

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MILFORD JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Yeovil, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123723

Headteacher: Mr J K Gordon

Lead inspector: Roger Brown

Dates of inspection: 22 – 24 March 2004

Inspection number: 256915

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7–11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	409
School address:	Glenthorne Avenue Yeovil Somerset
Postcode:	BA21 4PG
Telephone number:	01935 474477
Fax number:	01953 410681
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend W V Thompson
Date of previous inspection:	23 February 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a large school on the outskirts of Yeovil. There are 409 pupils aged seven to eleven. This includes twelve pupils who attend the specialist speech and language unit, which is integrated into the school. At present there are more boys (53 per cent) than girls (47 per cent) in the school. A small number of pupils (three per cent) come from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils whose first language is not English. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school at other than the usual times during the course of each year is below average at eight per cent. The school roll has grown slightly since the last inspection in 1998 and is predicted to rise further following an increase in its official admission number this year. The school takes most pupils from the area immediately surrounding the school as well as from villages outside the town. A small number of pupils travel quite a considerable distance by bus to get to the school. A lower than average percentage of pupils have free school meals - currently four per cent, although this number is not likely to be accurate as there are no hot meals served at the school and parents see no point in registering for this benefit. Twenty per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs. This is above the national average. The majority of pupils with more acute special needs have speech and communication difficulties, but other disabilities include autism, hearing impairment and moderate learning difficulties. However, seventeen pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This figure is well above the average and four times the county average. It is only in part accounted for by the speech and language unit that is integrated into the school. The majority of pupils start in school with average levels of attainment, but a significant number come in well below average as the school has a well deserved reputation for integrating pupils with learning difficulties into its classes. The inspectors judged the overall level of attainment when pupils start at the school to be in line with that found nationally.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22229	Roger Brown	Lead inspector	Personal, social and health education and citizenship
10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector	
8864	Peter Clifton	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology
8056	Howard Probert	Team inspector	Music Physical education Special educational needs
1723	Michael Milton	Team inspector	Science Geography History
32257	Richard Chalkley	Team inspector	English Art and design Religious education

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the school is good.** As a result of good teaching and learning, pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory. Most pupils attain above the expected standards in science by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics and English are average. Standards in reading are good, but unsatisfactory levels of achievement in writing depress the standards in the subject overall. All aspects of the school's provision are successfully co-ordinated to ensure that the significant number of pupils with high levels of special educational needs benefit from the education the school provides. Pupils' attitudes to school and relationships with each other are very good. The good leadership of the headteacher plays a significant part in creating the ethos of the school. He is well liked by the pupils and staff, and his influence in creating and maintaining the 'Milford family' is a key aspect of the school's success. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils with special educational needs are successfully integrated and provision for them is very good.
- Pupils achieve well in science, religious education, the arts and sport. Music provision is very good. Pupils could do better in writing.
- Very good links with parents reinforce the high standard of care in the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work and to each other are very good. They behave very well.
- Pupils' interest in school life and the very extensive enrichment programme the school provides are very strong.
- Most teachers do not use the assessment data that they have to work out patterns or trends in learning. Lacking this information, they do not tell pupils clearly how well they are doing and what they must learn to help them improve, particularly in writing.

The school has made a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards declined, partly reflecting the increased number of pupils with special educational needs admitted to the school. They are now rising again, although not fast enough in writing. The key issues identified at the time of the last inspection have, in the main, been addressed. However, the issues of developing the skills for independent learning could still be improved, as could the use the staff make of assessment data. At present this school is rich in data, but this is not used effectively to target underachievement or to plan the next steps of learning. Managers analyse the data, but the teachers make too little use of this information when planning what they are teaching, or informing pupils of what they need to do to improve.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	D	D	D
mathematics	C	E	C	C
science	B	C	B	A

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

**Pupils' achievement is satisfactory** throughout the school. However, it is good in the arts and sport where the wealth of extra-curricular activities gives great encouragement to all pupils. It is particularly good in music. Standards overall are average; they are above average in reading, science, art and design, music, religious education and physical education, but below average in

writing. The school recognises that it needs to raise standards in writing and to improve issues such as problem solving in mathematics if it is going to raise standards overall. Girls achieve higher standards than the boys, but a greater proportion of boys than girls have special educational needs.

This is a school where pupils' care and welfare are seen to be of equal importance with all other aspects of their development. Pupils care for each other very well and show very good respect for their environment. **Overall, pupils' personal development is good.** Pupils' moral development is very good, their spiritual and social development is good. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, but they would benefit from experiencing a wider range of cultural activities. Pupils' attitudes are very good; they really enjoy school and want to learn and their behaviour is very good. The levels of attendance at the school are also good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning in the school are good.** All teachers insist upon and get high standards of behaviour. This allows the pupils to concentrate on their work and make good progress in lessons. The planned integration of pupils with special needs using the school's carefully structured 'provision map' benefits all the pupils. However, teachers do not make the best use of the wealth of assessment data they possess and this limits their ability to improve the pace of learning. In the very best lessons teachers motivate the pupils by creating excitement and drama. Teachers challenge pupils to think about what they already know and apply this to their new knowledge, giving them a good depth of understanding.

The curriculum provided by the school is good. The school has expended much effort planning the curriculum to integrate all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The breadth of the curriculum across the arts and sport is also noteworthy. The very good levels of care, guidance and support provided for the pupils combined with a very good partnership with parents make the pupils feel very secure and happy. As a result, they enjoy coming to school and their learning clearly benefits from this.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good, overall.** The headteacher has successfully created an ethos where staff and pupils are happy and motivated. All staff manage their responsibilities well and, although the management is satisfactory, there are aspects that need improving. The focus on standards is insufficiently sharp. The school is carrying forward around ten per cent of its budget each year. The action planning to manage these areas lacks sufficiently precise criteria and objectives. The work of the governing body is good. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and fully comply with all statutory requirements. Their links with the community are strong and their work supports the school well.

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

Parents hold the school in high regard. A small number raised the issue of bullying, but almost all commented on the fact that issues were dealt with quickly and effectively. There is much enthusiasm for the quality of the extra-curricular provision, particularly the music and drama. Pupils like the school. They think that this is a good school. The inspection team agree with these views.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise standards in writing.
- Develop the strategic planning process to sharpen action planning.
- Make more effective use of assessment data to set targets and raise standards.

- Improve problem solving in mathematics.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Standards and achievement overall are satisfactory. Standards in English are average because although writing falls just below the expected level, the standards in reading are above average. Standards in mathematics are in line with the national average, and standards in science are above average. The achievements of the pupils attending the speech and language unit are very good, they make good progress. Girls in the school achieve higher levels than boys in Years 3 to 6 and their achievement is good in all subjects. Girls achieve standards that are at least as good as the national average in English and mathematics and above in science, whereas the boys achieve standards that are below the national average in English and mathematics, but above in science.

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

- Pupils achieve well in reading, science, religious education, the arts and sports.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, often exceeding the targets they are set.
- Too little practice in extended writing holds back the pupils' achievement in English and in elements of other subjects, such as geography.
- Pupils' standards and achievements in reading, speaking and listening are consistently above average; this is despite the fact that a small but significant number of pupils have recognised communication problems.
- All pupils achieve well in music, especially singing, thanks to the high quality teaching they receive.

