

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **BOWBURN INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

Bowburn, Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114088

Headteacher: Mrs S. Withnall

Reporting inspector: Mrs R. Eaton  
OIN: 15173

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2000

Inspection number: 190075

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wylam Street Bowburn Durham
Postcode:	DH6 5BE
Telephone number:	0191 3770606
Fax number:	0191 3770606
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. D. Haley
Date of previous inspection:	28 <sup>th</sup> October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs R. Eaton	Registered inspector	art	The school's results and achievements
		design and technology	How high are standards?
		science	How well are pupils taught?
		special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs R. Mothersdale	Lay inspector	equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
			<i>Community links</i>
			<i>Staffing and accommodation</i>
Mr J. Taylor	Team inspector	mathematics	<i>Efficiency</i>
		geography	
		history	
		information technology	
Mr D. Earley	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		music	<i>Assessment</i>
		physical education	
		religious education	
		English as an additional language	
Mrs M. Hulme	Team inspector	areas of learning for the under-fives	

The inspection contractor was:

Lincolnshire Education Associates  
The Innovation Centre  
Europarc  
GRIMSBY  
North East Lincolnshire  
DN37 9TT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6 - 9</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10 - 12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>12 - 13</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>13 - 15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>15 - 16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>16 - 17</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>17 - 18</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>18</b>
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>19 - 22</b>
 <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>23 - 33</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Bowburn Infant and Nursery School is situated in a former mining village on the outskirts of Durham. The area is one of high unemployment, and this is reflected in the circumstances of many of the children's families. The nursery draws children from a wider area, but a proportion of the higher attaining children leave before the start of the reception year. Thirty-one per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. Children attend the nursery on a part-time basis — 39 in the mornings and 38 in the afternoons. There are 58 in the reception year and 98 in Key Stage 1. Many children begin the reception year with very low levels of attainment. Twenty-six per cent of the pupils who attend the school full-time are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is above average. Nine pupils, or 5.7 per cent, have statements, and this percentage is much higher than average. Pupils' special educational needs generally relate to learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Five pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with another five in the nursery. English is an additional language for all these pupils, and seven of them are at the early stages of learning English. The main languages spoken in their homes are Arabic, Bengali and Japanese.

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

This is a very good school. Pupils achieve high standards, particularly in English. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good, and their personal development is excellent. Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language make very good progress. The quality of teaching is very good. The leadership and management of the school are very good, and its resources are used extremely efficiently. It provides very good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve very high standards in English.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good and they plan and organise lessons very well.
- Pupils' personal development is excellent, because the school makes very good provision for them to become independent.
- The curriculum, including the provision for special educational needs, is very good.
- The arrangements to care for pupils and to monitor all aspects of their development are excellent.
- Parents and the school work very well together.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well, in partnership with the staff and governors. All share a determination to raise standards.

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

- Standards in mathematics are high, but pupils do not achieve quite as well as they do in English.

*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 previously inspected in October 1996. Since then, it has made very good progress. Particularly significant are the improvements in standards. Achievement is now higher in almost every subject. Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science has improved greatly. The children under five now make very good progress, as do pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now good. The quality of teaching, which was satisfactory, is now very good – a considerable improvement. All the key issues have been dealt with thoroughly. Marking is now much more useful. Pupils are now involved in assessing their own performance, through the school's systems for setting targets. Improvements have been made to the environment, particularly to

the outside area of the nursery. Previously, the leadership and management of the school, and the value for money it provided, were good. They are now very good. The school is very well placed to continue to improve.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	A	D	A	A*	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E
writing	A*	D	A	A*	
mathematics	A	B	B	A	

*A\* means that the school's results are in the top five per cent of all schools*

Attainment in English is a particular strength of the school. Overall, the trend in results is better than the national averages. Since the previous inspection, results have improved significantly. In 1999, the school set targets for 70 per cent of its seven year olds to achieve Level 2 or above in reading, writing and spelling. These targets were exceeded by an average of 15 per cent. Targets are higher for the current Year 2 pupils, and have been revised and increased as a result of mid-year assessments.

Pupils listen carefully and explain their ideas thoughtfully and clearly. They read fluently and accurately, and write in well-structured, correctly punctuated sentences. Standards in mathematics are above average at the age of seven. Pupils' ability to use and apply number to mathematical problems, and in other subjects, is a strength. In science, pupils achieve particularly well in the investigational aspects of the subject. Pupils' skills in information technology are well developed and they use them very effectively to support their work in other subjects. In religious education, pupils' knowledge of other faiths is impressive.

Pupils achieve high standards in the majority of other subjects – achievement is very high in music and satisfactory in design and technology.

Pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language make very good progress.

Children under five make very good progress. By the time they are five, the majority achieve the national targets for their age and many begin the early stages of the National Curriculum. They make particularly good progress in their personal and social development.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to take part in lessons and activities. They enjoy learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are very well behaved and take care of each other and their surroundings.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils display great maturity and responsibility for their ages and are very thoughtful towards each other.
Attendance	Good. Pupils are keen to come to school and to learn.

Pupils sustain their interest and concentration very well. They work well in groups. Pupils listen to each other and respect other people's views and opinions. They do not need to be constantly supervised when learning, and this helps them to make very good progress. The friendly atmosphere in school means that pupils are confident to try out new skills or to express their opinions.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very 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.*

Teaching of English and mathematics is very good, and the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well. Throughout the school, teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good, and they plan and organise lessons very well. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils, which encourage them to try very hard. Questions are used very effectively, to help teachers find out how well pupils are learning. Support staff and volunteers make very important contributions to lessons and to pupils' progress, particularly those with special educational needs. Teachers are very careful to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Teaching was very good or excellent in 79 per cent of lessons and good in the remaining 21 per cent. This is a remarkable achievement.

Pupils are independent and confident. They are interested in their work and understand what they have to do.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school is very successful in providing a broad range of high quality learning opportunities for all its pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. A particular strength is that specialist support is linked strongly to the work pupils do with their class teachers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The support is very effective and pupils are very well integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong and about the values and beliefs of other people. They are helped to take responsibility and to live as part of a community. The school provides rich opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's care for all its pupils is exemplary.

The school has a very good partnership with parents and benefits from their active involvement in many aspects of pupils' learning. The very well structured and stimulating curriculum enables pupils to achieve high standards, and offers them a wide range of opportunities for enrichment.

There are excellent procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and using the information gained to guide planning.

The arrangements for ensuring the health of pupils are excellent. All staff know pupils very well and this underpins their utter commitment to their care. Staff work very hard to ensure pupils' safety. Child protection procedures are very comprehensive.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership is excellent. The deputy headteacher and teachers with management responsibility fulfil their roles very effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very well informed and play an active part in school life and developments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school makes use of a wide range of methods and data, to find out how it can improve still further.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent use is made of all resources, in order to achieve high standards and support pupils' personal development.

