

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **COTSFORD INFANT SCHOOL**

Peterlee

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114151

Headteacher: Mrs H McGregor

Reporting inspector: Anne Currie  
25429

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> –9<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 189187

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school:              | Infant   |
| School category:             | Community  |
| Age range of pupils:         | 4-7 years  |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed  |
| School address:              | Cotsford Park<br>Horden<br>Peterlee<br>Co Durham |
| Postcode:                    | SR8 4TB  |
| Telephone number:            | 01915865372                                      |
| Fax number:                  | N/A  |
| Appropriate authority:       | Governing Body                                   |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr A Reardon                                     |
| Date of previous inspection: | September 1996                                   |

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| Team members  |                      | Subject responsibilities  | Aspect responsibilities   |
|---------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Anne Currie   | Registered inspector | English<br>History<br>Art<br>Under fives  | The characteristics and effectiveness of the school.<br>The school's results and achievements.<br>Leadership and management.<br>Teaching and learning |
| Jane Hughes   | Lay inspector        | Equal opportunities   | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.<br>Pupils' welfare, health and safety<br>Partnership with parents and carers                      |
| David Twist   | Team inspector       | Science<br>Information technology<br>Design technology<br>Physical education          | The quality and range of opportunities for learning   |
| Kevin Johnson | Team inspector       | Mathematics<br>Religious education<br>Geography<br>Music<br>Special educational needs | .   |

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Cotsford Infant School has 130 pupils, aged from 4 to 7 years. It is smaller than other schools of its type. The roll is falling. Unemployment is high and some families are leaving the area to find jobs. At the time of the inspection 23 children were still under five years old. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and no pupils have English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is varied but overall it is below that found nationally and well below in speaking and listening, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Just over 35 percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average, and the percentage has risen considerably since the time of the last inspection in 1996. Pupils live in the surrounding village of Horden, mainly in local authority houses and former colliery terraced houses. Three pupils have statements of special educational need which is above the national average for a school of this size. Forty percent of the pupils are on the special educational needs register. This is well above that expected nationally and above that at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' difficulties are related mainly to speech and communication and moderate learning problems. The school is to be included in an Education Action Zone from April 2000.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in all subjects except for writing, speaking and listening and handwriting by the time they leave. They make good progress from a low starting point and one of the main reasons for this is the good teaching. The headteacher gives very firm guidance for all the school's work. The school gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils in Year 1 and 2 classes make good progress in their learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teaching is good, especially in Year 2.
- Staff help pupils develop good attitudes to work and good behaviour.
- The school collects a lot of information about how pupils are learning. It uses it effectively to provide very good additional support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- Pupils are cared for well.
- Extra money received by the school is carefully targeted to provide good additional support for pupils, especially those with special educational needs and those in Year 2 who are capable of higher attainment.

#### **What could be improved**

- Provision for children under five, especially those with low levels of attainment when they begin school.
- Attainment in writing, speaking and listening, and handwriting.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since then it has made significant improvements. It has successfully addressed all the key issues mentioned in the previous report. Governors are more involved in the work of the school. The curriculum planning is

more detailed and there has been an increase in the opportunities provided for pupils to solve problems and carry out investigations in mathematics and science. In lessons and in marking teachers give pupils a clear indication of what they are learning and how their work can be improved. In addition, the school now looks carefully at the results it achieves and uses the information well to set targets to raise standards. Further assistance is provided through the use of support staff and smaller groups so that the work is well focused on what pupils need to learn. The number of pupils with special educational needs has risen and the school provides for them very well.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

| Performance in: | Compared with |      |      |                  | Key                                     |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|------------------|---|
|                 | all schools   |      |      | *similar schools |   |
|                 | 1997          | 1998 | 1999 | 1999             |   |
| Reading         | C             | E    | D    | C                | well above average A<br>above average B |
| Writing         | E             | E    | E    | D                | Average C<br>below average D            |
| Mathematics     | C             | D    | D    | C                | well below average E                    |

*\*Similar schools are selected on the basis of the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, although results were low against national standards, pupils achieved average results compared to similar schools in reading and mathematics. The percentage reaching the higher level, Level 3, was close to the national average for all schools. In writing, the results were well below the national standard and below average compared to similar schools but they showed an improvement over the results for the previous three years, especially in spelling. The percentage reaching Level 3 was close to the national average, indicating that the school works well with pupils capable of higher attainment.

There was a dip in the results in all three areas in 1998, which reflects that the year group had lower levels of prior attainment than usual.

Current standards in the work seen during the inspection in Year 2 are in line with what is expected nationally in all areas except speaking and listening, writing and handwriting where they are slightly below. In physical education pupils exceed the standards expected. Standards in reading reflect the impact of the literacy hour, good phonics teaching and the support received from home. The improved standards in mathematics result from good teaching which focuses well on what pupils need to learn.

Most of the children in the mixed reception/Year 1 class are likely to reach the standards expected nationally by the term after their fifth birthday. The majority of children in the reception class are unlikely to reach these standards in language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Most of these children had levels of attainment which were well below average when they entered school.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school                | Pupils are keen to come to school and they have good attitudes to their work.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Good in lessons, in the playground and at lunchtimes.  |
| Personal development and relationships | Staff and pupils work well together. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the responsibilities they are given. They reach good levels of personal development. |
| Attendance                             | Satisfactory.  |

There are strengths in the attitudes pupils develop towards their work and the way they behave in school. Staff develop good relationships with pupils and as a result, pupils are keen to please and work hard. Pupils, especially those in Year 2, respond well to the opportunities they are given to take responsibility.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 percent of the lessons observed. It was good in 50 percent and very good in 8 percent. Only two lessons were unsatisfactory. The areas for improvement mentioned in the previous report have been successfully addressed.

The best teaching is in Year 2. On occasions there are weaknesses in the teaching of children under five when the work is not well matched to their needs. As a result, these children do not make sufficient progress.

The teaching of mathematics is good and the school has begun to implement the National Numeracy Strategy well. The Literacy Strategy is fully implemented. The teaching of English is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Year 2. On occasions the work set for individual pupils during the Literacy Hour is not well matched to their needs. There are strengths in the teaching of reading and in the additional help given to pupils in Year 2 to improve their writing. Good support is given to pupils with special educational needs. In addition, a variety of strategies is used to give extra support to targeted pupils, especially in literacy, and these help pupils make good progress.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | Satisfactory overall but there is a weakness in the range of opportunities provided for children under five with low levels of attainment when they begin school.  |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs   | Very good. There is well planned additional support with good teaching.  |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good. The school provides a wide range of experiences for pupils. There are clear rules which are consistently applied and pupils are rewarded for good behaviour and working hard. Trips are arranged to local places of interest to extend pupils' knowledge of their own cultural heritage. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils  | Staff know pupils well and provide a very good level of care. The school is successful in meeting its aim to work in partnership with parents. Parents feel welcome in school and they receive detailed information about school life.   |

Children under five are divided into two classes based on the information received from the Nursery school. The higher attaining children are placed in a mixed reception/Year 1 class and the work planned for them is well matched to their needs. Children with lower levels of attainment are placed in a reception class. The range of work provided for them does not always meet their needs well, especially in speaking and listening, early reading and writing skills and mathematics.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher gives strong leadership and has introduced a variety of strategies to raise standards. She is well supported by co-ordinators who monitor the work done in their subjects. All staff work together as a team and the school has just received the 'Investors in People' award which reflects the importance placed on staff training and development. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities             | This aspect has improved since the last inspection and the governors' role is now satisfactory. The governing body fulfils all its legal requirements except that it does not ensure that teacher appraisal is formally carried out.  |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | The school analyses its test results and takes appropriate action to bring about improvements.  |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | Good use is made of the money available to the school. Additional support is well targeted to improve the standards achieved. The principles of best value are used well; for example comparisons of cost are made before making large purchases.   |

The accommodation for pupils is satisfactory but there are shortcomings in the facilities for staff as there is no separate staff room. There is an appropriate number of staff for the number of pupils on roll. Resources are adequate.



## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most  | What parents would like to see improved   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They feel their children are making good progress and the school encourages them to work hard.</li><li>• The school is very approachable.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• Behaviour is good.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents are not happy with the amount of homework set.</li><li>• Some would like more information about how their child is getting on.</li></ul> |

The inspection team agrees with the very positive views expressed by parents. There is a satisfactory amount of homework for the ages of the pupils. Parents are given appropriate opportunities to discuss their child's progress and they have the opportunity to make additional appointments to see staff. They could be given more information about the topics their children are studying.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. When children enter the school in the September of the academic year in which they are five, their attainment is below that found nationally. The standards achieved by about thirty per cent of the children in speaking and listening and their knowledge of the world around them are well below those found nationally. Most children have already had the benefit of a year of part-time nursery education. Some children enter a mixed reception/Year 1 class. They are selected on the basis of the assessment information received from the nursery school. The other children are in a reception class. The children in the mixed age class make good gains in their learning and they are likely to achieve the standards expected nationally, the term after their fifth birthday. They are benefiting from the good range of activities on offer and good teaching. Children in the reception class are making slower progress. Most are starting from a lower level of attainment and the work is not always well matched to their needs. They are unlikely to reach the standards expected.
2. In National Curriculum tests in 1999, Year 2 pupils achieved standards in reading which were close to the average for similar schools. In writing, results were below the average for similar schools and well below compared to all schools. Results in spelling were just above the national average, reflecting the improved emphasis in teaching the basic skills.
3. In mathematics, the percentage of pupils achieving the level expected, Level 2, was close to the national average, but the percentage reaching the higher level, Level 3, was below average. In science, the teachers' assessments indicated that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was in line with results from similar schools. In science, reading and writing, the number of pupils reaching Level 3 indicates that, when the pupils are capable of reaching an above average level of attainment in these subjects, the school provides good learning opportunities. There is not a similar emphasis on higher attainment in mathematics.
4. Over the four years from 1996 to 1999 results have fluctuated. There was a fall in the standards reached in reading and mathematics in 1998 and this reflects a particularly low achieving year group. In 1999 results in reading, writing and mathematics all rose. There is no marked difference in the attainment of boys and girls over the same period.
5. Work seen during the inspection shows that attainment has been maintained in most areas. In physical education, standards are above those expected and this is an improvement since the last inspection. In religious education, pupils meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. By the time pupils leave the school at age seven, standards are in line with those found nationally in all subjects, except speaking and listening, handwriting and writing where they are still slightly below the national average. Pupils start from a low level and they make good gains in learning to reach the standards they achieve. The standards reached in reading have improved since 1999. This is the result of the good teaching of phonics and the group reading sessions in the Literacy Hour. The standard of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils' writing skills are not extended appropriately in

other subjects, such as history and religious education, as the use of worksheets does not give them the stimulus they need to extend their writing.

6. The school has analysed results from previous years and changed its approach to improve on the weaknesses found. For example, increased emphasis was put on teaching spelling and this resulted in a marked improvement so that standards are now similar to those found nationally. The school has made arrangements to set pupils for writing once a week and they benefit from working in smaller groups with the teaching well focused on their specific needs.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards achieving their targets. These targets for learning are clearly stated in individual plans and are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are appropriate to pupils' needs. The special educational needs teacher is used effectively to extend the skills of pupils in both Years 1 and 2. The work of learning support staff is also good and results in pupils making good gains in their learning and in raising pupils' self esteem.
8. The headteacher tracks individual pupil's progress as they move through the school. This information is used to set realistic targets based on the knowledge the school has of prior attainment and teachers' assessments and predictions. These targets are shared with governors so that they are kept appropriately informed of standards in the school. As well as targeting pupils who need additional help reaching the standards expected nationally in English, the school is also focusing attention on higher achieving pupils. The school will be included in an Education Action Zone from April 2000 and it has already been allocated additional funding to support pupils' learning. This is used to employ a supply teacher so that small groups of pupils can work with the class teacher to extend their writing skills.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

9. Pupils throughout the school, including children under five, show good attitudes to learning. They are keen to come to school and are interested in the variety of planned activities. In particular, pupils demonstrate a positive approach to independent tasks, for example, during literacy and numeracy lessons. Here, pupils show that they are trustworthy and can work without adult support. In a Year 2 literacy session, pupils were able to think about the shared story they had listened to and compile a colourful list of adjectives to describe one of the characters. Some discussed their ideas with other group members and they worked diligently and with interest. Most are keen to contribute to class discussions and are happy talking in front of others about their ideas. They are very familiar with the high expectations held by all adults working in the school and this has a positive impact on their learning.
10. Behaviour is good in classrooms, around the school building and at playtime. Pupils respond well to the assertive discipline policy and understand clearly what is expected. The consistent approach by all adults ensures pupils experience a calm and orderly learning environment. No evidence of oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection and parents say they are happy with children's behaviour. There have been no exclusions from school.
11. Pupils make the most of any opportunities they are offered for personal development and their response is good. They undertake daily jobs eagerly and can be trusted to complete a task properly. They take registers to the office and help to tidy up in classrooms. They also help to look after the school guinea pigs, learning

basic hygiene and care procedures. Pupils enjoy social activities, such as school discotheques which are regular features of the social calendar, and they also participate eagerly in productions or visits which improve their personal and social development. A good example was a visiting ballet company which performed the "Nutcracker" and included children in parts of the production. This was a new experience for most pupils who had not seen ballet before.

12. Relationships in the school are good overall. Staff and pupils work well together and all the adults show great care and concern for their pupils, establishing a very positive learning environment. Relationships between pupils improve as the children mature and are at their best in Year 2. Pupils support each other well and work co-operatively when needed. They are quick to congratulate the best efforts of their peers and this is particularly well illustrated during the weekly celebration assembly. Pupils listen attentively as their friends' best efforts are rewarded and they show interest in the work they have completed or the kindness they have shown to others.
13. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection.
14. Levels of attendance are satisfactory although just below the national average. The majority of pupils are punctual. However, a few pupils are persistently late which means that they regularly miss the start of the first lesson.
15. Pupils with special educational needs show positive attitudes to work and are particularly enthusiastic when carrying out practical tasks. Their behaviour is generally good and they settle to work and concentrate. Their speaking and listening skills are not well developed. Consequently, they are unable to sustain concentration during class discussions and their inattentiveness often distracts others.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. Teaching is good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 percent of lessons seen. It was good in 50 percent of lessons and very good in 8 percent. The best teaching was in Year 2. Two unsatisfactory lessons were seen, one for children under five and one for physical education. The weaknesses in teaching, identified in the last inspection, have been addressed.
17. For children aged under five, teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good but it is satisfactory overall. The relationships staff develop with the children are good and instances of unsatisfactory behaviour are dealt with consistently. The children, who are selected on the basis of their prior attainment to be in the mixed Year 1/reception class, are well managed and the work is skilfully matched to their learning needs. They have a suitable variety of practical activities for their age and also more formal work which offers an appropriate level of challenge. Twice during the week they stay with their teacher for a literacy session, whilst the Year 1 pupils are taken by another teacher. On these occasions, the work is carefully planned for them and the size of the group means that they receive appropriate individual or very small group teaching, which enables them to make good progress especially in writing. In the reception class, work is not always well matched to children's needs. The amount of time they are required to spend listening on the carpet is too long for their short attention spans. For example, the majority are not yet ready to take part in complete numeracy sessions. There is insufficient adult support to help children develop their language skills through play activities by modelling appropriate

language and helping children to maintain concentration and relate to each other successfully. When there is more adult help the quality of teaching improves as children receive sufficient support to help them complete their tasks which are more closely linked to the needs of small groups or individuals. For example, during a literacy session a parent helper was used effectively to extend children's language and social skills by working alongside them when they played in the "Baker's Shop". Other children practised their handwriting skills under the supervision of a member of the support staff. The class teacher was able to work with the other groups and give them the attention they needed.