#### **Commentary**

1. Attainment on entry to the school is average. Standards for most pupils are at least average in the core subjects of the curriculum by the end of Year 6. However, this has not been the case in every cohort: two years ago there was a notable decline in standards. This has now changed: standards have risen in mathematics and science, and they are rising in information and communication technology. Standards in writing are the weakest element in all the subjects, and although able pupils achieve high standards in this aspect, too few pupils, particularly boys, are achieving the expected levels. On the other hand, the reading and speaking and listening elements of English are taught very effectively and all pupils have good levels of achievement in these areas. This includes those pupils with recognised communication problems. The school's success in these areas builds upon the standards seen at the time of the last inspection. At that time, standards were found to be above average in all areas of English, and in some aspects of mathematics and science. The apparent reduction in standards in writing and using and applying mathematics can in part be accounted for by the school's success in attracting even more pupils with a wide range of significant special needs (currently four times the county average). This is distorting the overall results achieved by the school in the end of Year 6 assessments<sup>1</sup>. It does not reduce the standards achieved by individual pupils, but it does reduce the average point scores used to compare the results in other schools. Consequently, the school starts from a position of some disadvantage when its overall results are compared to apparently similar schools. The number of pupils entering the school after the normal starting time in Year 3 is not great, but

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<sup>1</sup> All levels of the National Curriculum are awarded a point score. The average for all pupils taking the test is used to grade schools in each year. The expected average points at the end of Year 6 is 27. Tables are adjusted to reflect the national average score before grading. The grades are shown in the summary.

the profile for these pupils shows that at least half of those joining the school later have significant special needs. This is in addition to the higher than normal numbers of pupils with statements of special needs that start in the school in Year 3.

2. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in the speech and language unit make good progress throughout the school and most achieve their individual targets and some exceed them. Teachers and learning support staff are guided by detailed education plans and most lessons, especially in English and mathematics, are adapted well to meet their learning needs. The special educational needs map of provision is used to track pupils' progress as they move through the school.
3. At the time of the last inspection, the pupils were achieving standards in excess of the national expectations in music, and in aspects of mathematics, science, religious education and physical education. This is still the case in all respects, except using and applying mathematics. This school places great emphasis on integrating all of its pupils and giving them the opportunity to truly succeed in at least one aspect of the curriculum. It does this by offering a truly rich and broad curriculum and, as a result, standards in music are above expectations, particularly in regard to singing, where the quality is outstanding. Standards in reading, all aspects of science, art and design, religious education and physical education are above average.

**Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.0 (26.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.1 (25.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.7 (28.4)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 104 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

The following table compares attainment at the time of the last inspection and comments upon the reasons for change.

**Achievement and standards at age eleven**

	Attainment in 1998 measured in national assessments	Current judgements for standards in 2004	Pupils' achievement in relation to prior attainment	Comments
English	Above average	Above average in reading, which is much stronger than writing. This is below average, depressing the scores for the subject in the end of Key Stage 2 assessments.	Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but this is not always consistent, especially in writing. Pupils' achievement is good in reading, speaking and listening.	Few pupils write at length, and, whilst most are confident expressing their ideas in writing, they are better at planning their work than completing it.
Mathematics	Average overall, but above average in the basic skills	Average	Progress and achievement in the basic skills are still good, but problem solving skills are weak.	Teachers' high levels of confidence in this subject are reflected in the pupils' work and progress.

Science	Average	Above average	Pupils' achievement is good and they make significant progress in developing their scientific knowledge and skills.	The school places a strong emphasis on scientific enquiry, allowing pupils to achieve good levels of understanding.
Information and communication technology	No national assessments, but attainment judged to be in line with national expectations	Average and improving	Pupils achieve satisfactorily. They make very good progress when given access to the computer suite, but this progress is more limited in day-to-day use as pupils do not yet have ready access to computers at all times.	The use of a specialist support assistant means that pupils have access to high quality guidance and, as a result, they enjoy using ICT.
Religious education	No national assessment, but attainment judged to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus	Above expectations set out in the agreed syllabus	Pupils make good progress in this subject. They apply what they have learned confidently to other aspects of their work.	Pupils listen attentively, and share their views confidently, enjoying the work they cover.

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

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good and have improved since the previous inspection, whilst their attendance and punctuality are good. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is still good overall. These aspects make a significant contribution towards the success of the pupils' learning.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good attitudes of the pupils is a strength of the school as this allows all pupils to mix well and to support each other in their learning.
- The very good behaviour of the pupils is a strength of the school. It means that lessons start promptly, work is not interrupted and the atmosphere is calm and purposeful.

### **Commentary**

4. Although the level of attendance has dropped slightly since the previous inspection, it is still above the national average. The main reason for the decline is the growing number of holidays taken by families during term time. The school has good procedures to promote attendance, which it uses well. The good efforts of parents ensure that the majority of pupils are punctual. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and most lessons commence promptly.

## Attendance

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

5. The pupils' interest in school life is very good. The school stimulates in them a desire to learn. The school provides a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. These are open to all pupils and approximately 80 per cent of pupils participate in at least one activity. For instance, the school has football teams for each year. Such good individual participation largely accounts for the very good confidence and self-esteem shown by most pupils. This very good provision allows many of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, to discover talents and skills in the arts and sports that significantly strengthen the school's standards in the broader curriculum.
6. Pupils are encouraged to be enterprising and to help in school. The 'Kids' Council' meets weekly and put forward whole school views. In addition there are Year 6 mentors, class monitors and pupils in charge of setting up assemblies. Pupils recognise that they have a role to play in running the school and that their voice will be heard. This encourages their positive attitudes to learning.
7. The school's active promotion of good relationships is very evident. Relationships are good amongst pupils and between pupils and staff. Older pupils readily look after the younger ones, as was demonstrated by a Year 6 girl taking a Year 3 for first aid treatment after lunch. Bullying, racism and harassment, although occurring occasionally, are very rare. Through personal, social and health education, the use of the 'Kids' Council' and assemblies, pupils are given the confidence to report any incidents. In addition, staff are well aware of the need to nip incidents in the bud.
8. The school is confident about its procedures to set high standards of pupils' conduct and this obviously works. Behaviour throughout the school is very good and there have been no exclusions in the previous twelve months. Pupils are very polite. They stand back, open doors and ask visitors if they need directions. Pupils are proud of their school, which is a very tidy place. During the inspection there was no evidence of graffiti, litter or vandalism.
9. The school is currently putting a lot of effort and training into the pupils' spiritual awareness, which currently is good. In morning assembly they are taught to be aware of an inner self and use silent prayer. In a Year 4 classroom, where there was a re-enactment of the Passion, all took part and some were clearly moved by the aura of events being portrayed. The pupils have a good awareness that they are 'living in' and are a 'part of' a community. They work alongside others of different abilities and mix well. They are aware that not everyone has been brought up in the same way or has the same advantages. From their lessons on Judaism and Islam they are beginning to respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The school ethos ensures that the majority of the pupils are very well aware of right and wrong. They realise why chastisement is occasionally necessary and they respond well. They also respond very well to praise and reward. Appreciation of their own and other cultural traditions is satisfactory. The school is twinned with a local village primary school. It takes part in country dancing and attends the nearby Wells Festival. Multicultural dance has been performed in school through Street Dance and Afro-Caribbean, Jamaican dancing.
10. Pupils with special educational needs demonstrate very good attitudes to school and learning. In cases where pupils have behavioural problems, both teachers and support staff work

diligently to implement agreed behaviour management plans and to ensure that their needs are met in the classroom and wider school setting. For example, there is a range of activities to improve their social and behavioural skills, including friendship groups and special lunchtime activities. There is good evidence to show that those pupils who have been excluded from other schools fit in successfully in this school. The ethos of the school with its strong emphasis on integrating everyone makes a significant contribution to the quality of the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are usually effective. The assessment of pupils' work is thorough, but the use the school makes of the information gathered is not as effective as it could be. The curriculum is well planned and broad. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The school's partnership with the parents is very good. The school's relationships with the community and other schools are good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in school is good. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The integrated planning ensures the effective teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum benefiting all the pupils.
- Teachers' high expectations for pupils' very good behaviour help everybody to learn effectively and allow pupils to be enthusiastic about their learning.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and their respect for all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, are reflected in the high quality of the lessons.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of the assessment data they have to analyse what has gone well, or less well, or to plan for next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise different types of writing across a range of subjects.
- Independent learning opportunities for all pupils are satisfactory, but not fully developed.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 55 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	12 (22%)	34 (62%)	8 (14 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