Overall, the provision of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is very good. Resources are stimulating.

All staff and the governing body share a determination to provide the best possible education for the pupils and to raise standards. Led by the headteacher, the school has established a very clear picture of its performance. The ability to analyse tasks in order to identify the most effective way forward is a strength of the leadership.

Educational priorities are supported by excellent financial planning. The school is very successful in achieving best value.

Arrangements for staff development are very effective and closely linked to the school's priorities.

## 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>• Children like school.</li><li>• The teaching is good.</li><li>• Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some would like to see a more interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li><li>• A number have concerns about homework – some feel that children receive too much.</li><li>• The condition of the surface of the playground causes concern.</li></ul>

The inspectors agree with the parents' very positive views of the school.

The school offers children opportunities to take part in recorder groups at lunchtimes. Additionally, it provides a wide range of activities which enrich the curriculum most effectively. This is appropriate for the age of the children and takes account of the transport arrangements of some.

The provision of homework is very good and is linked well to pupils' personal targets.

The school has been working to improve the playground for some time. It has very recently taken responsibility for this aspect of its provision and is seeking funding to implement its plans. Pupils are supervised very closely in the playground.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When they enter the nursery, children's achievements are well below what might be expected for their age. They make very good progress in the early years. By the time they are five years old, in the reception year, the majority have achieved the national targets for their age group and many have begun the early stages of the National Curriculum. This represents very good achievement, particularly in the area of personal and social development, and means that children are very well equipped to start Key Stage 1.
2. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds in reading and writing show that pupils' attainment is well above that expected for their age: the percentage attaining at the higher levels was especially high. When compared to pupils in similar schools, pupils' results are very high. In mathematics, the results were above the national average, and in comparison to similar schools they were well above average. The Teacher Assessments for science show that more pupils reach or exceed the expected level than in the majority of schools, and they attain much higher standards than in similar schools. Although there is some variation in the results over recent years, owing to fluctuations in the number of pupils with special educational needs, the overall trend is one of improvement.
3. The findings of this inspection confirm that standards in reading and writing are very high, and they are high in mathematics and science. Further, they show that most pupils attain very well in speaking and listening, their attainment in information technology exceeds the national expectation, and in religious education, they attain beyond the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In the majority of other subjects, pupils achieve high standards – achievement is very high in music and satisfactory in design and technology. In most lessons, throughout the school, pupils' achievement is beyond that expected for pupils of their age.
4. The school's results and achievements are particularly significant when the proportion of pupils with special educational needs – well over one-fifth – is considered. Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection. In 1996, standards in English were satisfactory, sometimes good, and in mathematics and science they were satisfactory. In most other subjects, attainment was satisfactory, with some higher standards in music and physical education. The school has been very systematic in its efforts to raise standards. A range of successful strategies has been developed to improve the quality of teaching. Teaching is now very good and this is clearly the most important factor in the improved results. However, the school's analysis of assessment information and its use in target setting have also played an important role. For example, the school was aware that the cohort due to enter the National Curriculum tests in 1998 had an unusual profile, with almost 50 per cent of pupils on its register of special educational needs. In response, an action plan and specific individual targets were produced, supported by a modified curriculum and parental involvement. As a result, almost all the children achieved or exceeded the targets set for them. The school is currently working very successfully to improve the results of boys in English, traditionally less good than those of girls.
5. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has been very effective and instrumental in raising standards. Although the Numeracy Strategy has also been enthusiastically adopted, there has not yet been time for its impact on results to be as striking – at present, attainment in mathematics is not as high as in English.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, as a result of the very good quality provision made for them. The school's results provide clear evidence of this progress, since the percentage of pupils who do not attain national averages is less than the percentage with special educational needs. Pupils make especially good progress in reading and writing, because of the very appropriate emphasis placed on these key areas. Teachers identify particular letters or words they intend pupils to learn, and then, working in partnership with staff from the learning support service, provide regular opportunities for them to practise reading and spelling. Records show clearly how pupils increase the number of letter sounds they remember, go on to use this knowledge to tackle reading and spelling simple words, and recall and read words that occur frequently in their books.
7. Teachers use assessment procedures very effectively to identify higher attaining pupils. They then ensure that the work they set is sufficiently challenging, particularly in English and mathematics, so that these pupils also make very good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress, as a result of the very good support they receive. Because their language and literacy skills develop so well, they are able to achieve very well across the curriculum.

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

8. Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning. They are very happy to come to school and parents are very pleased about this. They enjoy lessons and are very quick to start activities in the classroom, put away their reading bags and be ready to listen to their teacher. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of activities in lessons. For example, in a physical education lesson, each pupil paid great attention to the rhythm and timing of a country-dance. This had a very good impact on the success and participation of the whole Year 2 class. Pupils work very well in groups and they do not always need to be constantly supervised to ensure that they concentrate on their work. For example, in an art lesson, Year 1 pupils used resources such as glue very responsibly when creating a collage, shared ideas and materials generously and were very intently focused on their task.
9. Overall, the behaviour of pupils is very good and the school leaves them in no doubt about the high standards of behaviour that it expects. There have been no exclusions. Pupils are very well behaved at lunch and play times and get on very well with the lunchtime supervisors. They are quick to take care of each other and say 'sorry' without any prompting – for example, if they accidentally bump into someone. They wait their turn in lines, without pushing and jostling, when preparing to go out to the home time bus. Pupils handle artefacts and displays – such as a seaside collection - very carefully. When replacing pencils in pots or books on shelves, or returning their cutlery and trays for washing up after lunch, they are very sensible.
10. Pupils' personal development and relationships with others are excellent. They enjoy the routines of school, such as fetching and returning registers, tidying up classroom tables or helping with handing out biscuits in the nursery. The school encourages pupils to look after themselves (to fasten laces or do up zips) and this helps them to achieve independence. For such young children, pupils display great maturity and responsibility. They rarely shout out in lessons, wait to be asked the answer to a question, and put their hands up to speak. In an information technology lesson with Year 2 pupils, the teacher did not constantly have to remind them to keep away from the edges of a grid for a programmable toy. This meant that all pupils could see what was happening, all could participate and all learn. Pupils respond well to 'circle time' and are very sincere in their contributions – for example, suggesting ways of making someone feel better or how to extend friendship to a new person in a group. They are very aware

of the school's emphasis on not talking to strangers and pointedly do not open doors for visitors. Pupils enjoy close relationships with each other and all the staff and volunteers, and the friendly atmosphere in the school has a very beneficial effect on pupils' learning – they are confident to try new skills or express their opinions.

11. Attendance is good and has improved since the previous inspection. It is now above the national average for a school of this type. The school works hard to stress to parents the importance of attendance and punctuality.

