and for the development of numeracy across the curriculum, which at present is unplanned as an overall strategy. However, good examples of individual teachers using charts and graphs in geography and in science show that numeracy skills are being developed.

SCIENCE

98. Standards seen during the inspection are average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The end of Key Stage 1 assessments show that teachers placed the pupils in the top five per cent, when considering the percentage of pupils who would reach at least Level 2, but well below average where those attaining the higher, Level 3, were concerned. At the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils performed in the tests much better than their teachers' assessments indicate they normally worked at. This mismatch is because assessment in science is less frequent than in, say, mathematics. Although the school is actively looking for a system that will be manageable, no such system is yet in place.
99. Very little science could be observed during the inspection. From discussions with the co-ordinator and with teachers, and from the work sample provided by the school and scrutiny of the Year 6 science books, the standards a range from below expectation to a few pupils who are already working at Level 4. Overall, standards in science are average.
100. Over time, the pupils acquire the knowledge and understanding they should, and their achievement is satisfactory. This sustains the judgement of the previous inspection and improvement in the subject is satisfactory overall. The pupils' good speaking and listening skills stand them in good stead in science, and they develop an appropriate scientific vocabulary. The pupils' work in scientific enquiry shows that they are good investigators, but not so effective in analysing their results. Higher attaining pupils are not given sufficient freedom to devise for themselves ways of presenting their results. In some topics, there is an over-use of worksheets that limit the pupils' contribution to writing one or two words at a time, and opportunities are not created or taken to use the pupils' literacy skills to support their science work.
101. Year 4/5 pupils work on the planets of the solar system, and they shared their work with the rest of the school during assembly. They produced a display that represented the different sized planets in their orbits, and had made removable labels for each. Other pupils were invited to try to put the labels on the correct planets. This was a good feature. Year 5/6 pupils each have a folder on electricity, which show that they have covered all the required elements. They know how circuits are made and broken, understand how switches work, and how bulbs can be made brighter.
102. No overall judgement is made on teaching because of the small number of science lessons that were taught during the three days of the inspection. However, scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that there are high expectations in the Year 5/6 class, with detailed marking and comments from the teacher, such as 'In your answer, I would have expected some mention of gravitational force'. Elsewhere, however, teachers do not always correct basic spellings so that, although key words in science are prominently displayed in classrooms, the pupils do not always have maximum support in learning accurate spellings when they use the words for themselves.
103. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Clear planning led to a good discussion on why the various types of track the Year 4/5 pupils had used to propel a balloon across the classroom had varying degrees of success. The teacher's sound knowledge and understanding led to good probing of the pupils' answers to her questions, encouraging them to be more precise. Given the choice of two levels at which to work, several of the Year 4 pupils chose to work at the higher level, and enjoyed the fact that they were doing Year 5 work, which they tackled enthusiastically and successfully. Teachers are skilled at planning on two levels to allow for the mixed age ranges in each class: often there is a common introduction and a common plenary, with a variety of tasks at different levels in between.
104. The co-ordinator is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and is supportive of colleagues. Science is a high priority in the school's development plan, and in-service training has built the confidence of teachers and increased their knowledge of the subject. The small amount of science on the timetable has been increased, but the school's analysis of the time it allots to each subject shows that the allocation is still below the recommended minimum time. Consequently, there is not the time to do the sort of in-depth work that will raise the standards of the more able pupils. Further, there is no detailed assessment system in place, so that teachers are not able to track how learning is progressing and to use the information to plan future teaching. A positive development is the introduction of science alongside English and mathematics, as a subject for which homework is set. Some good examples of how this is developing were seen in the pupils' homework diaries: experiments to do at home, involving how quickly ice cubes melted in or out of water, were carried out, for example. The school has also improved resourcing for science so that whole classes can now work on experiments at the same time. The curriculum is

enhanced by events such as the Travelling Planetarium and the Health for Life Van. The school's environmental area is being developed by a team of governors and parents to extend the outdoor resources for science.