11. The quality of teaching is consistently good across all year groups. In part, this arises from the successful centralised planning the school has developed. This is linked to centralised resources, matching the needs identified in the planning process. All teachers make good use of these facilities to ensure that they cover all essential elements of the curriculum. Teachers are clear about the objectives they have for each lesson and plan successfully to meet these. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. There is now greater consistency and much more structure to the work of the teachers.
12. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, and sometimes very good. The consistency of the planning and the setting of targets appropriate to their individual needs ensure that pupils with a diverse range of needs obtain the kind of support they require. Tasks

and activities are well matched and pupils work productively in group activities. The close partnership between teachers, support staff and visiting professionals, which enables pupils to learn effectively, is a major factor in their good achievement. The school's good use of staff with specialist knowledge to intervene before difficulties become severe particularly benefits these pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator not only contributes to the good quality of the planning but provides a very good model of teaching. A strong and particularly effective feature of teaching and the pupils' learning is the fully integrated classes. The very successful inclusion of all pupils in all aspects of the curriculum is a notable feature in the school. All teachers understand about special needs teaching and they apply this knowledge to the benefit of all pupils' learning. The school is currently working towards a 'dyslexia awareness award'. The impact of this work is not just on those pupils with dyslexia: teachers apply the principles to their work with able pupils, but structure their approach at a much higher level. Equally, pupils who have neither special needs nor particular talents are given good help with their learning by the knowledgeable teaching assistants, who readily use their initiative to pick up on difficulties and provide accurate and helpful support when needed. In this way, the well-trained support staff make valuable contributions to the overall quality of learning.

13. Other elements in the good quality teaching include the teachers' good command of their subjects. They are confident in the content of the material they are teaching, giving clear explanations and answering pupils' questions honestly and accurately. They are not afraid to let pupils know that they too can make mistakes, and that often we learn best from understanding where we have gone wrong rather than always expecting to be right. In the most successful lessons teachers are not afraid to use their own experiences to interest and to challenge pupils in the work they cover. The pupil's learning is positively influenced by the background and enthusiasm of their teachers. As a result, pupils are developing skills and talents, notably in music, the arts and sports, where their standards and performance exceed those usually found in similar schools.
14. The climate in all the classrooms is productive; pupils work hard, concentrate well and usually achieve the objectives the teachers have set. Teachers expect and get very good behaviour from the pupils. Teachers and other adults exercise their authority fairly and the pupils respect and like them because of this. As a result, pupils can be relied upon to behave well, and the teachers can be adventurous in the way they teach. In some high quality lessons teachers use drama to spark pupils' interest and involvement, in others, the interactive whiteboards are used creatively to capture pupils' imagination. Throughout the school, the teachers' enthusiasm is apparent and the time and effort they expend is repaid in the pupils' good levels of engagement and their active interest in their work. For instance, on a number of occasions, pupils whose interest has been captured carry out further research into the aspects they have been learning about at home and then bring this new information into school the following day.
15. Pupils' learning is good. Pupils can explain confidently and clearly what they already know, what they have to do at any point, and what they understand. Most can ask searching questions and all show a desire to learn. However, too often they are uncertain about what they need to do next, what their target should be to take them to the next stage and how they can help themselves to learn more effectively. Teachers mark the pupil's work conscientiously, but only a few indicate the next steps the pupils need to take. All pupils, including those with quite severe special needs, collaborate with their peers or with adults well, but there were few occasions during the inspection when pupils were expected to work independently. Even the well structured homework used throughout the school is mainly concerned with reinforcement of class work rather than developing new learning. Opportunities to practise writing at length and for different purposes are missed. Skills such as note taking are good, but pupils rarely write an extended piece of work with a particular objective in mind. This holds back the development of their writing skills.
16. Assessments are carried out regularly and the results recorded and reported. However, whilst the school possesses a great deal of data on pupils' achievement at all stages in school, the uses of this data are limited. At present, management analyses trends, strengths and

weaknesses and supplies this information to the teachers, but it is not always used sufficiently well. In some instances, particularly where the pupils have identified special needs, teachers use this well to plan the next steps. However, teachers reliance on the centralised plan tends to dictate the next steps for the majority of pupils rather than their own assessment of what has been successful and what the pupils have really understood. The outcome of this is that, at times, some pupils are marking time; they already know about what they are being asked to do and understand it sufficiently well not to require further practice. This slows the pace at which they make higher levels of achievement.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum provision is good. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. Accommodation and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Visitors and visits improve pupils' learning.
- Pupils have many opportunities for involvement in musical activities.
- A promising start has been made to establishing links between subjects.
- The curriculum is evaluated, but not rigorously enough.

## **Commentary**

17. The broad and balanced curriculum is based on national guidance that has been adapted to the school's needs. All statutory requirements are fully met. The planning is recorded electronically, and details of learning resources are linked to this planning. The time allocations to different subjects are balanced, and help to ensure that there are good learning opportunities in each subject. The school has started to make valid links between subjects, for example, between history and English. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is well planned and taught, and is based on national guidance. It includes appropriate provision for education about relationships and sex, and the misuse of drugs. Since the last inspection, the school has addressed the key issue of ensuring that all pupils receive their full entitlement to the curriculum. The school evaluates its curriculum and identifies aspects for improvement, but this evaluation is not rigorous enough. As a result, weaknesses have not been addressed as quickly as they should, for example, in mathematical problem solving.
18. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those with Statements of Special Educational Needs, is very good. Pupils' needs are identified early and pupils are assessed carefully. The quality of the subsequent education plans is very good. A particular strength is the inclusion of pupils in lessons. Learning support staff and teachers, led by the school's experienced co-ordinator, work very well together to provide effective support and guidance so that pupils make good progress. Each pupil has a detailed Individual Education Plan with achievable targets. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school is fully accessible to pupils with special educational needs.
19. A notable feature of the speech and language provision is the effective contribution made by the teacher for specific learning difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs already get a great deal of structured multi-sensory work to raise their phonic awareness. The teacher for specific learning difficulties provides good strategies to help pupils having difficulties with phonics, reading and high frequency words. Also, she leads small group work with a focus on initial letter sounds, medial vowel sounds, digraphs and two letter blends.

20. The curriculum is enriched by activities available for all pupils as well as activities that pupils can choose. For music, all Year 3 pupils have recorder lessons, and all Year 6 pupils follow a music technology course with ICT that is taught by an outside specialist. In addition, parents pay for about 100 pupils to learn to play musical instruments, and they are taught by the LEA's peripatetic music teachers. Pupils have the opportunity to perform in a variety of groups, including an orchestra and a choir. In the last academic year, the whole school took part in an African music and dance workshop. Each year group has a living history day each year when, for example, the Year 6 pupils role play a day in a Victorian school and Year 5 pupils work with outside specialists in a variety of activities that involve working with Tudor costumes and artefacts. Residential courses are available to all pupils in Years 5 and 6. Year 5 pupils visit an outdoor pursuits centre and Year 6 pupils visit the Isle of Wight, where they study a variety of subjects. There are two productions each year, and about 200 pupils altogether are involved in these.
21. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' participation in sports. Local rugby and tennis clubs provide coaches for some sports to augment the provision of the school's teachers. In addition, students from the nearby secondary school provide coaching in hockey and netball. The school provides competitive matches for several teams in a good range of sports.
22. A high proportion of parents consider that the school provides a good range of activities that their children find interesting and enjoyable. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and 75 per cent of the school's pupils take part in these. These clubs include a very wide range of sports, dance, drama, music, art, environment, chess and cycling. In a few cases, clubs are targeted to the needs of particular pupils, but most activities are open to all pupils.
23. The school prepares pupils well for transfer to secondary schools. Pupils attend subject days for mathematics and design and technology at nearby schools. The local primary and secondary schools teach common units of work at the end of the summer term and the start of the autumn term to help pupils transfer between schools without reducing their rates of progress.
24. The school's accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum well, including a large hall, a library and ICT suite, and a small room for teaching catch-up classes. There is a large playground and good-sized playing field. However, not all parts of the school are accessible to pupils with disabilities. The school has 15 classrooms, although it hopes to have 16 classes next September. Pupils in three classes still have to go outside to reach the toilets. The induction of new teachers has been effective and they are making a good contribution to the quality of education that the school provides. The overall quality of learning resources is good, with few weaknesses. The school is implementing plans to improve provision for ICT, as there are insufficient resources at present to maximise the contribution of ICT to pupils' learning in other subjects.