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

12. The quality of teaching is very good. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when the teaching was judged to be largely satisfactory. Although there have been some changes to the teaching staff, in the main the improvements have been brought about by other factors. Action has been taken following monitoring by the headteacher and other staff; the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been introduced very successfully; and teachers work together to agree approaches in order to raise standards. These developments have led to a particularly striking feature of the school – the work of all teachers is of very high quality, which means that all pupils benefit. This is why high standards are achieved throughout the school. There are a number of major strengths in the teaching and no significant weaknesses.
13. Teachers are very well informed about all areas of the curriculum, for children under five and in Key Stage 1. Their knowledge is reinforced by the very good quality policies that guide their work, helping them to determine what needs to be taught at each stage of the pupils' development. Other than in the nursery, each teacher has a 'year partner' teaching a parallel class. Each pair works together extremely closely, planning how they will meet the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the curriculum. Their planning is detailed and very effective. Teachers are quite clear about what they want the pupils to learn and, particularly in English and mathematics, they have different objectives for different groups of pupils. Additionally, their knowledge of the pupils themselves enables teachers to choose activities that capture their interest, contributing to the very good quality learning in the school. For example, in a numeracy lesson with reception year children, the teacher had planned a number of tasks to reinforce their ability to count. One of these involved telling them that Teddy had brought some things he shouldn't, in his school bag. What could they be? This entranced the children, who were desperate to be involved in investigating and counting the chocolate shapes in the bag. They made very good progress, because they were given repeated opportunities to count and because learning was such fun.
14. A noticeable strength of pupils' learning is their confidence and independence, and teachers work hard to promote these qualities. From an early age, pupils are required to take responsibility for aspects of their learning, such as collecting and putting away resources. In Key Stage 1, most are able to work independently, because teachers match their tasks very accurately to their needs. They make sure that pupils understand and can cope with the work, but also that there is the right amount of challenge. This means that pupils have to concentrate and try hard in order to be successful – they are busy and this contributes to their very good behaviour. For example, in a science lesson, Year 2 pupils were investigating foods. The teacher had carefully planned a number of relevant activities, including recording the results of a class survey, exploring computer programs and asking adults about their eating habits. Voluntary helpers supported lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, whilst the teacher circulated the room, assessing pupils' work and progress and picking up and correcting any misconceptions – chips had been classified as 'healthy', because they are made from vegetables.

Pupils were making very good progress in acquiring scientific knowledge and developing their ability to carry out independent research.

15. Pupils have utter confidence in their teachers, because relationships in the school are excellent. This means that they are ready to attempt work which seems hard – they know that their efforts will be appreciated. For example, in a lesson taught by the teacher from the learning support service, two pupils with special educational needs tried very hard, because the teacher continually boosted their self-esteem. She used praise discriminatingly – so that they knew when they were successful – and gave them little jobs to do, such as setting out letter and picture cards. Again, in ‘circle time’ discussions, pupils are relaxed and receptive, because teachers consistently remind them that they are each special. As a result, they listen extraordinarily well to others and express their feelings and thoughts – for example, that you can turn to a good friend when someone else has let you down – without inhibitions. This contributes very effectively to pupils’ excellent personal development and to their progress in speaking and listening.
16. Support staff and voluntary helpers make important contributions to pupils’ progress, particularly for those with special educational needs. Teachers ensure that all adults are extremely well prepared for lessons, which means that they appreciate the purpose of activities and their own role. A factor that lifts this aspect of teaching to well above what is found generally, is the quality of the written notes provided. These often include questions that might be asked – and responses that might be anticipated. This contributes to the very efficient use of time in lessons, and hence to pupils’ progress. For example, because nursery nurses and volunteers go out of their way to encourage children in the nursery to communicate, the children’s progress in speaking and listening is enhanced, whatever the activity. Throughout the school, the quality of teachers’ questioning reflects their very high expectations. Most lessons involve at least one occasion when pupils gather together around the teacher – for example, when the lesson is being introduced or reviewed. Teachers are very skilled at adapting questions to pupils’ individual needs – as when they help them to structure their thoughts and in order to check their understanding and progress. Teachers sometimes use questions when marking pupils’ books. For instance, asking ‘Can you use these symbols when you play the instruments?’ when reviewing a piece of work in music. This useful strategy, to which pupils sometimes write down their responses, encourages pupils to think again about what they have learned, consolidating and extending their knowledge. The usefulness of marking was identified as a key issue in the previous inspection report and teachers have developed this aspect of their work very well.

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

17. The school is very successful in providing a broad range of very well planned and balanced learning opportunities. These meet the needs and aptitudes of all its pupils very effectively, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The curriculum is enhanced by a rich variety of stimulating activities both within and beyond the school.
18. The school has very effective strategies in place for teaching literacy and numeracy. It has implemented the National Strategies very thoroughly and this is helping the school to achieve high standards in these areas. It makes very good provision for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across the subjects of the curriculum. They use mathematical skills in work on coordinates in geography and measure scales to determine

different levels of noise in scientific investigations. They write sensitive prayers as part of their work in religious education and in history, they produce detailed and accurate comparisons between life in the present and at the turn of the previous century. Pupils handle data about shapes in their mathematical work and use computer programs to draw maps using keys in geography. The school has successfully addressed criticisms from the previous inspection by making very good provision for higher attaining pupils and by ensuring that pupils are involved in their own self assessment and target setting.

19. The school makes very good provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language. With the support of the local education authority service, the school identifies the individual needs of these pupils and provides them with additional support both within class and as part of a very effective withdrawal system. They are very well integrated into the life of the school.
20. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Very good attention is paid to meeting the requirements of the Code of Practice. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are linked clearly to their needs and, in the case of pupils with statements, to these or the outcomes of annual reviews. A particular strength of the provision is that specialist special educational needs support is an integral part of each pupils' curriculum – not an additional, separate curriculum. For example, the work of the specialist support teacher stems directly from pupils' individual needs but is linked very closely to the class teachers' planning. This effective liaison is very efficient, because it ensures consistency of expectations between staff and repeated opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning. The school is very quick to identify when pupils need additional support and to involve other agencies and professionals – for example, to provide specialist support for pupils with speech and language or emotional and behavioural difficulties.
21. The school invites a wide range of visitors into school and makes very good use of the local community to enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils have opportunities to work with artists in residence, to listen to music ensembles and to watch theatre groups. They extend their knowledge and understanding when they work with the local clergy and the school nurse, and are visited by the police, fire and ambulance services. They explore the local environment in their work in history and geography. There are effective links with other schools. For example, pupils in Year 2 attend performances at the local junior school and the school was involved in partnership in work in art with the local secondary school. There are good links with a local playgroup and there are effective arrangements for the smooth transfer of pupils to junior school. This means that children are prepared very well for the next stage of their education.
22. The provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. The school makes very good provision for sex education and education about the uses and misuses of drugs. Pupils have well planned opportunities to learn about healthy life styles. For example in work in science they learn about healthy diets and in physical education there is very good provision for them to learn about the effects of exercise on the body. In both whole school and class acts of worship, pupils are encouraged to be still, to reflect on their own feelings and beliefs, and to pray. The school hall and classrooms have very thoughtfully prepared corners where candles, pictures and artefacts are carefully chosen to stimulate pupils' reflection on qualities such as kindness. Teachers make very good use of 'circle time' to invite pupils to express their thoughts and to understand that each person in school is special. This clear commitment to value each individual is a significant factor in the school's approach to enabling pupils to develop insights into the values and beliefs of others.
23. The school has clear guidelines which are very effective in helping pupils to distinguish between right and wrong. Staff signal clearly what is acceptable and not and there is a shared

understanding which permeates the whole school. In religious education lessons, assemblies and in 'circle time', pupils are encouraged to consider how their behaviour affects others. In lessons teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They are encouraged to help each other and to work independently.