18. There are good opportunities for all the reception children to join together into smaller groups for practical activities. For example, at the end of the morning some use the physical play equipment in the next door nursery's playground. During the inspection they also took part in artwork and cookery. These sessions are well managed and the work is appropriate. As a result, children make steady gains in understanding and skills. On occasions learning opportunities are lost as there is insufficient focus on children's learning. For example, the session using the outside apparatus is seen as a play activity with little focus on the skills to be developed, other than those related to children's personal and social development.
19. In Key Stage 1, teachers show good subject knowledge and understanding in the way they prepare and deliver lessons. They have appropriate expectations of their pupils. Planning has improved since the last inspection and learning objectives are clearly identified. Pupils are well managed and the behaviour policy is consistently implemented so that pupils know what is expected. Occasionally teachers allow pupils to call out rather than put up their hands to answer questions. Some pupils become excited and distracted and they do not listen carefully enough to what others are saying. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and good use is made of support staff to give appropriate additional help. Teachers use a range of assessments effectively to guide future work which is based on what pupils already know. Marking is used well to emphasise correct spellings. Good verbal feedback is given to pupils during lessons, for example in a Year 1 dance lesson when the teacher moved round and encouraged pupils to improve the quality of their movements. The end of lessons is used well to reinforce what pupils have been doing and to make them aware of what they have learnt, as when pupils in Year 2 act out the story they have been reading. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. In the best lessons the work was very well planned. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson the teacher provided a wide range of items to stimulate pupils' interest and to encourage them to use their observational skills. The good relationships between pupils and the teacher meant that they felt confident and were willing to investigate things for themselves. The previous report highlighted the need for pupils to be given the opportunity to undertake investigations and problem solving. Pupils' current work indicates that this aspect has also been addressed, especially in mathematics and science.
20. The teaching of numeracy skills is good and the school has begun to implement the National Numeracy Strategy well. In a very good lesson in Year 2, the teacher built very effectively on what pupils already knew. There was good balance between the teacher-directed part of the lesson and pupils' activities. The work was varied to suit the needs of different groups of pupils so that they all extended their learning during the lesson. For example, some were learning to count in 10s, some in 20s, starting at any two-digit number, and some in 30s.

21. Phonics are taught well and this has a positive impact on the levels of reading and spelling attained. The literacy hour is fully implemented and it worked well in about 50 percent of the lessons seen. In the other half the pace dropped in the section used for individual work. The work in these sessions is not always well matched to pupils' skills and understanding. In one lesson too many worksheets were used to consolidate learning and, on another occasion, the work was too difficult and time was wasted as there was no adult intervention to give the additional necessary support.
22. Information technology is used effectively across the school to support pupils' learning. For example, listening centres are used to improve concentration and to develop reading skills. Programs on the computers also give valuable opportunities to reinforce number skills and phonics. Information technology is taught effectively. Good emphasis was placed on developing appropriate vocabulary and open-ended questions were used to encourage pupils to think for themselves and to generate their own ideas, for example when they were learning to use a new drawing program.
23. There is a clear homework policy which is adhered to with pupils reading regularly at home and also learning spellings. These have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Some parents are not happy with the amount that is set but there is disagreement over whether the current level is too much or too little.
24. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and teaching assistants are very aware of pupils' emotional and intellectual requirements. Learning targets are very well matched to individual needs. A wide range of strategies is used to motivate and help to sustain interest. Good well-focused adult help, provided by skilled support staff for small groups of pupils with similar learning needs, has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

25. The overall quality of the school's curriculum is satisfactory. It is better for the children in Years 1 and 2 than for those in reception, particularly in the case of the significant proportion who are under 5 and whose attainment is below or well below average. For these children, the types of activities planned do not always match their learning needs. Much of their work in the areas of literacy and numeracy is organised in a similar way to that of older pupils and they find it difficult to sustain sufficient concentration when they are listening for long periods. There is insufficient attention given to developing children's speaking and listening skills through activities such as role play. Although outdoor play sessions allow children to use large play equipment, opportunities are missed to direct their activity towards developing particular skills or experiences.
26. The curriculum provided for Key Stage 1 pupils is good and it is both broad and balanced. It offers a relevant range of experiences to pupils, which mostly captures their interest. It meets statutory requirements and all subjects are taught, including religious education. An appropriate amount of time is given to the teaching of literacy, for which the school's approach is effective, and the development of numeracy, which is good. In both areas, the school has adopted the nationally recommended strategies. Main strengths of the Key Stage 1 curriculum include the amount of investigative work in science and mathematics, which has improved since the last inspection, and the carefully thought out organisation of the timetable, which

protects the time given to other subjects, such as history and art. The school works hard to provide extra support in smaller groups, for those children who might struggle to reach the expected level in English and for those with a strong chance of exceeding it.

27. The school's schemes of work have improved. Some subjects have adapted the nationally recommended programmes of work and others use alternative schemes such as the local authority's physical education syllabus. A particular strength of the curriculum is the way visits are used. For example, after visiting Beamish Museum, Year 2 pupils have gained a strong idea of how schools were different in Victorian times. The use in school of original artefacts, such as a desk, a slate and an abacus, also helps to bring history alive for them.
28. The school's system of supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs is a strength and this ensures that they make good gains in their learning. Individual education plans for these pupils include targets for English, mathematics and personal development, which are clear and manageable. Pupils have full access to the National Curriculum and are integrated well in all activities.
29. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Teachers and support staff provide very good role models for pupils. The school pays due regard to providing equal opportunities for all its pupils.
30. The school does not offer any extra-curricular activity for pupils. Links with partner establishments are not particularly strong. The school arranges visits to the junior school to which most pupils transfer and such links are satisfactory, but the school's working relationship with its main feeder nursery has not developed to the extent that children's work in school builds on their experiences in the nursery.
31. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the quality of these has been maintained since the last inspection.
32. In promoting pupils' spiritual development, the school offers a wide range of opportunities for them to experience and reflect upon the wonder of natural things, such as flowers and buds on the reception class' nature walk to explore 'signs of Spring'. Occasions such as assemblies provide numerous opportunities for pupils to consider the reasons for religious festivals from a range of different faiths. Year 2 pupils recall, for example, the background to Shrove Tuesday and talk about the Chinese New Year. In their reflections on their own hopes for the future, they have written thoughtful pieces about their hopes for the new millennium. These include statements such as 'I will be nicer to my sister' and 'I will ride my bike without stabilisers'.
33. Moral development is also well promoted through such strategies as regularly reminding pupils of the importance of considering others, of being kind, and of remembering that others are often less fortunate than ourselves. In assemblies, pupils' observance of school rules is celebrated by stickers and entries into 'The Golden Book' and pupils are often asked to comment on the rights and wrongs of situations. When asked about the purpose of school rules, a Year 2 child observed the 'they help us to decide between right and wrong'.
34. The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. Clear classroom rules such as 'Listen to adults' or 'Be kind and helpful to each other' help pupils to learn how to become successful members of the school community. Their ability to

become independent learners is supported by teachers referring to the established class rules which list what is expected when pupils are given independent tasks to complete. Pupils respond well and they help each other with difficult problems, such as when a Year 2 boy went to join his friend who was having difficulty operating a new computer program. Opportunities to undertake simple tasks, for example as classroom or register monitors or caring for the guinea pigs, help pupils to develop social responsibility.

35. Pupils' cultural development is effectively promoted through a good range of experiences. Their awareness of the local cultural heritage is well supported by visits, for example to the beach and Durham Cathedral. Pupils develop a sense of the area's industrial heritage by helping to improve a disused mine area with the direction of a landscape artist. Awareness of other cultures is successfully promoted through a variety of initiatives. These include writing letters to pupils in Holland and studying pictures and artefacts from Nigeria, sent by a friend of the school. Children's writing shows that they have grasped some of the main differences between their life style and that of children who live in very different settings. They know, for example, that children living in Nigeria will wear a very different type of uniform to school with bright traditional colours.
36. The school has good links with its local community and initiatives, such as visiting the local supermarket to learn more about how it works, have improved children's understanding of the world at large. Visits by Hartlepool United footballers, to coach a mixed group of Year 2 pupils, have helped to improve games skills for those children.
37. Parents are very happy with this aspect of the school's provision and they report that their children are keen to do well and to receive the approval of staff in areas such as their social behaviour.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. The school takes very good care of its pupils; this is a strength of its provision. The high standards of pastoral care observed during the last inspection have been maintained. Staff know their pupils well and keep detailed records of their personal development as they move through the school. They are aware of social and emotional as well as academic needs. Teachers respect the pupils and value the contributions that they make to lessons.
39. Issues of welfare, health and safety are very well addressed by staff who ensure that all adults are aware of the arrangements. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with any child protection issues; the headteacher is very conscientious in her duty of care in such cases. All adults in the school are familiar with the school's policies and expectations with regard to the pastoral care of pupils. Parents are very appreciative of the care shown by staff to their children.
40. Good procedures are in place to ensure pupils' behaviour is consistently well managed. The system of rewards and sanctions is well known to pupils and their parents and they enjoy the weekly competition for the best class in the school. The school ensures parents are familiar with what it expects through its home-school agreement and policies.