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

Arrangements for the pupils' care, welfare, health and safety and the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are very good. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's commitment to a fully inclusive approach is a model of good practice; all pupils benefit from the high levels of care and support that the school has established to make this possible.
- The school's involvement of its pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is a strength of the school.

## Commentary

25. The school's named and trained child protection person ensures that all staff are aware of their relevant responsibilities. The school has a detailed and up-to-date written policy and all documentation is stored securely. Staff follow the procedures effectively and use their initiative well to take action to prevent minor issues developing into greater difficulties. There is very good liaison with the local social services and there are currently no cared for, refugee or traveller children.
26. The headteacher is the named health and safety person and with the named governor ensures that all risk assessments are constantly being reviewed. All fire-fighting, physical educational and portable electrical equipment are 'in date' and checked and fire exercises held every term. All exits are accessible and well marked. Good use is made of outside professional help such as police, fire service and school nurse. Accident and medicine procedures are thoughtful, caring and efficient. The school has six fully trained first aid persons. Lunches are eaten in hygienic conditions and the school possesses a very effective Internet Safety Policy, which it enforces with the pupils. As a result of this careful and consistent approach, the school has an air of calm and order. Pupils' attitudes reflect this atmosphere, which in turn benefits their learning.
27. The special unit attached to the school makes provision for up to twelve pupils with speech and language difficulties. Good specialist facilities are provided to meet these pupils' individual needs. They are fully integrated into school life and taught mainly in lessons with other pupils and sometimes within smaller withdrawal sessions. The speech and language therapist works effectively with individual pupils in assessment sessions. She also collaborates closely with teachers and support staff in the classes with pupils with speech and language difficulties, as well as working one-to-one with pupils she observes in order to link language work to class topics. She also runs a 'signing club' and leads 'talk groups'. A clear and effective outcome of her work is the way all staff and pupils have adopted 'signing' as part of their classroom communication systems. Pupils who have special talents are given many opportunities to practise their skills and tackle a range of challenges and new experiences in the extensive extra-curricular programme.
28. From talking to pupils and parents it is very clear that all pupils have someone to whom they can turn for a comforting word at any time. This was witnessed when one Year 5 girl personally went up to the headteacher, after school, with a piece of writing of which she was very proud and on which she was highly commended. Pupils also emphasised the confidence and trust that they had in the playground mentors. The overall access that the pupils have to well-informed support, advice and guidance is good and is mostly from feedback with their teacher and the headteacher. Pupils set their own targets with their teacher and these are discussed at parents' meetings. Marking in exercise books is systematic, but does not tell pupils what they need to do next to reach the next level or how they can improve their work. Induction arrangements for pupils starting at the school are good. The main feeder infant school is next door and teachers liaise and exchange information and ideas. The pupils spend at least one day in the junior school, for example, in the computer suite, on familiarisation, whilst new parents come in for a going up evening.
29. The school is very good at involving its pupils in decisions about the life of the school. This is usually through the School Council, but also from ideas gained at assemblies and personal and social education lessons. All pupils contribute very well and their views are taken seriously. Consequently, the pupils now have their own suggestion boxes, benches, games and markings in the playground and very clean and very well decorated toilet areas.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and other schools and colleges have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. Links with the community are still good. All of these aspects contribute significantly towards the success of the pupils' learning.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils know their parents support the school and, as a result, this strengthens their positive attitudes and reinforces their willingness to learn.
- The positive and enlightened attitude the school takes to integrating all pupils into school life is reinforced by its high quality links with other schools. It shares its facilities with feeder schools and special schools to the mutual benefit and experience of everyone.

### Commentary

30. From talking to parents and from comments on returned questionnaires, it is clear that a very high percentage consider Milford Juniors to be a good school and the inspectors agree with this. The school shows very good practice in that it displays clearly, on its notice boards, the results of returned parent questionnaires and also those of its pupils.
31. Information to parents is very good. All receive a prospectus and the governors' report, both of which contain all current statutory information. Pupils' reports are clear for parents to understand. They report on all subjects of the curriculum, state clearly what a child can do and propose realistic targets. Parents are welcomed to 'meet the teacher' evenings termly and teachers can also be seen, at 'short notice' during the daytime. Popular educational evenings have been held on 'keeping up with your children' and 'supporting homework'. The weekly newsletters are very informative and popular. Parents feel involved with the school and the pupils' attitudes reflect the positive view they hold of the school.
32. The school works hard to involve its parents. A questionnaire goes out every two years and parents have helped with ideas towards a cleaner school, bullying precautions and homework provision. Procedures to deal with any concerns and complaints are good. The school's complaints procedure is clear and unambiguous and the majority of concerns are dealt with at a personal level. It is rare for matters to require a formal resolution.
33. The parents make a good contribution towards the pupils' learning. Several parents come in regularly and help with reading, general assistance, trips out, extra-curricular provision, concerts and shows. The Parent-Teacher Association is highly appreciated by the school. It arranges sponsors and social events; it contributes considerable funding towards books, computer equipment, videos and CD players. Parents express appreciation of the home-school reading book and sign that they have seen homework, which includes literacy, numeracy and reading on a regular basis.
34. Educational links with other schools in the Yeovil Federation are very good. All phases of education share expertise and training. The school welcomes trainee teachers from two universities and work experience students from local secondary schools. The mechanism for transfer of pupils to secondary schools is efficient and caring.
35. Links with the community are good. The pupils are part of Somerset Music and share football facilities with Yeovil FC. A local firm has sponsored football and netball strips and shops supply prizes for Christmas and summer fayres. At Christmas time the pupils sing carols in Yeovil town centre and at a local old people's home. Both the Yeovil Baptist and Episcopal Church ministers come in regularly and take assemblies. The school is often used by a local stage theatre group and Yeovil Operatic Society.

36. For several years the school has made good provision to share its facilities with two local special schools. This allows individual pupils from the schools to come with their carers and integrate socially into classes. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed of their children's progress and are invited to participate in reviewing their future needs. Effective use is made of home-school books for communication purposes. When appropriate, there are planned opportunities for regular meetings with parents of pupils experiencing behaviour, social or emotional problems.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The governors are fully involved in all aspects of the school and take their responsibilities very seriously; the governance of the school is good. The leadership of the school is good. The headteacher has created a positive ethos, which all staff subscribe to and support. Management is satisfactory, with some good elements.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the school has created an effective staff team.
- Subject leaders and all members of staff are positive; the team spirit created is reflected in the wealth and quality of extra-curricular activities that take place in the school.
- The governing body gives good quality support and direction to the development of the school.
- The management of the school has created systems that aim to achieve quality, but the impact of these has not been fully evaluated; for instance the assessment analysis carried out by the managers is not yet used effectively by the teachers.
- The action planning to manage improvement lacks sufficiently precise criteria and objectives.
- The management of the budget is over-cautious; a large and growing budget surplus is not allocated precisely to meet the needs the school has identified.