24. Relationships within and between groups of pupils and teachers are excellent. The calm, caring manner of the staff provides a very good role model for the pupils. They are provided with many opportunities to accept responsibility and show initiative. They act as librarians, help younger pupils with dressing themselves and conduct independent research – for example, into the decade of their birth. Pupils are enabled to help those less fortunate than themselves. For example, they help to provide wheelchairs for Nigeria and help children in Guatemala and Albania.
25. Teachers provide a very wide and rich range of interesting learning experiences in order to extend and deepen pupils' cultural development. For example, children take part in role-play about life in Victorian schools. They learn about and taste Japanese food. They visit such places as the Hancock Museum, the Science Fair and the Coastal Centre. Pupils learn to appreciate the richness of their own cultural heritage by finding out about the mining industry and visiting local museums. They take part in events organised by the village and know about the produce from local allotments. They celebrate festivals such as Christmas and harvest. They study traditional stories in literature and listen and dance to folk music. As part of extra-curricular activities, pupils learn to play and perform the recorder. Pupils have many opportunities to study cultures other than their own. Pupils, parents and visitors with knowledge and expertise of other cultures are welcomed into school to show aspects of traditional customs such as the wearing of saris and the preparation of Chinese food. In religious education lessons, pupils learn about festivals such as Hanukkah and Diwali. The school receives letters from people they have helped in Nigeria, which give insights into their lifestyles and they learn from visitors about life in South America. There is a very good range of pictures, displays, artefacts and clothing – for example from African, Caribbean, Indian, Chinese and Japanese cultures. Books about other cultures are readily accessible in the library and around the school.

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

26. The school's arrangements to ensure the health, safety, care and protection of all pupils are exemplary.
27. Child protection arrangements are led by the headteacher, who is the designated person responsible, but are shared by members of the governing body as well as staff. The school maintains close links to the area child protection committee, social services teams and health professionals in the area, showing its concern for pupils' welfare. Overall, day-to-day working practices for monitoring and promoting the health and safety of pupils are excellent. The procedures for dispensing medicines and meeting pupils' medical needs are meticulously organised, as are the very good first aid and accident procedures. Responsibility for monitoring the health and safety arrangements in the school is very well co-ordinated, with governor involvement, and risk assessments have been completed. Fire drills are held regularly, and recorded, and necessary safety checks are carried out or organised for physical education, fire fighting equipment and electrical appliances. The school has queried the appropriateness of the fire alarm arrangements in the school, but has been assured by the local education authority that the present system is both suitable and safe. Pupils are very well supervised at playtimes by staff, with close attention paid to avoiding the numerous potholes in the playground surface. For a considerable length of time, the school has sought action over the safety of the surface of the

school playground. It has very recently been placed in a position where it is able to address the issue as part of its own rolling programme of maintenance.

28. The school is vigilant in monitoring all reasons for pupils' absences and this has led to there being no unauthorised absences. It works closely with families to promote attendance and punctuality and has very good systems to target and raise individual pupils' attendance rates. Pupils enjoy receiving certificates for improved and good attendance. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are exceptionally good and the school makes excellent use of a range of awards and certificates to encourage pupils to behave well. Bullying is not tolerated.
29. There is an excellent range of assessment procedures for the monitoring of pupils' progress. The school makes extremely good use of these in order to guide teachers and pupils on the next steps to be taken. From the time they come into school, pupils' progress in all subjects of the curriculum is assessed regularly, thoroughly and systematically. Their progress is recorded in detail, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. This gives teachers a very clear understanding of the strengths of each pupil as well as what they need to learn next. Teachers use this detailed analysis very effectively, to guide their planning and to set clear and comprehensive targets for individual pupils and groups. Individual targets for improvement are discussed with pupils and parents. They are linked to homework and are available in the classroom alongside each pupil's work, in order to reinforce the agreed emphasis. The school also monitors assessments of children under five and National Curriculum test results in order to identify any trends in performance. As a result, for example, the school decided to place an emphasis on pupils' writing in order to improve attainment. Teachers hold regular planning and evaluation meetings and moderate pupils' work so that a clear understanding of standards is shared by all. This is enhanced by the use of moderated portfolios of work and individual folders of pupils' assessments. Assessment information is used very effectively to identify pupils with special educational needs. The statutory reviews of pupils' statements are carried out very conscientiously.

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

30. The parents' views of the school are very complimentary. Parents feel that the staff are very approachable and accessible, ready to discuss their children's successes and difficulties. For example, each night after school, all the teaching staff go out with the pupils when they are collected by their families, and are ready to talk there and then about immediate concerns. Parents are very pleased that all staff are committed to the well-being and education of their children, and are reassured that they will be safe, motivated and stimulated whilst in the school or nursery. They trust the school and are happy that their children's start in education is so well managed, supported and taught.
31. The school's links with parents are very good. The school's drive to improve the pupils' attendance figures is strongly supported by the close links between home and school and the teachers' ability to speak to families directly, informally and helpfully. The recent resurgence in the Friend's Association has come from the desire of some parents to help to raise funds and to share the administrative burden of such initiatives with staff. Liaison and communication with parents have a high priority amongst staff and can be clearly seen – for example, in the warm greetings to parents in the nursery, at the start of each of the sessions.
32. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good. The school values parents as a very rich resource contributing a great deal to pupils' progress. Pupils benefit from the small groups that are frequently possible, owing to the number of helpers in school. Parents



are informed about their children's targets for learning and ways in which they can help them to make progress. The school regularly seeks the views of parents – for example, about homework provision, school uniforms and the home-school agreements. The achievements of parents who attended training courses to help their children learn at home and to support the literacy and numeracy provision in school, were celebrated by pupils, staff and parents themselves. Parent helpers in the school receive a warm welcome and are well supported and informed about their role in lessons. This has a very positive impact on the standards that pupils achieve and on their learning.

33. Very good quality information is provided for parents. Parents value the liberal use of the home-school books. Useful notice boards are in place for parents, and letters, newsletters and helpful information are sent home on a regular basis.