41. The headteacher works closely with the education welfare service to ensure pupils attend school regularly. Reminders are given to parents about the importance of attendance and punctuality.
42. There are very good systems in place for assessing pupils' attainment and recording their progress. In English, mathematics and science, pupils' attainment is regularly measured against National Curriculum statements. This helps to identify underachievement as well as good progress. Assessment information and National Curriculum test results are closely analysed to identify any weakness. For example, shortcomings in pupils' spelling were recently noticed as a result of such analysis. Subsequently teaching focused more strongly on this area and standards have improved. Teachers' very good knowledge of their pupils' abilities enables clear targets to be set for individuals and groups. The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs is very carefully monitored and learning targets are regularly reviewed. Individual plans are written for higher attaining pupils in order to provide more challenging work for them.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

43. Parents are very positive about the school as demonstrated during the parents' meeting and in the parent questionnaire replies. Parents feel welcome in school and have plenty of daily contact with staff whom they find very approachable. The school secretary offers parents and visitors a warm welcome to the school and staff ensure parents are put at their ease in the school environment.
44. Detailed information about the life of the school, its aims, expectations and routines are published for parents in the prospectus, governors' annual report to parents and newsletters. These are of a high standard and they provide parents with a good insight into school life. Parents state that they feel well informed about the school. The school actively seeks to improve home-school links and it surveys parents for their views on specific aspects of school life. This ensures parental views are considered and acted upon. A recent example revealed that parents wanted more guidance on homework and this issue has been addressed by the school, with the result that parents feel better able to support their children's learning at home. Written reports to parents are of a satisfactory quality overall, with particularly evaluative comments in English and mathematics. Parents and pupils also make a contribution to the reporting process. However, some parents would welcome more information about the topics their children study each term and this would be a useful addition to the information they already receive. Most parents are conscientious about completing their children's reading diaries at home and their support helps to foster a love of reading in pupils.
45. Parents raise funds through the "Friends of the School" Association with great success; they provide better learning resources for the school which make a positive contribution to children's learning. A small number of parents help regularly in school and others bring specific expertise when required. For example, one parent demonstrated the art of wall building to pupils who were then able to try out their own skills. Such contributions have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
46. Parents are made aware of any concerns the school has about their child at an early stage and often parents are approached at the end of the school day. The school makes every effort to involve parents of children with special educational needs in formulating individual educational plans. Annual reviews are well attended

by parents who contribute effectively to their children's statements and the targets set for them.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

47. The headteacher gives strong leadership to the work of the school and the co-ordinators make effective contributions to the management of their subjects. There is a clear focus on raising academic standards and also on fully meeting the schools' aim of providing a well-ordered, caring environment where children can become self-reliant and co-operate with others. There is no formal system of staff appraisal, but the headteacher carefully monitors teaching with support from local authority advisers. However, teachers are not set individual formal written targets. The training needs of individuals, as well as those for the whole school, are appropriately considered when funds for courses are allocated. The money available is used effectively. All staff work together very well as a team. The school has just been awarded the 'Investors in People' award in recognition of its staff development systems.
48. The improvements made since the last inspection are significant and they illustrate the school's commitment to improving standards. In addition, the school has improved its analysis of its performance and begun to set targets to help. The value of these is evident in the improvement there has been in spelling in the last two years. The school also targets its resources very effectively to raise attainment. It focuses attention on pupils who need extra support to reach the standards expected for their age. This term it is using money allocated through the Education Action Zone, which is coming into effect in April 2000, to give additional support to other pupils who it considers are capable of reaching higher levels in writing.
49. The members of the governing body have changed considerably since the last inspection and the key issue, to make them more involved in the running of the school, has been satisfactorily addressed. Governors are kept well informed about the work of the school and the standards achieved. They receive detailed reports from the headteacher and there are close links between the headteacher and the chair of governors. The governors were fully involved in the decision to make a member of staff redundant last year, because of the steadily falling roll.
50. The development plan is a comprehensive document, which is fully costed and sets well-defined priorities. These are clearly targeted towards bringing about changes, which will result in higher standards being achieved. There are well-defined criteria by which the success of the various initiatives, and the cost-effectiveness of spending decisions, can be judged and an evaluation made of whether or not the best use is made of resources. The school makes good use of the resources available to it, especially its allocation of additional funding to target specific groups of pupils.
51. There is an adequate number of teachers for the number of pupils, which is steadily falling as families leave the area in search of employment. There are well qualified support staff who assist pupils, especially those with special educational needs. Staff help pupils make good progress towards their set targets. There is insufficient additional adult support available in the reception class, especially in the mornings, to ensure that children receive the help they need to participate fully in the activities arranged.

52. The office is run very efficiently, with day to day procedures for budget management well administered. Office staff provide a good first point of contact between parents and the school. The site is kept clean and tidy. The classrooms are of a good size and there are useful bays outside the classroom which are used very effectively, for example for artwork or for activities for the children under five. The spare classroom is used well to provide additional teaching space for children under five and also for groups of pupils with special educational needs. Part of the room is also used to provide a library area, but it is not yet well developed and the stock of books is limited.
53. There are suitable outside hard play and grassed areas. Both are bleak and there is a lack of features, such as plants, seating or large play equipment, to add interest at play and lunchtimes. The only office apart from that occupied by the headteacher, is used as a general office, a staff room and a medical room for children who feel unwell. This is inadequate as staff do not have sufficient space to relax.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. To raise attainment the headteacher, staff and governors should:

(1) Improve the provision for children under five by:-

- a. providing more opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills;
- b. ensuring that there is a better match between the maturity and previous attainment levels of the children and the work provided;
- c. improving planning for activities, especially outdoor play and role play so that more emphasis is given to the skills that are to be developed;
- d. providing more adult support, including voluntary help and as resources allow.

(Paragraphs 1, 17, 18, 25, 30, 47, 55, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63)

(2) Raise attainment in English by building on the good work already done and:-

- a. developing a whole school approach to handwriting and implementing it consistently to raise standards;
- b. planning more effectively for speaking and listening activities;
- c. relying less on worksheets for recorded work, especially in other subjects, so that pupils have more opportunities for extended writing;
- d. ensuring that the activities planned for individual work during the literacy hour are well matched to pupils' needs;
- e. implementing the school's new scheme for assessing and developing pupils' writing and using the information to set targets for improvement.

(Paragraphs 2, 5, 21, 25, 65, 66, 68, 71, 72, 79, 98, 119)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

(1) Introduce more rigorous methods to monitor the quality of teaching and set targets for improvement for individual teachers.

(Paragraph 47)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

40

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

14

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
|           | 8         | 50   | 37           | 5              | 0    | 0         |

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

### Information about the school's pupils

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>   | YR – Y2      |
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)             | 130          |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals                    | 46           |
| <b>Special educational needs</b>   | YR – Y2      |
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs                | 3            |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register          | 52           |
| <b>English as an additional language</b>                                     | No of pupils |
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language                      | 0            |
| <b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>                                | No of pupils |
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 10           |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 10           |

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

|                           | 1998/9 |
|---------------------------|--------|
| School data               | 6.1%   |
| National comparative data | 5.4%   |

#### Unauthorised absence

|                           | 1998/9 |
|---------------------------|--------|
| School data               | 0.3%   |
| National comparative data | 0.5%   |

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

|  |      |      |       |       |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|  | 1999 | 30   | 30    | 60    |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results       |          | Reading   | Writing   | Mathematics |
|---|----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above   | Boys     | 22        | 20        | 26          |
|   | Girls    | 25        | 26        | 27          |
|   | Total    | 47        | 46        | 53          |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School   | 78 ( 68 ) | 77 ( 66 ) | 88 ( 81 )   |
|   | National | 82 ( 80 ) | 83 ( 81 ) | 87 ( 84 )   |

| Teachers' Assessments                       |          | English   | Mathematics | Science   |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above   | Boys     | 22        | 25          | 25        |
|   | Girls    | 25        | 27          | 27        |
|   | Total    | 47        | 52          | 52        |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School   | 78 ( 71 ) | 87 ( 78 )   | 87 ( 81 ) |
|   | National | 82 ( 81 ) | 86 ( 85 )   | 87 ( 86 ) |

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

|                                 | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage      |              |
| Black – African heritage        |              |
| Black – other                   |              |
| Indian                          |              |
| Pakistani                       |              |
| Bangladeshi                     |              |
| Chinese                         |              |
| White                           | 98           |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 2            |

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y2**

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 6.2    |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 21.1:1 |
| Average class size                       | 26.2   |

#### **Education support staff: YR– Y6**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 3  |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 53 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Financial year                             | 1998-9 |
|  | £      |
| Total income                               | 273629 |
| Total expenditure                          | 276528 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 1729   |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 14770  |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 11871  |