ART AND DESIGN

105. At the end of both key stages, standards in art are average, and this sustains the judgement of the previous inspection. At the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' work shows satisfactory development of their art and design skills. They work confidently with a variety of media such as clay, paint, paper and fabric collage. Pupils in the Year 2/3 class make clay tablets, and decorate them imaginatively, with the school logo, with model clay books, or using the signs for number operations. They create 'through the window' pictures, using a variety of media: paint, pastels and paper collage. They explore colour mixing and make satisfactory progress in their art work. In Year 1, some choose to draw their own pictures, rather than use a template.
106. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' work shows increasing skill, control and imagination. They develop their collage work: Year 4/5 class did this using story boards as a starting point, and show evidence of planning and drafting their work. They make wool pictures, depicting earth, sea and sky, and these are attractively framed and displayed. They show good skills in using pastels, and can use them to blend, shade and highlight parts of their work. They used the pastels to produce Monet-style backgrounds for their work.
107. No overall judgement is made on teaching because only two art lessons were observed, both in Key Stage 2. The teaching in each was satisfactory. Teachers planned well, and had organised a carousel of activities, so that pupils were developing independence in decision making. Both teachers circulated round the groups, commenting, asking questions and moving the learning on, asking the pupils to think about what they had done previously, and encouraging them to use their learning to further their own collages.
108. There is an art policy, but it is in need of review, and the scheme of work has not yet received detailed mapping to bring it in line with Curriculum 2000. ICT is not used in art. Despite this, art work throughout the school is carefully executed and tastefully displayed making areas like the hall visually attractive and welcoming.
109. The present co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. Art has not been a main focus in the school's development recently, but the school joins with other schools in the cluster for large-scale events such as the Digital Arts Project that took place last spring. The accommodation for art is adequate, but resources are limited, with only a few books on art and artists and limited examples of the work of great artists on display. Art from a wide range of cultures does not feature in the curriculum, although some from the Gambia is included in the current Year 4/5 project.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. From the observation of a Year 5 and 6 group of pupils, seen working as part of art and design and technology activities, and from discussion with pupils, standards are judged to be average. Examination of planning documents, scrutiny of a portfolio of previous work and discussion with staff, indicates that an appropriate range of activities is being provided in the subject and standards for seven-year-old pupils are also average. Since the last inspection average standards have been sustained.

111. No teaching was observed during the inspection, therefore no judgement can be made, although scrutiny of the pupils' work suggests that it is at least satisfactory. Year 1 pupils try different ways of making movement in pictures. Year 2 and 3 pupils make sandwiches and design appropriate packaging. Year 4 and 5 pupils design drums and shaking instruments as part of their study of Gambia. The group of Year 5/6 pupils observed design pairs of slippers. They make a mock up with seam allowance, test and modify accordingly, and choose appropriate materials for the sole and uppers. They select tools for cutting, needles and thread for decoration and joining.
112. The co-ordinator has worked hard to maintain standards in design and technology and, by monitoring of the subject through a portfolio of work, has maintained it as a discrete subject. Termly topics are incorporated into the school's rolling two-year study cycle, but the amount of time spent on the subject is limited and does not allow pupils the time to fully develop their skills or use skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT to advantage. The scheme of work is dated, and although national guidance is used in termly planning, the requirements of Curriculum 2000 are not yet fully reflected.

GEOGRAPHY

113. Planning indicates that pupils attain standards at the end of both key stages that are broadly average. This is the same judgement as at the time of the last inspection. There is wide enough coverage of the subject to ensure they develop their geographical skills progressively through the school.
114. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils have a growing understanding of the layout of their school and the area around it. Pupils in Year 1 make simple plans to show their way to school. Pupils in Year 2 become aware of other countries and other climates through their studies with Year 3 and use a variety of maps with assurance. They use appropriate geographical vocabulary such as 'polar' and 'tropical' with accuracy.
115. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are adept at reading a wide variety of plans and maps. In Year 6, pupils study the passage of a local river and use appropriate vocabulary such as 'sediment' and 'estuary' correctly. They visit a water treatment centre to learn how water is made safe to drink. Pupils have opportunities to follow current affairs and their literacy skills are used well to make reports on world events such as the recent Kumb Mela festival. Pupils in Year 4/5 contrast settlements in different parts of the world and compare pictures of market places in Gambia and England so that they have increasing understanding of how there are underlying similarities between very different localities. They report using bullet points statistics about the villages where they live. Next year, pupils in the Year 4/5 class will discuss environmental problems. There are opportunities throughout the key stage for pupils to develop their skills of orienteering.
116. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.
117. Three lessons were observed, and the quality of teaching in them was satisfactory overall: one was of good quality, one was satisfactory and the third was unsatisfactory. The good lesson was carefully planned with sufficient tasks to ensure that pupils of differing abilities were fully and appropriately challenged. The teacher used a variety of resources: video clips, challenging worksheets, map exercises, question and answer and some written work, and timed targets helped to keep up a brisk pace and sustain the pupils' interest. The teacher encouraged the correct use of a wide geographical vocabulary so that there was a good increase in the pupils' technical understanding. There were also good opportunities for pupils to practise their listening and speaking skills, and to write at appropriate levels of difficulty. In the unsatisfactory lesson, good attention was paid to practising the pupils' speaking and listening skills, but there was a lack of appropriate tasks to further all the pupils' writing skills, and the pace slowed as the pupils lost interest, so that the learning suffered. A shortage of atlases contributed this, as there were insufficient for the pupils to have one each.