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

34. A striking feature of the school is its striving for excellence, demonstrated not only by all staff but also by the governing body and the many volunteers who contribute to the provision. The headteacher has established this commitment to raising standards by communicating her own determination extremely clearly and by motivating others to work very hard in pursuit of the school's aims. A particular strength of her excellent leadership is her ability to analyse the school's performance, establish challenging targets for improvement, and then to plan carefully and comprehensively to achieve these.
35. Her evaluation of the school's work is supported by the very effective use she makes of all available data and of a range of monitoring strategies. For example, pupils' results are compared with those of pupils in similar schools and the reasons for any differences are explored and used to inform planning. Other staff with management responsibility – in particular, the deputy headteacher – are closely involved in evaluating the school's performance and in driving forward developments. For instance, subject leaders take responsibility for reviewing progress in their area, setting the agenda for future developments, and taking any necessary action. This results in teachers who understand their role in the leadership and management of the school. This, in turn, has a positive impact on their commitment to its performance. In all this, staff are very aware of national initiatives and priorities and they use this knowledge to guide their work. This means that their time is used efficiently – for example, knowing that the National Curriculum requirements are shortly to change, they have not wasted efforts by rewriting schemes of work to take account of the current relaxed arrangements, but have sensibly amended the existing documents, following extensive discussion and consultation.
36. The governing body is similarly very well informed. Governors take full advantage of training opportunities to increase and update their knowledge of national developments and their own responsibilities. They receive detailed reports from the headteacher and additionally gain first-hand information through visits to the school. An unusually high percentage of governors regularly help in classrooms and some take part in more formal monitoring exercises. For example, the governor with particular responsibility for special educational needs makes periodic checks on the implementation of the school's policy.
37. Despite the effectiveness of the arrangements to delegate responsibility to other staff, the headteacher has a very clear oversight of all aspects of the school's work, including teaching and learning. There is strong evidence that developments derived from monitoring activities have contributed to the very good improvements to the quality of teaching and raised standards.

38. Staffing in the school is adequate to teach the curriculum and is very well supplemented by support staff and a high level of voluntary help from parents and governors. All staff work together as a team: this is a strength of the school and makes a valuable contribution to the learning process and care of pupils. For example, during the caretaker's absence, two of the lunchtime supervisors, who are also voluntary helpers, have stepped in to support the school with the caretaking duties. Teaching staff are well qualified to teach the curriculum. Professional development of all staff is very well co-ordinated and closely linked to the school development plan. A regular pattern of classroom observations and personal development interviews enables staff to identify their strengths and areas for development. The induction of new staff and the support for newly qualified staff are very good. As a result of the staff development arrangements, each teacher's work is of very high quality.
39. Overall, the provision of resources in the school is very good and makes a significant contribution to the maintenance of high standards. Resources are very accessible to staff, safely stored, clearly labelled and, apart from the provision for information technology, plentiful. The school's use of teacher-made resources is very impressive, especially in the nursery, and helps considerably to increase pupils' learning. The school's library provision is well stocked, books are attractively presented and areas are provided for pupils to browse and study their choice of reading matter. The school makes very good use of museum lending resources – for example, the artefacts on display to support the school's celebration of the social history of the area.
40. The accommodation is very good. It is very well maintained and spotlessly clean. All space is used to its full potential. Imaginative and exciting displays make the most of every available surface and wall, to provide pupils with an interesting and stimulating environment. The hard play areas are in need of some repair, but the school has access to a large playing field and an environmental area.
41. This is a very efficient school. It uses all its resources wisely to support improvements that benefit its pupils. The governors are very well informed about the quality of education the school provides and give strong support to the headteacher and staff as they strive to make further improvements. Financial management is excellent and this ensures that well informed spending decisions are made. The school is forward looking, which has enabled it to anticipate a fall in numbers and build a contingency into the budget in order to maintain current teaching levels. This has resulted in the needs of all pupils being met more effectively, in smaller classes. The funding recently allocated to improve information and communications technology resources, to compensate for the delay in receiving additional government funding, is another judicious decision. This will help to limit any disadvantage the school might otherwise have suffered, by adding Internet skills to the high standards presently reached in information technology.
42. The school is already making excellent use of this new technology for administration and financial purposes. Together with the efficiency of the school secretary in dealing with day to day matters, this keeps the way clear for teachers to concentrate on their work in the classroom. Value for money, which was good at the time of the last inspection, is now very good.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

43. In order to further raise standards, the headteacher, staff and governors should:  
Improve attainment in mathematics by continuing to ensure that:
  - The positive benefits of the National Numeracy Strategy are disseminated throughout the school as thoroughly and appropriately soon as possible
  - Analysis is made of pupils' performance to set individual targets for improvement.*(paragraph 5)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	72	21	0	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39	156
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	48

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	41

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	31	21	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	25
	Girls	20	20	21
	Total	44	45	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (65)	87 (65)	88 (80)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	28
	Girls	18	20	20
	Total	42	45	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (63)	87 (76)	92 (74)
	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	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	93
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	26

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	83

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	38

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	66

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
--------------------------------	----

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
----------------	------

	£
Total income	303502
Total expenditure	300952
Expenditure per pupil	1560
Balance brought forward from previous year	21921
Balance carried forward to next year	24471

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	229
Number of questionnaires returned	86

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	24	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	38	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	37	2	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	34	8	1	1
The teaching is good.	72	28	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	26	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	13	6	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	34	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	65	27	5	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	79	20	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	36	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	30	12	6	24

## **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**

44. Children enter the nursery at the age of three. The teacher's assessments of what they know, understand and can do shows that they start with a very wide range of abilities but generally these are well below what might be expected for their age. Many have poor skills in literacy and numeracy and particularly poor social skills. However, by the time they are five years of age, in the reception class, the majority have achieved the national targets for the age-group and many have begun the early stages of the National Curriculum. They achieve particularly well in the area of learning known as personal and social development, where they become confident, independent children with very positive attitudes to learning. They relate very well to one another and adults, which leads to good co-operative working when in small groups and when all together as a class. A good range of experiences helps them make sense of the world around them and to appreciate their part in it. As they begin the early stages of reading, writing and numeracy they lay firm foundations for the National Curriculum work that comes later.
45. Given the low starting point this is very good achievement and an improvement on the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be simply satisfactory in the early years.
46. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good in both the nursery and reception classes and there are no significant weaknesses. There is very good teamwork between the teachers, nursery nurses and support staff. This results in a totally consistent approach to the way children are taught, so that children move smoothly from the nursery to reception year and then into Key Stage 1.
47. Teachers have a very good understanding of what children need to learn. For example, in the nursery class, the adults' knowledge of the mathematical area of learning results in a very well organised mathematics bay. In one lesson, children had opportunities to use a range of very appropriate resources, some of which had been made by staff and, because they were so stimulating, these were actively sought out by the children. The teacher's knowledge of all the areas of learning led to her making good links for the children between one activity and another so that every opportunity was used to develop children's numeracy skills. For example, as children used the water play to fill and empty jugs they extended their mathematical language and understanding of such terms as 'full', 'empty' and 'to the brim'. In another part of the room they were using play dough to make the shapes on mathematical cards and counting to see if they had made sufficient of each shape.
48. By the reception stage, the numeracy activities are rooted very firmly in the National Numeracy Strategy and the teachers use their knowledge to provide practical activities that extend children's knowledge and understanding. In one class, a teacher was using imaginative play with a 'take-away' shop where children read a menu to select their food and then had to find the right coins to pay for what they had ordered. In this way they were extending their understanding of number operations such as addition and using the language involved. In another class, a teacher made very good use of an evaluation session where children had been making 'money spiders'. This required them to count pence in order to stick the correct number on each leg of the spider. They were able to explain what they had done and demonstrated a good understanding of vocabulary related to money, how to count up to ten pence and how to find out if their efforts were accurate.