### **Commentary**

37. The governing body makes a significant contribution to the leadership of the school and its successes. It is fully involved in strategic planning and formulating policies, and supports staff in implementing them. All statutory requirements are met. Governors keep in close touch with the school's work across all its aspects and this cements the partnership between the school and the governing body into an effective team. The pattern of the governing body's work meshes well with the school's development cycle, so that both are influential. Governors are very well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and deal with them openly and frankly, contributing fully to the development planning. Performance management procedures are taken seriously by the governing body and monitored closely.
38. The leadership of the school is effective. There is a consistent drive for quality in all aspects of the school's work, although this is not having a rapid enough impact on improving the performance of the pupils. There is a tendency to assume that getting the systems right, for instance, the planning and the integration of the resources with this, will mean that standards will rise as a consequence. In practice, the teachers use the planning effectively to get full coverage of the curriculum, but do not combine this with the assessment information they have to hand to sharpen the focus of what they teach. As a consequence, some pupils are going over needlessly what they already know and understand. In other instances, such as in English, so much care is taken to structure the pupils' learning that they spend more time planning and thinking about what they will write and do than practising, analysing and refining their skills.
39. Leadership and management for special educational needs are very good. The knowledgeable special needs co-ordinator is a member of the school management group and has constructed a highly committed team of support staff, who contribute significantly to pupils' achievements. His relationships with teaching staff are very good. The priorities of the special

needs department are not only fully understood by teachers, but teachers are committed to their implementation in their classrooms. In this way the policy of complete integration is successful.

40. Staff form a strong team, they share a common sense of purpose and make an effective contribution to the school's current goals and values. Relationships are friendly and characterised by mutual respect. The school is organised efficiently with very good use made of the high quality administration staff. The management is reflective, informed on the whole by sound management practice. Essential functions are covered well and procedures are not unduly bureaucratic. All teaching staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and personal objectives, and have ready access to guidance, support and relevant training. The delegation of responsibilities is effective. This enhances the good quality teamwork, as staff are motivated to promote their particular responsibilities and are keen to contribute to the school's success.
41. The headteacher and the senior managers spend a lot of time and energy supporting the teachers by putting structures and systems into place. A more critical and rigorous approach to examining the effectiveness of the impact of this work would help all staff. Managers are constantly seeking solutions and answers to problems as they arise, whereas probing questioning and deeper analysis might allow teachers and managers to work more productively, rather than harder. The school's strong and very successful commitment to including all pupils in all aspects of its work means that everyone benefits from equality of opportunity. Nobody is excluded from any activity. Gifted and talented pupils are encouraged to develop their skills. The small numbers of pupils from different cultures are actively encouraged to share their cultural heritage. All pupils, boys and girls alike, are given many opportunities to exercise their skills and explore a wide range of activities and events.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	905,992
Total expenditure	897,849
Expenditure per pupil	2,211

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	72,470
Balance carried forward to the next	80,613

42. Finances are managed efficiently and scrupulously and the deployment of resources discussed and agreed with governors. The principles of best value underpin all decisions about the acquisition and deployment of resources. At the time of the last inspection, when the present headteacher took charge, there was a deficit budget; this had to be addressed by making teachers redundant. Partly as a result of this experience, the management of the current budget is over-cautious. In the last financial year the school had a budget surplus amounting to eight per cent of its income. This year, thanks in part to unforeseen changes in the staffing, the surplus looks set to rise to eleven per cent. The school has ambitious ideas about how to use this money. It is considering building a new classroom to meet the needs of its expanding numbers and would also like to build a music room. This would minimise the disruption that currently takes place as pupils practise their music in corridors, on staircase landings and in whatever space is available. The ideas are sound, but as yet they are not backed up by a focused action plan with clearly established criteria and objectives.
43. Despite the over-cautious approach to spending, the school has used its income wisely. Staff appointments have been consistent with its priorities. Forty per cent of the current staff are competent musicians. This has helped to maintain the high status of music that existed at the time of the last inspection, and has seen the subject blossom further. The school is part of a pilot project to implement the 2003 national agreement on workforce reform. This is reinforcing the good atmosphere that already exists. Staff already feel valued in the school, and the sensitivity with which the school has managed changing staff circumstances, for instance,

maternity leave, job share and temporary appointments, is an integral part of the ethos that makes the school a good place to work in. A rolling programme of building work has improved the state of the existing accommodation. A good quality library is being developed and, more importantly, is used well by the pupils, as there is a librarian to support them. Taking these factors into account alongside the school's other successes, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing are just below average. The school is aware of this weakness and is taking action to improve it.
- Standards in reading and speaking and listening are above average.
- All pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and in reading, but not well enough in writing.
- Teaching is good overall, though there are some weaknesses in the teaching of writing.
- Leadership is committed and well informed.
- Inconsistent use is made of information gained from the assessment of pupils' progress.

#### Commentary

44. Overall, standards are average. The results in national tests have fallen since the previous inspection. Last year, the results in the end of Year 6 tests showed a small improvement on those of the previous year, but the standards achieved were still below the national average. The area of weakness is writing. The majority of pupils achieve at least average standards and a small number of able pupils, higher than average standards. However, over one fifth of the pupils taking the tests last year had recognised special needs. The focus of most of these needs is communication difficulties and this is reflected in the low levels of achievement in writing that they start with. Nevertheless, the achievements of all pupils in the other aspects of the subject are good, but in writing they are only satisfactory. The development of reading, and of speaking and listening skills is above average, a remarkable achievement given the low starting points of a significant number of pupils.
45. Pupils speak clearly, fluently and confidently. They are given good encouragement by all staff. Well thought out drama activities in English and in other subjects such as religious education and citizenship give pupils confidence to express themselves. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They read regularly, both in school and at home, and confidently describe the books they have read and why they have particular favourites. Writing has been a focus of the school development plan in the past year and the work the teachers have put in to improve this aspect of their teaching is beginning to show results. The teachers put a great deal of effort into getting pupils to plan their writing, structure it and think about plot and characterisation. So much time is spent on preparation, however, that too little time is spent on the task itself. As a result pupils have too little time to practise their actual writing, evaluate it and then refine it, and this is holding them back.
46. Pupils of all ages and levels of ability achieve well in reading and speaking and listening because of consistently good teaching. However, pupils' achievements in writing are below expectations as they are given insufficient time to practise what they have been taught. This is true for all pupils, whatever their level of ability. Those pupils identified with special educational needs are very well supported by their teachers and the assistants in reading and speaking and listening; as a result, they often make significant progress in these elements.
47. Whilst teaching and learning are good overall, examples of very good teaching and learning were observed. In the best lessons, teachers plan their work very carefully and use information about individual pupils so as to challenge them and develop their learning. All teachers ensure that pupils know about the purpose of the lesson and, as a consequence, the pupils have a realistic understanding of what they are trying to achieve. Teachers conduct

lessons at a very good pace, and consequently pupils are not bored. Throughout the school there is an insistence on very good behaviour; this allows the pupils to concentrate upon the tasks they are given. All staff praise pupils for their contributions in order to raise their confidence and self-esteem. All staff ask very good questions, enabling them to check pupils' knowledge and understanding as well as developing their learning. In the limited number of classrooms where they are available, teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards and computers to make their lessons interesting and exciting so that the pupils really enjoy learning. However, whilst teachers have made great efforts to ensure that all pupils plan their writing very effectively, they are not giving them sufficient time to regularly practise writing at length. The lack of practice is hindering pupils in the development of their confidence as writers and, as a consequence, they are less keen on writing than on other aspects of their work. They readily write notes for themselves about plot and characters. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 talk excitedly about their favourite authors and recognise why a piece of writing interests them, but they are uncertain that they can achieve good results as a writer as they are uncertain of their own abilities as writers.

48. The subject is well led and managed by a knowledgeable and experienced co-ordinator, who is a 'lead teacher' for the local education authority and, as such, is a very good role model for other teachers in the school. Since she has taken over the leadership of the subject, standards in writing have started to rise again. She monitors teachers' planning, observes them teaching, analyses samples of pupils' work and provides training for teachers and, as a result, is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. Resources are good and include a well-equipped library, which pupils use to research projects and personal interests.
49. As well as using nationally recognised tests each year, the school monitors pupils' progress each half term through internal writing tasks. As a result, the school has detailed information about each pupil's level of attainment. The use of this data to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and to plan lessons is inconsistent and not used effectively enough to raise standards in writing.