118. The subject is being developed in order to maintain the satisfactory standards recorded in the last report. Its management is satisfactory. The school has recently adopted the new National Curriculum guidelines for geography. The co-ordinator has planned outline coverage over two years so that all pupils will experience the required range of topics. The mixed age classes make this a less than ideal exercise. It is not clear how much time is given to the subject for each class, but the geography focus is arranged in blocks with the result that pupils do not benefit from a steady input of the subject. This limits opportunities for regular practice in developing specific skills, and there are weaknesses: next year's Year 2 pupils may not have the opportunity to study a locality beyond their own, for example, unless the scheme is amended. Planning at present is being developed in detail at the beginning of the term in which each topic is taught.
119. There is no clear overview yet of opportunities to practise writing, numeracy and ICT skills, although there are instances of them happening. In Year 4/5, for example, there is provision for the use of graphs as pupils develop their knowledge of weather across the world, and all teachers encourage the pupils' speaking and listening skills well. The co-ordinator is building a map of specific geographical skills across the school to ensure that there is a logical progression. Pupils do not have a special book in which to do geography and this lessens the importance of the subject. There is no formal assessment, but the co-ordinator is trailing a simple test with her class this term. Resources are satisfactory but with some shortcomings: there are not enough atlases, for example, for pupils to have one each. The impact of these factors is that although the pupils' achievement in geography is satisfactory, it is no better than that, and the subject has lacked a high profile in the school. The governors have agreed to increase the budget to bring the standard of resources into line with other subjects, and this is a start in addressing the relevant issues in order to raise standards above average.

HISTORY

120. Standards in history continue to be average at the end of both key stages, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Due to timetable constraints, only one lesson was observed, so additional evidence has been collected from the analysis of the pupils' work and the teachers' medium term plans. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make broadly satisfactory progress.
121. The pupils' achievement over time is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good understanding that people in the past lived very differently from people today. Year 1 pupils study old toys and observe that they are made from different materials than their toys. They also recognise clues as to which toys are old and which are new through the use of a range of primary and secondary sources and they start to have an idea of chronology. Pupils in Year 2 contrast their lives with those of people in Tudor times and conclude that life is far more comfortable today. They study the lives of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I.
122. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of many aspects of British history and their understanding of life in different parts of the world during specific periods is well developed. They use a wide variety of sources for research. However, there is a lack of evidence to show the development of some skills: for example, pupils do not appear to study different reports of historical events in order to understand how they may be biased.
123. Teaching in the one lesson observed was of good quality, but this is insufficient evidence on which to base a judgement of teaching across the school. There was a dense amount of information, which kept the pupils alert and interested and skilfully extended their understanding. For example, the pupils remembered the probable ages of a range of toys they had seen at the Dorchester Toy Museum. The teacher then introduced the idea of a time line, so that they could place photographs of the toys in chronological order. This new knowledge was reinforced when the pupils drew a selection of their toys in order of age. There is little other evidence of pupils using numeracy in history. There are some examples of history being used well to extend the pupils' writing skills such as a letter from a papyrus maker and descriptions of aspects of life in Ancient Egypt. The co-ordinator reports that information is gathered from CD-ROMs but there was no evidence of this available because history is not a focus this term.

124. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The subject is being developed at present. The school is adopting the new National Curriculum guidelines and teachers are developing their plans each term that there is a focus on history. History is taught in blocks, which means that pupils cannot build their skills regularly, and there is some discontinuity in their learning, as a result. At present forward planning is in the form of an outline scheme, but there is no detail to show how skills are taught progressively, nor any indication of planning to ensure regular time for pupils to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through the school. Pupils do not have a special book for history and this diminishes the importance of the subject. Work is either done on sheets of paper, which become tatty, or is hidden in English books. There is no formal assessment in place at present but the co-ordinator sees the work of pupils from across the school. Resources for the subject are satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

125. The previous report identified ICT as strength of the school and said that the pupils' standards exceeded national expectations at the end of both Key Stages. Unfortunately, the school has not kept up with the pace of development in the subject, relying on out dated hardware that is not capable of running the software used to support current national guidance in the subject. As a result, while levels of attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are average, standards of the majority of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 are below average.