49. Their very good relationships helps teachers to maintain children's interest, particularly when they have very short concentration spans. In the nursery, the adults work well with children for whom English is an additional language. These are bright children who simply lack the English words to communicate. They have a separate story time so that adults can take the story slowly and spend more time talking about the pictures, in order to extend their vocabulary. The children take a full part in all that happens in the nursery but there is no specialist support at this stage, so their progress is not so fast as that of other children. Teachers make very good efforts to involve parents as partners in the education of their children. Those parents who are able to help in school provide very good support as they are deployed very appropriately by teachers. One parent, taking a small group for a story, succeeded in developing the children's love of books and enjoyment in listening. She explained clearly how to use cues from pictures, and extended the children's awareness that print conveys meaning.
50. Basic literacy skills are taught very well at the reception stage. This is resulting in children developing a good knowledge of letter sounds and the skills to blend some sounds together to read unfamiliar words. They follow the text well in the large print books and take pride in reading parts where there is dramatic repetition of words – for example, in traditional stories such as 'The Three Pigs'.
51. The improved outdoor area for nursery children and indoor physical play space is helping them to share space safely with others. They are encouraged to use a range of tools and implements and, as a result, they are gaining greater dexterity in writing and making models. In reception classes they extend their physical development by using space and equipment in the hall. One teacher used her knowledge very well to raise children's awareness of health and safety issues – for example, the importance of warming-up activities. The objectives for learning were shared with pupils, whose performance was enhanced by their understanding of what was expected. The teacher's very clear explanations enabled children to accept responsibility and show initiative in such tasks as setting out ropes.
52. Teachers provide a wide range of activities for children's creative development. This gives them opportunities to begin to learn the appropriate techniques for music making, painting, collage, printing and drawing from direct observation.
53. Teachers take considerable time to make the classes inviting and interesting places to learn. All the classes for under-fives emphasise literacy and numeracy in the displays and work areas. The displays are exciting, and ensure that children are interested, concentrate hard and enjoy learning. The leadership of the foundation curriculum is very good, with the teacher providing a policy and guidance that are good, but now need updating in line with improved practice and the new early learning goals that must be taught from September. This is already planned. The early years co-ordinator is not yet involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning, but the school is keen to do this and an appropriate introduction would be when the new policy and guidance are produced.

## **ENGLISH**

54. By the end of the key stage, attainment is well above national averages in reading and writing. In speaking and listening, attainment is well above that expected for pupils at the age of seven. This is in line with the results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for reading and writing, where the percentages of pupils attaining at the higher levels in reading and writing were particularly high. These findings are an improvement on those of the previous inspection and are part of an overall improving trend. Standards are very high and the pupils learn very well



because the quality of teaching, which the previous inspection report described as mostly satisfactory and sometimes good, is now consistently very good. The school has worked hard and very successfully to implement the National Literacy Strategy and this has enhanced the very good progress made by most pupils, including those with special educational needs. The school has developed excellent systems for assessing pupils' work in order to set targets for improvement for individuals, groups and the school as a whole. This enables teachers to plan work that challenges all pupils to make very good progress according to their ability.

55. By the end of the key stage, most pupils listen attentively and respond confidently and clearly. When they speak in class or during assemblies or when they talk to visitors they organise their ideas carefully using a varied vocabulary. For example, they explain how to recognise syllables and describe how cyclical diagrams – such as the life cycle of a frog – and flow charts work. This is helped by the excellent relationships within and between groups of teachers and pupils and the calm, purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. The comments and opinions of all pupils are valued and their efforts are encouraged and praised. This gives pupils the confidence to articulate their ideas. Teachers have a very good understanding of basic reading skills. They explain these very clearly, so pupils know how to use a wide range of strategies for tackling new and unfamiliar words. Teachers' knowledge of punctuation and the process of writing is very good. Because they describe these so effectively, pupils use speech marks appropriately and understand how to draft and redraft their stories.
56. Teachers often share lesson objectives with pupils so that they know what is expected and understand clearly what they are doing. Planning is very well structured, using the literacy framework, enabling pupils to build on previous work and make very good progress. For example, in a lesson with Year 1 pupils, the teacher built up a list poem from pupils' ideas and then used this very skilfully as a focal point for learning about capital letters and full stops. Appropriately challenging work was planned for pupils of all abilities. Lower achieving pupils identified letter combinations from a taped programme and recognised and wrote down rhyming words. Higher attaining pupils were encouraged to work rigorously because the teacher set deadlines within the lesson. For example, they were expected to produce several thoughtful, well-punctuated sentences and arrange these in collaboration with other pupils into list poems within a given time period. In such ways the school has successfully addressed a criticism from the previous inspection by developing very effective provision for higher achieving pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to make very good progress because their individual education plans clearly identify areas for improvement. Additionally, all pupils have individual targets. Teachers and support staff use these very effectively to focus pupils on what they need to do in order to improve. For example, in Year 1 targets include 'Try to make your writing smaller' and, in Year 2, 'Use capital letters and full stops'.
57. A significant factor in the high attainment and very good progress made by most pupils is that teachers have very high expectations. They encourage pupils to work productively and apply considerable intellectual effort to their learning. They encourage pupils to work hard and produce lively and thoughtful stories and chose words adventurously for effect. In their reading comprehension activities, higher attaining pupils are expected to show increasingly accurate and insightful understanding. They learn to read aloud very expressively, in order to emphasise dramatic events in stories and to illustrate the use of speech marks. The progress of all pupils is enhanced by support assistants and by the voluntary helpers who give regularly of their own time to help pupils with reading.
58. Lessons are very well organised within the structure of the literacy framework and pupils use their literacy skills very effectively in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in a lesson on the Jewish festival of Purim, pupils listened very attentively to the teacher's description of

Purim celebrations. Then, in a small group, they researched the origins of the story from a range of easily accessible texts and presented these in the form of simple drama to the rest of the class. The school has successfully tackled a criticism from the previous inspection by making effective use of information technology. For example, pupils use tapes to listen to stories and word-processing to enhance their writing.