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

50. As a result of a recent evaluation of the use of literacy in other subjects, the co-ordinator has already identified the need for whole-school development work. There is a lack of consistency across all the classes. Basic rules of writing are not always applied, for example in religious education, and this leads to confusion amongst the pupils and a sense that the rules are not really important. There is relatively little extended writing in other subjects in order that pupils may practise good techniques that will help them to improve their writing skills. The use of computers to support literacy is satisfactory and is improving.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in respect of using and applying basic mathematical skills are good.
- The quality of the teaching is good and, as a result, pupils enjoy the subject.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those pupils with high abilities in the subject are supported well.
- Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is underdeveloped.

## Commentary

51. Overall standards in mathematics are now average in Year 6. At the time of the last inspection the standards were average overall with above average skills in using and applying mathematics. This element is still good. There was a marked decline during the intervening period, but this weakness has been addressed. Last year, the pupils in Year 6 achieved results in the end of year tests that were in line with the national average. This was a significant improvement on the results from the previous year and came about through the school's focus on improving teaching and learning skills in the subject. The school's improvement in the subject since the last inspection is now satisfactory. Pupils in the school are now achieving standards that are in line with those of similar schools and at times better. The standard of work seen in Years 3 and 4 is satisfactory, but there is a discernible improvement in the quality of work in Year 5, where it is good. The quality of work seen in Year 6 is satisfactory. Overall, girls achieve better results than boys but, as in other subjects, this is a reflection on the higher number of boys with special educational needs. There are two key factors which impact on the overall results in Year 6. Firstly, significant numbers of pupils with special needs and low numeracy skills join the school through Years 3–6. Although this does not affect how well pupils achieve, it does depress the school's overall results. Secondly, although basic number skills are good, pupils' problem solving skills are under-developed and this lowers test results.
52. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Time is used effectively and lessons are well planned. Teachers have very good management skills and pupils respond very well in class. They apply themselves well to their work and are keen to improve. Behaviour is very good and, as a result, staff and pupils have very good relationships. Teachers can joke with pupils and confess to their own mistakes; the outcome is confident pupils who are willing to ask questions and have a go when problems are difficult. The teachers work very effectively in year group teams sharing ideas and expertise. As a consequence, they are confident and show good subject knowledge. They give clear explanations and check that pupils understand the ideas being taught. In Year 6, higher-attaining pupils make good progress in developing algebra, deriving formulae from number sequences; this results from teachers' very good subject knowledge. In Year 4, average-attaining pupils develop their understanding of fractions well because the teacher captures their interest and gives clear explanations. There are some weaknesses in teaching and learning. These are most apparent in the classes where pupils are over-reliant on the teacher; in these lessons pupils are reluctant to have a go or to show that they can think independently. The most common problem relates to the final parts of lessons. Teachers do not always make sufficient time to review what has happened and then prepare pupils for the next step by priming them with ideas to promote new thinking.
53. The leadership of the subject is good. Teachers have been supported well through effective monitoring and opportunities for professional development. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The planning and the resources to support the subject are good, but evaluation of the subject by the teachers is not yet effective enough. The school has produced a large amount of data to identify the schools' strengths and weaknesses and to track the progress of individual pupils. For example, analysis of the 2003 tests in Year 6 indicates clearly that pupils did not answer questions involving word equations well. Although some teachers have taken action to improve weak problem solving skills, the strategy at whole-school level lacks coherence and drive. As a result, some pupils lack the confidence to tackle open ended problems or are unsure when asked to take on unfamiliar tasks involving several operations.
54. Pupils with particular needs are given good individual support to help develop skills or to focus attention on the teacher. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are good. Teaching assistants work sensitively and purposefully to provide them with good support. Particularly able pupils are identified and their needs are being met well in class. Teachers deploy teaching assistants flexibly. For example, in Year 5, after the teacher checked the pupils' skills in measuring angles, a group of pupils was selected to have additional support.

This benefits all pupils, not just those with identified special needs or particular strengths, but the majority of pupils, who only occasionally have particular needs.

55. Pupils express positive attitudes to the subject and think they are doing well. They value marking in books and help given by teachers. However, they do not have clear views about what they need to do to improve their work or understand targets they need to achieve next. Therefore their involvement in their own learning is underdeveloped.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

56. Pupils' use of number in other subjects is satisfactory. There are good examples of measuring and recording data in tables in science. Pupils use ICT to help draw graphs and bar charts. There is good use of the interactive whiteboard in Year 6, to support pupils' understanding of different angles. However, there is no strategy to promote numeracy across the curriculum in a coherent way. The activities happen in some classes, but not others. The activities that take place are not targeted at what pupils need reinforcing, but happen because they match the work that has been planned.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good teaching and learning result in pupils' good levels of achievement.
- Pupils complete plenty of work that involves scientific enquiry in all years.
- Teachers' marking is usually of a high quality, although pupils rarely respond to the constructive comments.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' work between different classes.

### **Commentary**

57. Standards in the subject are good and pupils' achievements in the subject are good. Their progress exceeds that of most other pupils from similar schools. Pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are above national averages. For example, many Year 6 pupils use the correct scientific vocabulary as they describe processes leading to irreversible and reversible changes, and many make generalisations from the data they collect as they investigate changes to an electrical circuit. Standards in scientific enquiry are above national averages. For example, pupils in Year 3 use a chart to help them identify the factors they are keeping the same and the factor they are changing as they plan an experiment. A weaker aspect of pupils' investigative work is that they rarely relate their conclusions to their scientific knowledge and understanding.
58. The good teaching and learning include some very good features. Teachers' subject knowledge is usually good and results in clear explanations and the use of questions that check what pupils understand as well as moving their learning forwards. Pupils carry out a good range of practical work and enjoy this learning. Teachers' planning includes matching work to the learning needs of different pupils, so that all pupils are challenged appropriately. Teaching assistants give effective support to pupils with special educational needs. Many teachers add comments to pupils' work that suggest an improvement or pose a question, but pupils rarely respond to these so that the marking does not help pupils' learning as much as it should. Teaching often builds on and extends pupils' earlier learning. Occasional weaknesses in teaching are that the explanation is imprecise or the work is too easy for higher-attaining pupils. The achievement of all pupils is good, including those with special educational needs, because the teaching challenges all pupils, who respond positively to the learning opportunities that are provided.

59. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Last summer, the well-informed co-ordinator monitored lessons, planning and pupils' work. She produced monitoring reports of a sound quality but has not had the opportunity to check that weaknesses have since been addressed. Consequently, there is not progression in pupils' learning in all aspects of scientific enquiry (for example, in presenting data in different types of graphs) and occasionally work is too easy for some pupils. The co-ordinator provides much informal support as teachers plan their lessons, some staff training and good guidance for assessment, and has improved and organised learning resources. Good progress has been made with science since the previous inspection.

### **Information and communication technology (ICT)**

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

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

- Overall, pupils' standards and achievements are average, but improving.
- Teaching in the computer suite is consistently good.
- The computer suite is used very effectively.
- The capacity for improvement is very good.
- The current use of ICT in other subjects is limited by resources.

#### **Commentary**

60. Standards are average in Year 6. There are strengths and weaknesses in standards and pupils' achievement across the subject. Pupils' skills and understanding in developing multimedia presentations are currently being taught and in this aspect, pupils are making rapid progress and achieving well. Standards here are above average. Pupils have also produced some high quality pattern designs in the style of William Morris. However, standards in using spreadsheets and aspects of e-mail are below expected levels. There is no difference in the achievements of boys and girls in the subject. Both groups of pupils make effective use of technology. Pupils with special educational needs clearly enjoy the opportunities they have to work with computers and their achievements are good. The gaps in knowledge and understanding of the older pupils are mainly due to weaknesses in curriculum provision in previous years. Standards are improving, although achievement seen during the inspection and over the longer period has only been satisfactory overall.
61. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are improving rapidly and achievement in the recently taught elements is good because of consistently high quality teaching and learning. Lessons in Year 5 on the control of traffic lights are particularly effective because higher attaining pupils are given work which involves a high level of challenge. This motivates them very well. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the teacher and the teaching assistant. High quality planning and very clear explanation by the teacher enable pupils to work confidently and independently with individual tasks. Very good teaching in Year 6 is enabling pupils to create high quality interactive work based on a science quiz. The teacher intervenes at the right moments during the lesson when she notices that points need to be clarified or further challenges given. The final part of the lesson is used to introduce new ideas, which causes a buzz of interest from the pupils as they leave the room.
62. The school has a very high quality computer suite, which is used well by all pupils. Teachers use the suite confidently and show a good knowledge of the programs being used. Good teaching captures the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils and they apply themselves to their work. Behaviour is very good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. However, outside of the suite, there are few opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills in different subjects as a normal part of each lesson because there are no computers in classrooms. Therefore the pupils have little opportunity to use the computer to aid their

research, and they do not see the computers as a tool for all learning but rather as a separate subject with a discrete set of skills. The school is keenly aware of this and has well advanced plans to rectify this situation, which is currently a barrier to pupils' learning and higher levels of overall achievement.