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 131 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 39  |

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 51             | 36            | 13               | 0                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 54             | 44            | 0                | 3                 | 0          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 36             | 59            | 0                | 0                 | 5          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 26             | 49            | 23               | 0                 | 3          |
| The teaching is good.  | 49             | 49            | 0                | 0                 | 3          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 49             | 38            | 13               | 0                 | 0          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 79             | 18            | 3                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 85             | 13            | 0                | 0                 | 3          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 49             | 41            | 10               | 0                 | 0          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 59             | 28            | 8                | 3                 | 3          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 56             | 38            | 3                | 0                 | 3          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 36             | 44            | 8                | 3                 | 10         |



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

55. The provision for children under five is satisfactory overall. Children enter the school in the September prior to their fifth birthday. The majority have already attended nursery school. The children are divided between two classes based on the assessments made by the nursery school. The thirteen highest attainers are in a class with eight Year 1 pupils and the others are in a class of 23. At the time of the inspection there were 23 children still under five spread between the two classes. Children's attainment when they enter the school is below that found nationally, and in language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world it is well below. Many children have short attention spans and they find it difficult to sit and listen. The children in the mixed-age class are making good gains in learning. They are benefiting from good teaching, especially in literacy and numeracy, and activities which are well matched to their needs. Most of these children are likely to reach the standards expected by the term after their fifth birthday. Children in the reception class make satisfactory progress but it is not as good as in the mixed age class. The work is not always appropriately matched to their needs as it does not take account of their low prior attainment. For example, children are expected to sit and listen for too long and they are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their skills, especially in speaking and listening, through a variety of practical activities. Most of these children are unlikely to reach the standards expected in this area of learning, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, by the term after their fifth birthday.
56. These standards are not as good as those reported in the previous inspection but the report did not give a judgement of attainment on entry. The current year group has lower levels of attainment than usual.

### **Personal and social development**

57. Many children in the reception class still find it difficult to share and take turns, despite appropriate emphasis being placed on this area of learning. The class teacher provides a suitable range of activities, for example listening to story tapes, working on the computer, in the role play areas and sharing construction toys. However, there is often insufficient adult support in these areas to help children develop the skills they need. Many children do not reach the standards expected. In the mixed age class the children are more mature and they are achieving appropriately for their age. Teachers have a consistent approach to behaviour and they reinforce what is expected. Children in both classes are independent, for example when they are changing for physical education. They come to school happily. All staff establish good relationships with the children. Those in the reception class have very short concentration spans and they find it difficult to listen for long enough periods of time, especially when part of a large group or when they are receiving little adult attention. Children in the mixed age class have longer attention spans and respond positively to the activities provided. All children are gradually gaining self-confidence and learning to mix and play with others, although the rate of progress of some is slow. Many find it difficult to listen to instructions and respond appropriately. The teacher directs many of the activities and children are not given enough opportunities to make their own choices about what they are going to do.



## Language and literacy

58. Children in the mixed age class make good progress in this area of learning as a result of the wide range of well planned activities and good teaching. The need to listen is continually reinforced and children are given good opportunities to express their ideas and to communicate with others in a variety of situations. For example, they listen carefully to stories, express their ideas and use puppets to act scenes. Twice a week they are taught as a small group and this has a positive impact on their learning. On these occasions, activities are well matched to their needs and they receive significant periods of the teacher's attention on a one-to-one basis. Children learn to speak in complete sentences and they extend their vocabularies. They know that print carries meaning and they are beginning to build up a stock of words that they recognise by sight. All children take home books to share, which establishes good habits for the future. Children are beginning to associate letters with the sounds they make. They use initial letter sounds to help them recognise the names of characters in the story about Preston Pig, such as rabbit, duck, pig and tiger. They are beginning to write their own stories and some correctly spell common words, such as he, ran and the. Progress is sometimes limited by the use of worksheets when the space available on them limits the amount of writing the children can do, as their letters are still large.
59. In the reception class many children have low prior attainment. There is insufficient adult support to give them the attention they need, especially to develop their speaking and listening skills. Many children have restricted vocabularies and they do not speak in complete sentences. They take part in role play activities in the "Baker's Shop" but they often play alongside each other and need adult intervention to guide their activities and develop their language skills. Children find it difficult to listen as part of a group and concentrate for a story. The behaviour of some children distracts others and the need for the teacher to guide these children often slows down the pace of the lesson. Some do not listen to story tapes for longer than a few minutes without adult supervision. The activities provided are helping children begin to recognise their own names and those of others in their class. They are extending children's knowledge of the sounds associated with letters. Writing skills are not well developed and letters are poorly formed with many children still having difficulty writing their name correctly.

## Mathematics

60. Teaching is good in the mixed age class and children make good progress learning to count and recognise and write numbers. Most are likely to reach the standards expected by the term after their fifth birthday. They count and write numbers to at least five and some to ten. Children recognise many colours and they correctly name circles, squares, rectangles and triangles. In the reception class, teaching is not well matched to children's learning needs, with activities often proving too difficult for them. The introductory session in the lesson seen was too long. There were not enough activities to maintain children's concentration. Some children can correctly order numbers to ten and sing songs related to that number such as "Ten in the bed". Lower attaining children received good support to help them complete a dice game. Even with support some found it difficult to count the number of dots on the dice and most did not recognise the number by the pattern of dots. Most of these children are unlikely to reach the standards expected.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

61. Many children come to school with only a limited knowledge of the world around them and they often lack the vocabulary to show what they know and express their ideas. The curriculum helps children extend their knowledge and their vocabularies. Good use is made of available staff by splitting the reception children from both classes into two groups for some related activities such as science. An example seen was a lesson where children walked around the school grounds looking for signs of Spring. Many could not correctly name a daffodil and a crocus. Children involved in making gingerbread men were given good opportunities to extend their vocabularies and speaking skills when they were encouraged to look closely at the ingredients and describe what they saw and smelled. Their attention was drawn to the changes that take place when the ingredients are mixed together. In the reception class, children watching an amaryllis develop knew that it needed water to help it grow. Links are made to work in mathematics when, for example, non-standard measures are used to record its growth. Children learn to operate the listening centres and computer. They use the arrow keys on the computer to match pictures to the correct initial letter. In this way, their literacy skills are reinforced.

## **Physical development**

62. Most children are likely to reach the standards expected in this area of learning. They have sound physical skills. They are well co-ordinated and move with a good awareness of space and each other, for example when the reception children have a dance lesson. They skip, run and jog around the hall with agility. They operate pedal toys well and steer round a roadway. The reception children are divided into two groups and have the valuable opportunity to use the outside play equipment in the nursery next door twice a week at the end of the morning. There is inadequate planning for this activity, and as a result, children do not make as much progress as they could. The session is seen as an extended playtime and is not used sufficiently to develop children's physical skills, although there is an appropriate emphasis on sharing and taking turns. Children's cutting skills are satisfactory and many competently use glue and spreaders. Most manipulate construction equipment well when they make models. They manipulate modelling clay carefully to make models of their favourite foods.

## **Creative development**

63. There is a variety of opportunities to help children extend their imaginations, for example a "Baker's Shop", a "Pizza Parlour", toys which allow children to act out real life situations and a puppet theatre with a range of puppets. Often there is insufficient adult help available for deployment in these areas to ensure that the children in the reception class develop their skills fully. Most do not have enough experience of this type of activity. In the afternoon the classes are arranged differently. All the reception children are divided into two groups. Support staff are used well to provide a variety of appropriate activities. Children express their ideas in paintings and drawings. For example, they use paint and charcoal to draw peppers and they achieve very variable standards. The smaller groups result in children receiving more adult input and they have valuable opportunities to develop their speaking skills and extend their vocabularies. The classrooms are bright and there are attractive displays which stimulate ideas.