126. The headteacher has identified this provision as an area for immediate development and, in addition to the older computers, each class has a least one personal computer with Internet access, with more sited for use by the older pupils. These computers have only been in operation since the beginning of term and the pupils' access to the Internet has been hampered by technical difficulties. Indeed, during the inspection the system was not working. Teachers have already purchased their own computers through a government funded initiative, and the headteacher has identified a training provider for the New Opportunities Funded training to further raise teachers' expertise. These initiatives have not had time to impact on standards generally, but particularly for the older pupils.

127. The pupils' achievement through Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have appropriate skills for their age. Year 1 pupils enjoy using colourful software to help, for example, with their counting skills and quickly learn to use a mouse to click, drag and drop graphics into place. Year 2 pupils word-process information about themselves and select font styles and the size they prefer. They can enter information into a simple database. They also use standard print and draw software with appropriate mouse control. They know how to programme a floor turtle to move along a pre-determined path.

128. Achievement through Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory: there is no consistency in what most pupils can do. The school has no clear scheme of work based on national guidance, with appropriate identified software, to ensure that there is continuity and progression in pupils' learning. However, there are some good examples of the use of ICT. Year 4 and 5 pupils download weather data from newspapers to keep a record of local, European and world weather. Word processing is a well-developed feature. Year 5 and 6 pupils highlight text, add bullet or number list and use the 'undo' icon. They produce an anthology suitably illustrated by photographs taken with a digital camera. A small number of Year 4 and 5 pupils on their own initiative (with technical support from home) produced an eight page 'Thorners Gazette' full of interesting news items with clip art and photographs supporting the text. Year 6 collect and enter data into an advanced spreadsheet. They understand how to highlight cells and add a range of cells but they have not yet the skills to interrogate a database. There are no examples beyond the use of floor turtles for the development of control technology.

129. Insufficient direct teaching of ICT was seen during the inspection to judge the overall quality in the school. Most classes focus on the model of the teacher demonstrating a new technique (such as entering data) then pupils in groups of two or three practise this on a rota at subsequent times during the week. This method becomes more effective the more computers of a common format there are available. Teachers plan for pupils to use computers to practise basic skills but there is no systematic planning of the use of ICT in other subjects. Teachers have their own computers and some use them to prepare materials for lessons and produce labels and headings for class display. Where this does happen, it helps pupils to see the relevance of using computers for daily tasks as well as for good presentation of work.

130. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers have no guidance that will help them to assess accurately the computer skills that pupils already have, and so enable them to plan lessons that meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils who have computers at home as well as those who do not. Pupils are enthusiastic about the new personal computers and the co-ordinator has the appropriate knowledge and relevant ideas for improving the subject, and is fully supported by the headteacher. The challenge is to raise standards in ICT to those expected nationally, and to provide the pupils with the skills, knowledge and understanding to use ICT purposefully across the curriculum.

MUSIC

131. Standards attained by the pupils at the end of both key stages are average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Only one whole class music lesson was observed during the time of the inspection, so evidence was drawn from tapes of the pupils' work, from several group recorder lessons, and from the school band session, all of which take place during curriculum time. The quality of singing was judged from the pupils' performances in assembly.

132. The pupils sing well. They were accompanied by a guitar in one assembly, by a piano in another, and their singing in the third was unaccompanied. The tone is good, and the vast majority sing in tune, even when there is no accompanying instrument to support them. However, the best singing takes place when a teacher leads them and accompanies them on the guitar. The whole school produced a lively performance of 'This Little Light of Mine', with crisp rhythms and clear diction. Three pupils from Class 4 provided an effective tambourine accompaniment. All the pupils, from reception to Year 6, put plenty of energy into their singing, and show clear enjoyment in the experience.

133. Every pupil in the school has the opportunity to learn the recorder as part of the school's music provision, not as an optional extra. This is a good feature, and gives pupils experience of practical musicianship. It also encourages them to listen, which they do well. One pupil in the band practice could hear that one of the violin strings was flat, and drew this to the teacher's attention. Higher attaining pupils in all year groups play the recorder with good tone; their fingering secure and breathing is well controlled. Pupils of average attainment can maintain their own part, and read the notes from staff notation. Lower attaining pupils struggle: the younger pupils are not helped by the fact that lessons take place in the staff room, and the chairs do not give them adequate support, so that they sometimes slump in their chairs and this has an adverse effect on their breathing. Pupils in Year 2, who are beginners at playing the instrument, had a similar problem, caused by the absence of music stands, so that their music was flat on the table, and this made it hard for them to play.

134. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It was satisfactory in the recorder lessons and the one class lesson seen was satisfactory. Teaching in the band practice was good. The peripatetic teacher had high expectations, and encouraged good listening skills, asking the pupils to criticise the performance of a group. The pupils responded very well: their criticisms were accurate and kindly. As a result, all the pupils were confident, and the high levels of enthusiasm they sustained resulted in purposeful practice and good progress in the session.

135. The pupils' achievement over time is satisfactory. Statutory requirements in the curriculum are met, and there are opportunities for the pupils to have instrumental lessons through the cluster group's initiative. This causes problems for some parents, since they have to transport the pupils to other schools at a specific after school time for different instruments, and this is not always possible for them. The arrangements for music in the curriculum mean that some pupils have to miss parts of their other curriculum lessons when they go for group recorder sessions: in some cases, the same subject is missed each week.

136. The subject is satisfactorily managed. Resources are barely adequate, but recent extra funding from the Friends Association means that additional percussion instruments are currently on order. Resources for listening to music are satisfactory, but the hi-fi system in the hall is used with its stereophonic speakers side by side, and this does not produce sound of good enough quality. Music makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development, through encouragement to listen and reflect on what they hear; the way they are asked to play together and work in groups; and by introducing them to music from a range of cultures, including the 'One World Band', which is a cluster initiative.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

137. Standards in physical education continue to be average at the end of Key Stage 1, and have improved since the previous inspection, so that they are now good at the end of Key Stage 2, with dance continuing to be a strength.

138. Pupils in Year 1 show good awareness of their bodies and perform skills that are above average, as a result of the good teaching they receive. They perform bunny hops efficiently, and independently extend tasks to include variation of direction. By the end of the key stage, pupils consolidate their skills and reach average levels, but they do not continue to make the same rate of progress as Year 1 pupils, so that their achievement through the key stage is judged as satisfactory overall.

139. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average, and this represents good achievement through the key stage. Pupils in Year 6 take the theme of a river in Africa as their subject for a dance session. They show high levels of sensitivity and imagination, as in pairs they compose a series of vivid movements that demonstrate varying currents and the different animals that the river meets on its journey. Pupils evaluate each other's work and show acute observation of what is skilful and pleasing. However, throughout the session pupils have to take care not to disturb others' work, because of the small size of the hall, and this limits the extent to which they can express themselves freely. Half a dozen pupils have to sit out at any one time because of the small size of the hall. It is noticeable that standards of performance rise during demonstrations by small groups. Pupils in Years 4/5 work effectively in pairs to achieve a sequence of mirror movements at a variety of levels. They also perform sequences on small apparatus with good attention to start, fluid travelling actions and finish position. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated where appropriate and the rest of the class help to ensure that they make satisfactory progress.

140. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, but it is good overall, especially in Key Stage 2. This is the reason that the pupils make good progress and reach above average standards. All teachers pay careful attention to warm-up and cool-down activities, and pupils are well aware of the effects and benefits of exercise. In good lessons teachers show good subject knowledge and ensure that there is steady progression in the skills their pupils learn. They maintain a sense of purpose and achievement, with a carefully chosen variety of activities so that pupils practise and improve their skills at a steady pace. Good teachers insist on quiet, motivated work so that the pupils remain safe in the cramped conditions and concentrate on what they are doing. In good lessons pupils are enthusiastic, quiet and eager to practise and improve their range of skills and they attain well.

141. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She is rewriting the scheme of work for gymnastics to ensure there is good coverage and steady progression of learning skills throughout the school. At present she does not see planning regularly, nor is there formal evaluation of the subject. However, pupils write a self-evaluation of their performance at the end of Key Stage 2. The school provides a good range of games that pupils are enthusiastic to take part in. Results in football and netball against neighbouring schools are encouraging although the present netball court is small, uneven and dangerous. Pupils learn athletics in the summer and swim every day in the small pool, so that everyone can swim by the end of Key Stage 2. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall: the co-ordinator is aware of the limitations in what can be taught in the hall, and ensures that older pupils sit out for part of the lesson.