63. The leadership and management of the subject are effective. The staff work well as a team and have good subject knowledge. They share ideas openly and are keen to improve what they do. The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Given the expertise of the staff and the plans for development, the capacity for further improvement is very good.

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

64. The use of ICT in different subjects is satisfactory. Limited day-to-day access to computers is inhibiting usage, although the pupils are developing good skills in many areas. The school is waiting for new equipment to be installed. This will almost double the number of computers in the school and will allow pupils much more independent and regular access to the technology. The school has two interactive whiteboards, with plans for one in each class in September. Teachers are making good progress in using these to support learning.

### **HUMANITIES**

65. No **history** lessons were seen during the inspection and it is not possible to make a judgement about provision.
66. Evidence gained from displays, pupils' previously completed work, and discussions with the history co-ordinator and some Year 6 pupils indicates that standards are likely to be above national expectations. It is clear that the history days held in each year make the subject interesting and fun, and are a great stimulus to pupils' learning. For example, Year 6 pupils show a good historical knowledge and understanding of the Victorian period as they write in the role of railway navvies, and the building of the railways. Pupils in different years develop good historical skills as, for example, they use Victorian artefacts and Tudor portraits as evidence. They complete a good range of different writing tasks although they do not always apply all of the skills they have learnt in English lessons. The guidance on which teachers base their lessons varies in quality between the different years. The best guidance includes clear links with the teaching of English and advice about how teaching can develop pupils' thinking skills. The guidance gives teachers little advice about how to use ICT to enhance pupils' learning. The co-ordinator has held the post for a short time and has a clear vision about how to improve provision for history.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good range of steps are being taken to improve provision and pupils' achievements are improving.
- Teaching is good and often imaginative and, as a result, pupils enjoy the subject.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development and does not yet provide teachers or pupils with sufficient information about what they need to do to improve.

### **Commentary**

67. Standards in Year 6 are average. Year 6 pupils study the land use of the Somerset Levels; many pupils are recognising the links between physical and human geography. As Year 5 pupils compare a locality in London with a village in Somerset, they suggest reasons to explain

the land use differences. In one lesson, the lack of clarity in the aerial photographs made them difficult to interpret. The achievement of pupils in all year groups is satisfactory; there is no discernible difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy the subject and achieve well.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and so devise careful sequences of activities that interest the pupils and help them achieve well. For example, work on recycling involved a practical sorting activity with recyclable materials, and in work in groups pupils identified the pros and cons of different types of recycling. Work on the Amazon rain forest included a role-play of some of the tribes' activities. Tasks are well matched to pupils differing learning needs and, for example, there were four versions of the same recording sheet in a Year 3 lesson. In addition, the contribution of teaching assistants enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. Pupils have some good opportunities for enquiry as, for example, they investigate Ordnance Survey maps to compare two localities. Teaching usually provides good opportunities for pupils to learn collaboratively. Occasional instances of weakness in teaching were that whole-class teaching was too long, which slowed the pace of learning, there was insufficient matching of tasks to pupils' differing learning needs so that higher-attaining pupils did not make as much progress as they could.
69. In the lessons seen, pupils' achievement was at least satisfactory and in some respects good because of improvements to the learning resources and the guidance on which teachers base their lessons. This bodes well for the future. As these improvements continue, pupils' achievement is likely to improve and standards should rise.
70. There are instances when effective links are made with other subjects such as art and design and citizenship. The subject leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for improving provision, and has started to take several steps to secure this improvement, especially to the curriculum, although he has not had any time away from his class since last September. Teachers assess pupils' progress against the learning objectives for lessons, but there is not a whole-school system for recording the standards that pupils are achieving. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity and of other world faiths.
- Teaching is good, with one example of excellence. This lesson left the pupils excited and thoughtful about the experience they had been through.
- The co-ordinator is providing effective leadership and manages the subject well and as a result teachers approach the subject confidently and the impact of lessons is good.

### **Commentary**

71. Standards are above those expected by the Somerset Agreed Syllabus. Pupils' achievement is good, including that of pupils with special educational needs. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Bible because they learn about Old and New Testament stories, the meaning of Easter and Christmas and the Ten Commandments. They learn to apply their learning to their everyday lives. For example, Year 6 pupils discussed the need to have respect for each other and for other religions. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other world faiths are good. They use computers to research information about Islam, Hinduism and Judaism and learn about significant religious practices and festivals.

72. Teachers have attended training for the teaching of the subject and, as a result, teaching and learning are consistently good. An example of very good teaching was seen in Year 4 when the teacher skilfully used drama to develop pupils' understanding of The Passion of Christ. Outstanding teaching was seen in Year 3 where pupils sat mesmerised as the teacher read the story of the temptation of Jesus with excellent dramatic effect and then moved on to show excellent skills in the use of role play as she helped pupils to understand the significance of Lent and how to resist temptation.
73. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator monitors planning and pupils' work and delivers and organises training for staff. She has developed good links with outside agencies and arranges for occasional visits by church leaders to lead collective worship. The co-ordinator ensures that all areas of the Somerset Agreed Syllabus are covered and successfully helps to ensure that religious education makes a contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Resources are good and include a satisfactory range of non-fiction material the school library.

#### Example of outstanding practice

##### **A Year 3 lesson, part of a sequence about Lent. The theme was on the temptation of Jesus.**

Mesmerised children sat around the teacher's feet listening to the story, read with great drama.

"Find a space in the classroom", she instructs. "Go and stand on the top of the temple."

Pupils move, somewhat fearfully, and stand with heads bowed and eyes closed, as the teacher slowly and quietly moves between them.

"Go on – JUMP!" she whispers temptingly in their ears. "You'll be fine. God will save you. You're His son."

Some shiver, others block their ears with their hands. They don't want to hear it and do not wish to be tempted.

They think of things they might give up – "Jam doughnuts! My play station! Television!" they cry and practise their responses, with the help of a friend, to others who tempt them to give up.

"Don't give up now", says one. "You're nearly there!"

"Just keep going", says another. "You can do it."

"This is hard", says one.

"Jesus found it very difficult as well", says the teacher.

Pupils are excited by the experience they have been through, but they are thoughtful. As a result, they have a very good understanding of concepts about temptation and abstinence, and how the Bible story they have experienced relates to their own lives.

#### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

74. No lessons were observed in **design and technology** and it is not possible to make a judgement about provision.
75. Evidence was gained from design and technology displays, pupils' previously completed work, and discussions with the co-ordinator. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed making kites from their own designs. It was clear from pupils' work that they tested different materials and made decisions about which were most suitable and why. Pupils modified their designs as they constructed their models, and investigated the best ways of joining the materials together. Subject resources are well organised and suitably linked to units of work. There is an overall programme in place for the subject in each year and a brief plan for further development. The plan is insufficiently detailed or focused on improving subject standards.

#### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils enjoy the subject and are enthusiastic about it as a result of the teaching they receive.
- Leadership and management are good, resources are good and staff are encouraged to be creative in trying new ideas or bringing in outside experts. This positively promotes the subject throughout the school.