59. Teachers make excellent use of day-to-day assessment in order to help pupils to overcome difficulties. In class, teachers move from group to group monitoring pupils' work and advising them, for example, on how to improve their handwriting. In this way they ensure that handwriting is neat, fluent and joined. Homework is used very effectively to complement and extend pupils' work in class. For example, pupils regularly complete reading and spelling work at home. Parents are very well informed about pupils' individual targets for improvement and about how to help them at home. They make regular and helpful comments in home-school reading records.
60. Pupils for whom English is a second language are very well supported by class teachers and by the teaching support provided by the local education authority service. These pupils are given very well planned activities to enable them to make very good progress in their reading, writing and speaking and listening. This also enables them to improve their understanding of ideas and language in other subjects of the curriculum such as mathematics and religious education.
61. The subject is very well managed. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning very effectively and organises the subject very well. She works very hard to support colleagues and has developed a very thorough system for the assessment, recording and review of pupils' progress. She has made a significant contribution to the implementation of the literacy strategy and this has had an important part to play in raising standards. The school has a shared and consistent approach to improving pupils' work in English and this is an important factor in the very good progress made by its pupils. Resources for the subject are very good and the library is used very effectively to develop pupils' reading and research skills.

## **MATHEMATICS**

62. The results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for pupils in their last year were above the national average. In comparison to similar schools they were well above average. The school is maintaining these good standards despite the fact that there is an increasing number of pupils with special educational needs in each age group. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were reported as being satisfactory. The improvement in the attainment of the faster learners is particularly good, with more than twice as many pupils reaching higher levels as at the time of the last inspection. The improvement in the quality of teaching, which is now very good, has had a clear impact on raising standards.
63. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented. The regular sessions of oral and mental mathematics have resulted in pupils becoming increasingly confident and interested in number. Seven year olds have developed a range of strategies for finding answers. For example, in one lesson they were able to double numbers, starting with 2, until they reached 1024. This was then used very effectively to teach halving as the reverse function, place value of three-figure numbers and partition of a big number in order to make doubling easier. In this, the teacher displayed very good knowledge and understanding of the subject by using every opportunity to challenge pupils to explain how they had found answers. Improved numeracy skills were highlighted in a lesson in which pupils were ordering numbers to 100 and, the faster learners, numbers to 1000. The teacher's high expectation in terms of the amount and demand of

the work, behaviour and diligence promoted very good learning. Pupils learned how place value was important, by comparing higher value numbers first. The very good tasks planned by the teacher enabled all pupils to work at a good pace and to move on to more difficult work when they were ready.

64. The standard of work in using and applying number is a strength. Some of this is done through other subjects – for example, in geography by learning how to use coordinates on maps; in history when studying time lines; and in science when using a scale to determine the noise level of different sounds. Teachers place a priority on tasks that match the abilities of pupils and require them to use the number skills they develop in the mental sessions. For example, good learning was observed in lessons when younger pupils were sorting data and representing it on tables and graphs. Counting, making sets and tallying the number of letters in each word of a paragraph all demanded that pupils used numeracy skills and their ability to think and learn for themselves. In these lessons, teachers made very good use of information technology to consolidate and extend learning. For example, pupils accessed words about two-dimensional shapes from a word bank and used different criteria to sort out three-dimensional shapes.
65. A very good feature is the teaching for pupils with special educational needs and other slower learners. Because of the quality of this, a number attain the expected level by the time they are seven years old. Lesson plans include modified learning objectives to meet their specific needs and teachers and learning support assistants provide very effective support. In an excellent lesson in ordering numbers, the teacher gave the assistant a very thorough briefing. This enabled these pupils to make very good progress in placing numbers to 10 in the correct order and then learning more about two-digit numbers. A feature of all mathematics lessons is the practical involvement of all pupils. They have frequent opportunities to discuss their work, to explain their methods of finding answers and to display and describe what they have done to others in the class. Teachers place a very strong emphasis on using key mathematical words. This enables pupils to understand and apply words such as ‘estimate’, ‘frequency’, ‘sphere’ and ‘right angle’, correctly.
66. The management of the subject is very good and has had a significant impact on raising standards. Leadership in the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, the monitoring, evaluation of teaching, staff development, curricular planning and the good level of resources have all contributed. Other developments and initiatives include the excellent assessment procedures, which are used very effectively to set group and individual targets for improvement, and homework which offers parents the chance to be involved in their children’s learning.

## **SCIENCE**

67. Standards are high. By the time they are seven, more pupils reach or exceed the expected level than in the majority of schools. They achieve much higher standards than do pupils in similar schools. The findings of the inspection confirm the statutory Teacher Assessments for 1999 and the latest assessments of the performance of the current Year 2 pupils. The high standards in science are as a result of very good quality teaching.
68. Pupils achieve particularly well in the investigative aspects of the subject. This is because teachers make the most of every opportunity to allow pupils to learn through first-hand experiences. They take advantage of pupils’ curiosity and encourage them to think for themselves. For example, in an excellent lesson, pupils in Year 2 learned the names of some nutrients, their functions and the importance of eating a variety of foods. They placed items of food in different coloured hoops on the floor – a particularly well-chosen activity, because it was

highly relevant to the age of the pupils. They were very well motivated: their interest was captured as the teacher produced the foods one at a time, and they were delighted as each was recognised and named. The teacher then produced two lunch boxes and pupils were required to apply their knowledge and decide which of the two was the most healthy. They were asked to justify their decisions, by observing carefully, noticing similarities and making deductions. Because they could refer to the examples of foods in the hoops, all pupils were able to take part in the discussion, including those with special educational needs. Pupils made excellent progress in this lesson, because the teacher had such high expectations for them all to be involved and to achieve. This was especially noticeable in the way that specialist language was introduced. By the end of the lesson, all pupils were using the correct names for nutrients such as ‘protein’ and ‘carbohydrate’, and were clearly very proud of this accomplishment. In the group activities that followed, the teacher had very carefully matched her demands to the needs of each. This meant that the higher attainers were challenged to think hard, whilst pupils with special educational needs carried out a more practical task, working with a learning support assistant. In some other lessons, the additional demands placed on higher attainers are not so evident.