## ENGLISH

64. In both reading and writing in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level, Level 3, was close to the national average for all schools. This indicates that the school successfully extends the skills of those pupils who are capable of higher attainment. The results over the last four years have varied considerably. In reading, there was a sharp dip in the results in 1998 and they rose again significantly in 1999. In writing, the results fell from 1996 to 1998, but they too rose again in 1999. The year group in 1998 had lower levels of prior attainment than usual and this is the main reason for the low results in that year.
65. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are in line with what is expected nationally in reading. In writing, the percentage reaching the expected level is still below the national average, but it is close to that of similar schools. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. This attainment represents satisfactory progress in learning because of the low starting point of the majority of pupils when they enter the school.
66. By the end of Year 2, standards of speaking and listening are slightly below what is expected nationally. Pupils are keen to talk to adults and their confidence grows as the conversations continue. However, their vocabularies are limited and most responses are expressed in phrases rather than sentences. Teachers use an appropriate range of strategies to improve pupils' vocabularies in lessons. Planning in all subjects includes details of the words to be introduced or consolidated, for example in science. Teachers check pupils' understanding of words they encounter in books. For example, when Year 2 pupils were reading a story from India about the Rajah's big ears. Teachers give clear guidance through their own use of good sentence structure. Labels and displays are used well around the school to reinforce vocabulary. Opportunities to extend speaking skills, for example through role play and drama are limited, especially in the lower part of the school. However, teachers use questions effectively to encourage pupils to express their ideas. Pupils are given good opportunities to express their ideas about the story they read and to predict what they thought was going to happen. Pupils retell the main elements of familiar stories. They convey their meaning effectively, but their choice of words is very simple. In lessons most pupils are keen to answer questions and express their views. On occasions they call out rather than putting up their hands. This is not always sufficiently checked by teachers and there is insufficient emphasis on the need to listen to what others have to say. Many pupils find it difficult to concentrate when they first enter the school. Gradually the majority sit and listen for an appropriate period of time but some find it difficult when part of a large group. Support staff are used well to help pupils behave appropriately, for example during the introductory session of the literacy hour. By Year 2 most pupils are beginning to listen carefully to instructions from their class teacher and to show respect for what others have to say.
67. Most pupils aged seven reach satisfactory standards in reading and some exceed them. They make good gains in skills as they move through the school. The higher attaining pupils read confidently with expression. They show good understanding of the story and retell the main events. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words and they self-correct when they notice that the sentence does not make sense. Pupils enjoy reading and are keen to read to an adult. The group reading session in the Literacy Hour is used well to develop reading skills and the good teaching of phonics also has a positive effect. Parents are encouraged to participate. Teachers write notes in the home-school reading records to show how

parents can help at home. The comments of parents indicate that the majority play at least some part in the development of their child' s reading achievements.

68. Attainment in writing by the end of Year 2 is below what is expected nationally, but it is close to that of similar schools. Pupils make good progress in their ability to write independently from a low starting point. They learn to write short stories in complete sentences and to use capital letters and full stops correctly. However, the literacy hour does not give sufficient opportunities for teachers to help pupils to extend their writing skills as the class teacher focuses on the development of reading. The large number of worksheets used in other subjects, for example history, science and religious education, does not give good support for the development of extended writing skills. For example, the space for writing on the worksheet is often limited and pupils can only respond with one or two sentences. However, pupils are given a wide range of different opportunities to write to stimulate their interest. For example, they write letters to children in Holland, accounts of visits, retellings of stories and instructions on how to make a sandwich. Handwriting is unsatisfactory. There is no whole school approach to teaching handwriting and pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practise letter formation. The expectations of teachers are not high enough. For example in Year 1, when pupils were copying a class story from the whiteboard, there was insufficient emphasis on the quality of their writing. Teachers do not put enough emphasis on this aspect when marking pupils' work.
69. The school looks carefully at the standards pupils achieve and, as a result, it has introduced new initiatives which are effective. For example, the low results in spelling in 1997 led the school to look at reinforcing the teaching of phonics and letter blends. Spelling results are now close to the national average. Staff also target borderline pupils who they think will achieve Level 2 with some additional support. These pupils receive good teaching and, as a result, they are making significant progress in lessons. Pupils in Year 2 are put into sets for writing sessions once a week. The groups are kept small by the use of support staff and the headteacher so that teaching can be well focused on pupils' needs, as well as giving encouragement and confidence. Pupils, identified as capable of achieving the higher levels, receive small group support once a week, for example to extend the range of their vocabulary in written work. Teaching in these sessions is good and pupils respond very positively to the opportunities they are given. Pupils respond well to individual help and work best when in small groups with adult support.
70. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the very good provision made for them. Their needs are clearly identified in their individual education plans and they receive good support from classroom assistants and the special educational needs teacher. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 are withdrawn twice a week to work alongside their peers with the special needs teacher. This is effective as it is used well to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem, as well as to extend their learning. It also means that the class teachers are left with smaller groups on these occasions, so that they can also ensure that the work set is well-matched to the needs of the pupils
71. In half of the lessons observed teaching was satisfactory and in half it was good. The Literacy Strategy is fully implemented in each class. Its impact on raising attainment is satisfactory, although there are times when the work set for pupils to complete independently of the teacher is not well matched to their needs. On occasions the worksheets used are too straightforward and pupils complete them easily. At other times pupils are not sure what they have to do and, as a result, they complete very little work in this session. Where teaching is good, teachers use their

subject knowledge well and stimulate pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Work is well planned and carefully matched to pupils' needs. Pupils understand what they are doing, find tasks demanding and they have achievable goals. Teachers explain the learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson so that pupils know what they are supposed to learn. Pupils are managed well and this creates an atmosphere where pupils concentrate and learn effectively. They feel confident with their teachers and are willing to have a go. Good questioning techniques are employed to assess pupils' level of understanding, to reinforce previous learning and to extend ideas. In shared reading lessons all teachers recap on what has happened so far before moving on to the next section. Teachers use the good supply of resources for literacy effectively. For example 'Big Books' enable whole class reading which helps the lower attainers to increase their reading skills by participating with others. In some classes teachers make provision for pupils to use information technology to enhance learning.

72. Since the last inspection the biggest improvement has been in the analysis of pupils' attainment and the introduction of successful smaller teaching groups, made up of pupils selected on the basis of their needs. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for developing the subject and a firm commitment to raising standards, but she does not have any opportunity to observe teaching. With the help of a new commercial scheme teachers are beginning to keep detailed records of pupils' learning, especially in writing, and to identify their future learning needs, but they need more training in its use. The need to develop the library was referred to in the last report. Part of the spare classroom is now used to house library books, but its potential as a learning resource has not yet been fully developed.

## **MATHEMATICS**

73. The school has maintained standards since the previous inspection, when they were judged to be in line with what was expected nationally. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the trend is set to continue. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with those in most schools.
74. Year 2 pupils' attainment in number work meets requirements for their ages. Pupils gain a sound understanding of number through their investigative work. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact as it focuses on the teaching of mental arithmetic skills. Pupils improve their knowledge and understanding of number, for example when investigating equal sets of numbers such as  $3 \times 3$  and  $3 + 3 + 3$ , or when arranging three colours in as many different sequences as possible. Most pupils have a secure understanding of numbers to 100. They count on and back in tens and they accurately calculate addition and subtraction problems using 2 digit numbers. They explore number patterns, such as  $1 + 9 = 10$  therefore  $10 + 90 = 100$ , using their knowledge effectively to add other multiples of ten. Higher attaining pupils are challenged by addition and subtraction problems involving money and they show a good understanding of place value when partitioning numbers into tens and units. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards when measured against their learning targets. Emphasis is given to learning about shape and measure. Pupils name and describe common two and three-dimensional shapes. They know the 'o'clock' times, and are beginning to use standard measures such as centimetres.
75. The good progress that pupils make in Key Stage 1 can be linked directly to the overall good quality of teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a

secure understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy. This enables them to plan clearly, focusing well on what pupils are to learn. They introduce appropriate mathematical terminology and reinforce it throughout the session. An example is the use of the word 'multiples' when pupils in Year 2 are counting in 10s, 20s and 30s. Teachers give clear explanations to help pupils understand. Consequently, they approach their work confidently, knowing what to do. Teachers' good knowledge of pupils' abilities helps them to match work well to specific needs. As a result, pupils make good progress at the most suitable level. Teachers use questions effectively to encourage pupils to explain how they arrive at their answers. Teaching assistants are given a clear role and, through their knowledge of pupils and their skills, they make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

76. Lessons are conducted at a good pace, but at times the length of the introduction by the teacher does not allow sufficient time for pupils to finish the activities planned for them. In one instance, pupils did not gain full benefit from the discussion at the end of the lesson because the teacher's control was not firm enough. Pupils did not listen well and the opportunity to share what they had learned with others was lost. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and deal sensitively with their individual needs. This promotes pupils' confidence and self-esteem and it has a positive impact on their learning.
77. Effective management by the subject co-ordinator has ensured that the Numeracy Strategy is well established. Teachers have been trained in the use of mental arithmetic strategies and in their management of the numeracy hour. There is good analysis of pupils' work to monitor standards. Systems for assessment are very good and all the information gained is used well to set targets for future attainment. Resources for numeracy have been improved recently to meet the needs of the new strategy. These are used well to support pupils' learning. Computer programs are used effectively to consolidate skills such as number recognition and counting on in 20's. In science, mathematical vocabulary is reinforced when pupils use terms such as vertical, horizontal and diagonal when they talk about the use of mirrors to create reflections.