### **Commentary**

76. Pupils demonstrate good achievement and reach standards that are above average. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present good demonstrations which ensure pupils' good learning and very good attitudes towards the subject. They use their sketch books well to plan and modify their work. Teachers plan lessons carefully, ask good questions and encourage pupils to evaluate their own and others' work, all of which help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
77. As a result of the opportunities the school provides, pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and eager to experiment and improve their skills. The wide range of learning opportunities ensures that pupils of all abilities become familiar with using tools and materials for a variety of purposes. These include paint, charcoal, pastels, tie-dye, fabric printing and pencil. Pupils use computers to paint and design pictures, as well as to research the work of famous artists on the Internet.
78. The subject is well led and managed by a co-ordinator who has effectively developed and improved the quality and provision since the previous inspection. The quality and range of resources are good and include a good range of examples of the work of famous artists which are used to inspire pupils in their own work and help them to learn more about celebrated works of art. For example, in the library there is a display of high quality which helps pupils to learn about the life and work of Rembrandt.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of singing throughout the school is excellent.
- Over 100 pupils learn to play musical instruments.
- The range of extra-curricular activities provides good opportunities for pupils to pursue their studies.
- Very good resources enable pupils to have access to a wide range of musical experiences.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of staff to teaching and learning in the subject directly relate to the high level of success the pupils achieve in this subject.

### **Commentary**

79. In the work observed, pupils in all years attained standards well above the national average. Many pupils can read rhythms very well, are familiar with key words and can make compositions with interesting use of sounds and some very good improvisation. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good, and at times very good, progress and their achievements are good. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 4 were designing a graphic score in order to perform a short composition. They have already learned to combine the musical elements of pitch, duration, tempo and timbre. They worked enthusiastically and confidently to complete their tasks. Pupils in Year 6 were working on computers using software to apply music to a music video. To complete this work, they needed to understand the structure of a song, including the introduction chorus, break and verse ending. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, worked studiously to

complete their tasks. Extra-curricular clubs provide further enriching experiences, including a singing club, choir, chamber choir, recorders and orchestra, and provide experience for the many pupils who are learning to play instruments.

80. The quality of the teaching and learning is good overall, but is often very good. Lessons are well planned, with good opportunities for musical creativity. Teachers have very good levels of subject knowledge and this is reflected in the high quality of pupils' learning. Pupils work well, with intelligent interest and enthusiasm because of their teachers' commitment and zest for this subject. They organise themselves very purposefully in group work and share ideas well. The lessons are lively and interesting and there is a real sense of challenge in the work that is covered. Teachers expect and get very high standards; for instance, the quality of singing is at times outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well and work hard. Pupils show very good attitudes, and relationships, both between themselves and with teachers, are very good. Assessment is at an early stage of development and it is not used sufficiently to inform the planning of work.
81. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and, as a result, standards are very good. The music co-ordinator has only recently been appointed, but she has inherited well-established structures and traditions in the subject. She has clear ideas about the development of the subject, which include a review of lesson planning and training and support for class teachers. The school presents very good opportunities for pupils to learn instruments and all aspects of this facility are planned with the pupils' needs at the forefront of consideration. Approximately a quarter of the pupils have instrumental lessons and, judging from the sample of lessons seen, the quality of the musical experience is very good indeed.
82. The high standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and improved in some areas, for example singing.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**The quality of the singing is a striking feature of the very good music provision. Pupils sing with distinction reflecting tone, pitch, tempo and mood. For example, in hymn practice:**

Singing is extremely well taught with genuine enthusiasm and verve. It starts with the staff modelling the way to approach a song or hymn. The pupils listen attentively and then they analyse what they have heard in questions and answers with the teachers.

When pupils start to sing, they are encouraged to feel the impact of their voices. Teachers praise them when they match their singing to the mood of the music and the words they are singing. For instance, when singing the hymn 'Jesus in the Garden' the first two verses are sad, and the pupils pitched the volume of their voices to the atmosphere required. It was low and soft, echoing the sentiment of the words. However, the third verse is joyful. At this point the pupils raised the volume to such a pitch that the impact on the audience was startling. The pupils smile and, in a simple way, their attitudes match the required dramatic interpretation of the words. The teachers' disciplined approach to the task of singing is very effective. They start with warm-up exercises, explaining that it is just the same as using similar exercises in physical education. Pupils are taught to follow simple hand signals and to learn about breath control, muscle control and how to project their voices. This disciplined and knowledgeable teaching allows pupils to enjoy using their voices. They do so with great skill and very high levels of accomplishment.

#### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

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

- The subject knowledge of the co-ordinator and other staff and their enthusiasm for the subject ensure the subject is taught well.
- The very good range of extra-curricular opportunities for all age groups gives pupils many opportunities to experience a wide range of sports and activities. This greatly enhances pupils' involvement and enjoyment of the subject.

- The good contribution of teaching support staff allows pupils with special educational needs to participate fully in the subject.

- The quality of resources and their organisation for work in lessons and extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Assessment and recording of progress are at an early stage of development and do not yet have an impact on raising standards.

### **Commentary**

83. At the time of the inspection the focus of the work was on dance. Within the year groups observed, standards of work were above the average in two of the lessons and well above in the third. Pupils demonstrate good movement quality and understanding of how movements link together to form fluent sequences. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They concentrate on tasks and produce good work. In small groups they help each other, comment on and refine their work, developing their ideas through good teacher support. For example, Year 4 pupils were developing a dance sequence inspired by the weather, lying and getting up 'like the wind blowing' and moving 'like the rain falling'. By the end of the lesson they had planned and performed a sequence showing contrasts of speed and level of direction in innovative ways. In other lessons, they work in small groups and help, comment on and refine their work, developing their ideas through good teacher support.
84. Achievement is good overall and standards are above average. All the pupils show interest and enthusiasm, making good progress in lessons and, over time, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 learn to swim with over 60 per cent of those in Year 4 already able to swim 25 metres. This is a good improvement since the time of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs often achieve on a par with others. This is because support staff work hard to develop their skills in lessons.
85. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning were good or very good. There were good introductory sessions which highlighted objectives for the lesson and linked effectively into previous work and follow-up activities. In one lesson, a brief PowerPoint presentation reminded pupils of the terms working in 'cannon' and 'unison'. There was good focus on movement quality and group and partner work. Pupils knew what they were trying to achieve and good demonstration gave clear indication of the expected outcome.
86. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has clear vision and planning for the future. The very good resources are organised well and are accessible and the co-ordinator, with support from other teaching staff, has established a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which involve more than 200 pupils. These are wide ranging and include cross-country, running, dance, tag-rugby, football, netball as well as hockey. Progress since the last inspection is good, particularly the progress in swimming.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching is often exciting and thought-provoking.
- Teachers initiate discussions that challenge pupils appropriately and extend their understanding well.
- Good planning ensures good coverage of all aspects of the subject.

### **Commentary**

87. Pupils' achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good and the standards pupils attain are good. Teachers make good use of role play and drama to stimulate pupils' interest, thinking and understanding. Pupils in a Year 3 class, asked to consider the idea of

stereotypes, at first found it difficult to recognise that their own understanding and preconceptions might be stereotypical. However, the teacher, with skilful questioning, developed the pupils' comprehension of the task and allowed them to come to the realisation that their own assumptions might be inaccurate. By relating the work to pupils' experiences the teacher made the work vivid and understandable. All the pupils were fully engaged. They were able to voice simple moral principles about right and wrong. As the lesson developed the teacher challenged the pupils to think about themselves in other roles. Why shouldn't the boys take on tasks such as ironing? Why shouldn't the girls be mechanics? This provoked a good quality debate in the groups, in which both humour and perceptive insights of difficulties relating to equality of opportunity were voiced.

88. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the requirements. The planning is good, and this is cross-referenced to the good, well-organised and accessible resources. The policies are up-to-date, relevant and used well by staff, who understand the importance of making this subject relevant and interesting.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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