## SCIENCE

78. Teachers' assessments in 1999 indicate that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was below the national average, but in line with similar schools. More pupils exceeded the expected level than was the case in most schools. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards have improved and current Year 2 pupils are achieving standards that are in line with the national average. This represents good progress across the key stage, as the level of awareness in scientific areas of knowledge and understanding is low when pupils enter Year 1. Both higher attaining pupils, and those with special needs, progress at appropriate rates for their ability.
79. Since the last inspection, the main improvement has been the amount of practical and investigative work undertaken. This is a result of increased teacher confidence, which in turn has been supported by the adoption of a clear scheme of work. This has helped teachers to plan a broad and balanced range of work that challenges pupils at the right level. A weakness in the curriculum, however, is the over-reliance on worksheets to record pupils' findings from their practical work. Whilst these enable pupils to complete their recording quickly, because they only require a small amount of writing, there are drawbacks, particularly for older children. Some are capable of writing their own explanations, accounts and conclusions, but they



seldom have the opportunity to do this, or to record their results in a wider variety of formats.

80. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a similar level of understanding across the main strands of the subject. They have a sound understanding of Life Processes and the basic needs of plants and humans to survive. Pupils describe the main properties of materials, such as wood, plastic or metal. They understand the changes that occur when substances, such as chocolate or clay, are heated and cooled, but the scientific vocabulary they use is not extensive. In their work on forces, Year 2 pupils have experimented with dropping a variety of articles, such as feathers, leaves and stones, from a height. After predicting their pattern of fall, they drew diagrams to illustrate what happened and these show very good levels of observation.
81. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching varied from good to very good. A strong feature is the emphasis placed upon first-hand practical investigation. For example, in Year 2 pupils experimented with different shaped mirrors before deciding how each behaved. When the teacher asked them to think about real-life situations involving 'upside down reflection' they quickly observed that concave mirrors produce inverted images. They described these as being "like you see in a spoon". In their work on natural and man-made materials in Year 1, pupils' understanding is enhanced by the teacher's provision of a good range of objects for them to investigate using magnifying lenses. Under her supervision, they make accurate drawings showing texture and colour, before classifying the objects. Another feature of the teaching that contributes to pupils' good progress is the pace of lessons. Teachers time their introductions well so that pupils get to work quickly without losing concentration. They provide plenty of activity to keep pupils busy and check their understanding as the lesson progresses. The fact that pupils have been told clearly what it is that they are meant to be learning, helps them to know how well they are doing. This is a feature of the teaching that was less evident at the time of the last inspection.
82. Management of the subject is good. Assessment results are discussed with staff, and the regular use of assessment helps staff to plan together in the light of what pupils have shown that they can do. The co-ordinator does not have the opportunity to see the subject being taught, but samples of pupils' work are collected and this helps her to monitor standards.

## **ART**

83. There was no opportunity to observe art being taught during the inspection. However, evidence available shows that all pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning as they move through the school. They attain standards that are similar to those in other schools. They extend their skills and experience a range of media and techniques, including paints, pastels, collage work, printing and clay. The satisfactory standards reported in the previous inspection have been maintained and the amount of collage and three-dimensional work has been extended.
84. Good cross-curricular links are used to make the most of the time available. For example, pupils design their own prints to replicate designs from Victorian times. They study a painting of L S Lowry and use pastels to create a picture in his style. Pupils paint their own pictures to make a street scene following their visit to Beamish Museum and they use a variety of materials to make the costumes of people in the picture. Pupils make clay pigs and they imprint their own designs on

clay tiles and paint the results. They also have the opportunity to use their drawing skills when they illustrate their work in other subjects. Their pictures show good attention to detail and the colouring is careful.

85. Art forms part of a variety of afternoon activities planned for reception and Year 1 pupils. Pupils are grouped according to their age and ability. As a result, the work is appropriately focused on individual needs and support staff are used well to ensure that the groups are small.
86. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and is available to offer support when it is needed. Pupils' work is carefully displayed and this helps them to develop a pride in their work. Artwork is used well in classrooms to create bright, stimulating learning environments. Pupils illustrate their work in other subjects such as history, but the standard of this work is often disappointing, with insufficient care taken.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

87. No lessons were observed in design and technology but other evidence shows that standards are typical of those found in other schools. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
88. The satisfactory attainment reported at the time of the last inspection has been sustained. The curriculum is well planned to give a balanced range of activities across the key stage. Pupils develop a good level of skills in the areas of measuring, cutting, joining and finishing as they make a range of products such as decorated gift boxes, greetings cards with moving parts or gingerbread men. Pupils' experiences have been enhanced by taking part in a 'construction day' run by local industry in Hartlepool, in which groups combined to make paper bridges which they tested for strength with weights. Individuals' accounts of the activity, written as sets of instructions, show that they have a clear recall of the processes involved. This activity also helped to develop their skills in writing.
89. Younger children are taught specific skills, which they will need to make products from basic materials. In Year 1, for example, they learn to saw wood safely as they make models of boats and teachers give attention to simple but important skills, such as using a ruler to achieve an accurate fold in paper or card. For these pupils there is limited opportunity to influence the design of their own products, as they often work to a common design, concentrating on developing their making skills. Although they often decorate products individually, it is not until Year 2 that they begin to draw up individual designs, such as for sweets to be given as presents. Here pupils learn to plan out details, such as the shape, colour and flavour of what they intend to make, and they are expected to stick to the main points of their design as they begin to make it. This teaches pupils the importance of careful thought at the design stage.
90. The use of construction kits follows a similar pattern whereby younger pupils develop particular skills of joining as they make models of their own choices. As they progress through the key stage they are given more challenging activities by having to follow instructions to construct more complex working models, or to make a model such as a house with windows, door and a sloping roof.
91. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who advises colleagues on their planning and has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of pupils' work.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

92. At the time of the previous inspection standards were judged to be above national expectations. Since then the time allocated to the subject has been reduced to allow for more emphasis on literacy and numeracy. As a result pupils have less opportunities to extend their knowledge. Pupils now attain standards in geography which are similar to those seen in most schools. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have gained basic understanding of maps and plans, and demonstrate sound knowledge of their own locality.
93. Pupils in Year 1 develop early mapping skills by studying aerial photographs of their school and locating, for example, their classroom or features in the school grounds. A colourful map of Greendale helps them to follow Postman Pat's route from his house to different parts of the village. Year 2 pupils extend earlier skills by following a route around Horden. They observe buildings, recording their different uses, and they accurately locate these on a large scale map. Effective use is made of other local areas, such as Horden beach and Castle Eden Dene, where pupils observe different landscape features.
94. In the small number of geography lessons observed, teachers showed good subject knowledge, especially of the locality, which meant that pupils made good progress in their learning. Pupils discussed the contribution of the park towards local amenities and they made sensible suggestions as to how the facilities in the park might be improved. Pupils express their ideas confidently and discussions make a valuable contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.
95. There is effective management of the subject. The curriculum provides good first-hand experiences upon which to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Valuable links with a school in Holland provide further scope for learning. The school has good links with a family in Nigeria and the exchange of artefacts and photographs further enriches pupils' learning. There are sufficient resources to support teaching. The provision effectively meets National Curriculum requirements.

## **HISTORY**

96. Pupils attain standards which are similar to those seen in most schools. The satisfactory standards reported in the previous inspection have been maintained. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make clear gains in subject knowledge in the topics covered and they develop their research skills as they move through the school.
97. Pupils compare aspects of modern life with those in the past and begin to see how things have changed over time. For example, Year 1 pupils compare old and new household articles, such as irons and old and new toys. Year 2 pupils learn how houses have changed since Viking times. They also study aspects of Victorian childhood, such as schools and the jobs children used to do. They compare these aspects with those in their own lives. Good use is made of artefacts, such as a teacher's desk, a slate, a replica textbook and an abacus which are on loan. Pupils are keen to talk about these items. They also enjoy looking at pictures and books to find out further information, for example what it was like to be a chimney sweep. Pupils confidently offer their suggestions and express their ideas clearly. They listen politely to what others have to say.

98. In the one lesson observed teaching was good. Pupils were well managed and questions were used well to stimulate ideas. A good range of resources was organised to give additional information. Pupils expressed their thoughts about how it would feel to be a child working in a variety of situations and they wrote their ideas in speech bubbles on pictures on a worksheet. Pupils showed a very thoughtful approach and they were given a valuable opportunity to write in a different format. However, there was insufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils as they had more ideas than they could write in the space available.
99. The subject is well monitored by the co-ordinator through teachers' planning. The curriculum is carefully organised to meet pupils' needs and this has a positive impact on their learning. For example, teachers of Year 1 and reception pupils share the provision and they group pupils to ensure that the work is well matched to ability. Pupils gain a clear understanding of their own cultural heritage through the good use of visits to support their learning which also stimulate pupils' interest. For example they visit the historic quay in Hartlepool, Beamish Museum and Durham Cathedral.

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

100. By the end of the key stage, pupils' standards are average. In Year 2, the vast majority of pupils are familiar with the main applications of information technology, including word processing, handling information and data, and modelling situations. Their skills in control technology are not as well developed, although there is more work planned in this area for the Summer Term.
101. In their work on computers, older pupils develop a good grasp of most of the main keyboard operations. They access programs, select from menus on screen and print out their work, for example when they have created pictures for Christmas cards using an art package. Although they know how to make good use of the principal keys, such as shift, enter, or direction arrows, typing skills are very slow for most pupils. This slows down their word processing work and limits the amount they produce. The majority of pupils have mastered the key skills of organising and setting out their writing on the computer and they correct spelling and punctuation errors. The higher attainers select different styles and sizes of font to suit their writing. In a useful activity to encourage their personal development, Year 2 pupils work with Year 1 children to help them develop their skills. In their work with graphics programs, older pupils produce a range of graphs to show such information as the colour of their front doors, or whether their house has a chimney. This work helps enhance their learning in their topic on houses and homes.
102. Pupils' achievements over the key stage are satisfactory. Pupils leave reception with sound skills in controlling the mouse and selecting images on the screen. This is built upon throughout Year 1. Best progress is made in Year 2, where pupils' pace of work quickens and they apply their skills as they are learned. Pupils in all years are confident users of other communications' technology, such as tape recorders, and groups regularly set up listening activities with their favourite story, often following the text in reading books.
103. Information technology is making a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning in other subjects. It is mostly in literacy and numeracy, where pupils in all classes practise basic skills such, as spelling or number recognition. Other subjects where pupils benefit include music, where they compose simple tunes and rhythms, and science, where they learn about forces from a CD Rom. Pupils with special

educational needs use a range of appropriate programs to support areas such as reading skills, as they practise recognising blends of sounds, or reading along with stories from their reading scheme.

104. Only two lessons were observed in information technology. In one the teaching was satisfactory and in the other it was very good. In the best teaching, pupils' interest was captured by lively presentation of new material, which motivated them to ask questions and to offer suggestions as to how the program might be used. The pace of the lesson was brisk and pupils had no opportunity to let their attention wander, as the teacher regularly posed challenging open-ended questions such as "What do you think I could do to ....?" Well-planned lesson content, with clearly identified aims for the lesson and skilful management of pupils, resulted in rapid gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The other lesson was well-structured, building on previous knowledge, and the teacher was successful in building pupils' confidence to experiment with a range of options on the keyboard. However, for a few pupils, the pace of the lesson was too slow to maintain their total attention and this reduced the progress they made in learning new skills. Most pupils respond well to their opportunities to use computers. They help each other with problems and the vast majority co-operate and share the equipment well.
105. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who gives useful support to colleagues in their planning and organisation of information technology. She has undertaken a comprehensive audit of the subjects' strengths and weaknesses in preparation for a forthcoming expansion of the current resources, which are just about adequate to support pupils' progress. The development plan is well focused and includes further training for all staff in areas such as Internet use.
106. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements. Staff confidence and expertise have increased and resources have improved, particularly to support literacy and numeracy. Methods of assessment are more useful to teachers, and the curriculum is better organised to provide progressively more challenging experiences as pupils move through the school.

## **MUSIC**

107. Standards in music are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. They are in line with those seen in most schools. Pupils gain appropriate experiences in appreciation of music and in performance.
108. There are opportunities to listen to music in assemblies and whole-school singing sessions. When singing, pupils retain the tune and rhythm of the music showing good awareness of others singing with them. They have an increasing repertoire and recall the words of songs from memory. Pupils use untuned percussion instruments correctly when repeating simple rhythms.
109. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils are taught in groups, enabling more effective use of the instruments available. Lessons are carefully planned to provide a good balance of listening and performing experiences. The teacher used a tape effectively in one lesson for pupils to identify high and low sounds and the call of a cuckoo written into the musical score. Pupils select the instruments they wish to play and they enjoy exploring the sounds they make as they follow simple rhythmic patterns. Good relationships are established and this promotes an enjoyable working atmosphere. Pupils are managed well and their individual needs are attended to sensitively

without disrupting the flow of the lesson. Pupils work enthusiastically, co-operating well with one another when sharing or exchanging instruments.

110. Music provision is effectively managed to meet the National Curriculum requirements. The subject knowledge of the co-ordinator is used well as she teaches all the pupils in the reception and Year 1 classes. There are sufficient resources and these are used well to support learning.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

111. Standards are above those found in most schools and are higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school gives a generous amount of time to the subject and pupils' skills are developed at a good pace.
112. No outdoor games lessons were observed but indoor games, gymnastics and dance lessons were seen. Pupils in all year groups show very good control of their movement and they have a good awareness of each other's space. For example, in a Year 2 gymnastics lesson, they performed good quality sequences of movement involving jumps and forward rolls. In all lessons, pupils show good balance and agility during their warm up sessions. Pupils in a Year 1 dance lesson adopted a wide variety of body shapes and balances as they prepared to interpret movements from a taped broadcast.
113. Three-quarters of the teaching seen was good. Pupils' skills are developed by teachers giving careful attention to improving their techniques, as when in Year 2 they practise their skills of underarm bowling. The teacher demonstrates, observes the quality of pupils' performance, and then redirects those who have not yet mastered the technique. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, pupils' skills were not as effectively developed because there were too many activities with too little time for pupils to practise. The teacher's attention was taken up with organising the children for each new activity at the expense of improving their skills.
114. The co-ordinator offers advice to colleagues. This has ensured that there is a broad and balanced programme of activities to draw from by introducing the local authority's scheme of work. The co-ordinator does not have the opportunity to monitor practice and at times the work is not sufficiently adapted to match pupils' levels of skill.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

115. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils reach standards which are in line with the expected levels set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge about Christianity and other faiths such as Judaism and Buddhism. They reflect on what they learn and how people's faith influences their daily lives. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
116. For Year 1 pupils their study of Christianity is enriched by a visit to Durham Cathedral. They talk about the visit during a lesson, recalling such things as the stained glass windows and how they depict stories from the Bible. By learning about St. Cuthbert and his life in Lindisfarne, pupils are made aware of the concepts of commitment and belief in God. These concepts are reinforced in Year 2 through, for example, the story of Mary Jones and her role in the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. By looking at artefacts, such as prayer wheels, Sikh bracelets and Christian religious garments, pupils gain a knowledge of different faith symbols

and their significance in daily life and worship. After hearing the story of Buddha and his reflection beneath the bodhi tree, pupils express their own thoughts and feelings about a better world.

117. Assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' understanding of different religious practices. For example, pupils reflect on how children in Greece mark the passage of Lent by making a Lenten calendar called a Kukaras.
118. The good teaching seen in lessons has a direct impact on pupils' learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident and their clear and enthusiastic teaching promotes a positive response. Pupils show their interest and curiosity by recalling what they know and by questioning and sharing others' ideas. The stories chosen are matched well to pupils' interest and understanding, and, where possible, learning is enriched by visits and visitors to the school such as Salvation Army officers to talk about the Bible. Good relationships are established and this encourages pupils to become confident and willing to express their ideas.
119. In shorter lessons pupils' willingness to talk about their experiences is stifled by the urgency to record their findings in writing. This is counter productive because there is too little time left for sustained writing so the impact of the activity is lessened.
120. The curriculum is managed well and the learning experiences for pupils fully meet the requirements of the local authority's agreed syllabus. Good use is made of local churches and visiting clergy to support pupils' learning.