69. Throughout the school, teachers are very skilled in the use of questions to help pupils learn, and this is an important reason for the very good progress that they make. For example, in two lessons where Year 1 pupils were investigating and classifying materials, teachers helped them to focus on the task and make decisions – for example, about whether an object was rough or smooth or possessed both qualities. By pointing out when pupils had made particularly interesting observations – for instance, that feathers, although soft, have a hard ‘stalk’ – they helped pupils to make progress. This encouraged other pupils to pay close attention to the textures they encountered in the ‘feely box’, because they wanted their own efforts to be praised. In one lesson, pupils with special educational needs made very good progress, because the teacher and other adults helped them to consolidate their knowledge of concepts such as rough and smooth by prompting them to compare the feel of a stone or piece of sandpaper to objects sorted previously.
70. The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator monitors teachers’ planning very carefully, and their assessments are moderated to ensure their accuracy and usefulness. Priorities for future developments are relevant to raising standards. Pupils’ attainment and the quality of teaching have improved significantly since the previous inspection, as a result of the very strong subject leadership and high expectations.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

71. Only one lesson was seen in each subject, so it is not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching. Achievement and progress are good in art and satisfactory in design and technology. In art, by the end of the key stage, pupils can record very effectively the things that they see, such as fruits and vegetables or their own hands. They use media such as pastels, pencils and paints with confidence, showing a well-developed sense of line and space, and choosing and mixing colours carefully to match what they have noticed. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop these skills and have high expectations for them to achieve. For example, teachers and helpers regularly encourage pupils in Year 1 to stand back and look at their torn paper collage, to evaluate their progress – ‘Can you make it better?’ All pupils have sketchbooks, and teachers make sure that they use these very effectively – for instance, to record their investigations into different materials for drawing. They provide a valuable resource when pupils are making decisions about their work.

72. In design and technology, pupils' practical, making skills develop well. For example, they learn how to use scissors with increasing accuracy, because teachers are aware of the importance of such skills and provide frequent opportunities for pupils to practise and develop them. By the end of the key stage, pupils' Easter cards show their ability to cut out neatly and to use split pins to create movement. When designing, they use labels to indicate their intentions and they make effective use of the drawing skills they have gained during art lessons.
73. Art and design and technology make important contributions to the school environment and to pupils' cultural development. For example, to celebrate the millennium, pupils throughout the school helped to design and execute a striking panel using textiles and involving a variety of techniques such as stitching and appliqué. Art has developed well since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve better, especially in their ability to mix and use colours, using a wider range of media. Standards have been maintained in design and technology. Both subjects are very well led and managed, with sensible priorities for future developments.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

74. Pupils achieve high standards by the time they are seven. Achievement has improved since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be in line with national expectations. The quality of teaching, which was reported as satisfactory and occasionally good at that time, is now very good and this has clearly had an impact upon standards.
75. In a very good lesson, pupils were taught how to use grid references and direction to describe journeys from one point to another on a map. This was prefaced by an interesting discussion about the placement on a map of North, East, South and West during which mnemonics such as 'Nobody Eats Shredded Wheat' and 'Naughty Elephants Squirt Water' brought an element of humour into the learning. The very well planned tasks, the use of computer programs and a floor robot enhanced the tasks, and all pupils were quickly engrossed in finding solutions to the questions that had been set. A question and answer session showed that most pupils had increased their geographical skills and understanding of the use of evidence to find answers. Additionally, their information technology skills had been extended, by programming a robot and using the computer to draw and print maps.
76. The well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils' learning builds very effectively on what they already know, understand and can do. They study the weather at varying levels as they move through the school and can explain how it influences the clothes people wear and the activities they pursue. They draw maps in response to stories such as 'Little Red Riding Hood', and their journey to school, and plans of the classroom. The good resources are used effectively – for example, pupils learn to use sources of evidence such as maps and photographs to find answers to geographical questions. The curriculum is enhanced by learning linked to the local area and nearby contrasting places. For instance, pupils have learnt a range of geographical terms such as 'hill', 'river', 'coast' and 'beach', by comparing Bowburn with Seaham.
77. Pupils' progress is very well monitored by thorough and accurate assessment linked to the National Curriculum, which gives the co-ordinator a very good perception of standards. This and quality of the curricular planning results in pupils, many of whom enter school with low levels of skills, making very good progress in geography as they move through the school.

## **HISTORY**

78. Pupils achieve high standards, and the achievement of a sizeable minority is very high. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching was reported as sound at that time. It is now very good and has clearly had a significant impact on the pupils' achievements. A particularly good feature of the teaching is in the way pupils learn about everyday life, work and culture of people in the past, by studying the history of the school, Bowburn, and the local coal mining industry.
79. In one lesson, younger pupils were taught how to sequence events, in order to develop their knowledge of the order in which events in history took place. The very good teaching involved using a family tree, based on authentic photographs, and pupils were challenged to interpret these and place them in chronological order. This was a very good follow up to previous work, when pupils used photographs to describe the way they had changed since they were babies. The task of compiling their own family tree resulted in pupils making good progress in their understanding of past and present, before and after. Their understanding of chronology is extended through the study of old photographs and artefacts, within and beyond living memory, which create great interest and promote good learning. For example, there are effective displays of working in Bowburn coal mine and coming to school at the beginning of the twentieth century. Teachers go to great lengths to provide pupils with practical experience of history. For example, they have opportunities to visit museums, handle artefacts, and dress in costumes to learn about how things were done in the past. The practical lesson when pupils dressed up and took part in an old fashioned wash day, devoid of any electrical aids, taught them how different and difficult everyday life was in the not too distant past.
80. Very good, accurate assessment based on National Curriculum programmes of study help teachers to plan lessons which are very well matched to the age and ability of pupils. Teachers are very well supported by the co-ordinator, who maintains a clear oversight of curricular planning.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

81. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now above the level of achievement expected of seven year olds. This refers to all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements. However, the school is not able to teach communications skills, such as electronic mailing, because it has not yet received funding to install an Internet connection and update its resources. In the meantime, the school has budgeted carefully to allocate some of its own budget to improve resources, in an effort to ensure that the pupils are not disadvantaged.
82. Standards have improved because the teaching is very good and, across the curriculum, almost all lessons include opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their information technology skills. While the school has recognised the need to increase staff competence in some newer aspects of the subject, especially in the use of e-mail, several teachers show very good levels of knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, there was very good learning during a literacy lesson, when pupils were taught how to insert pictures in text and enlarge and decrease the size of them. In this the teacher followed an effective step by step approach and challenged pupils to demonstrate what they had learned. During this lesson they showed good skills in accessing menus, using the mouse to move images and the cursor for indicating placement. Younger pupils made very good progress in a numeracy lesson, when they were taught how to access a word bank to recognise and describe mathematical shapes. The teacher showed very good skill in maintaining pupils' interest whilst they were waiting their turn, by recollecting

previous work they had done and consolidating techniques such as printing. Very good teaching in a geography lesson enabled pupils to produce maps on the computer, learn about direction and keys, and use a robot on a floor map to programme journeys to and from differing grid points. The very high expectation of teachers has resulted in many pupils using information technology independently to enrich and extend their work. To achieve this they have been effectively taught how to follow recognised procedures – for example, when using a computer to enter, store and print information. Very good learning was observed in these areas in a mathematics lesson when pupils were compiling frequency graphs from data information.

83. The school makes the best possible use of its technology resources. The co-ordinator has produced a very good action plan in anticipation of the extension of the curriculum to include the use of the Internet. The very good teaching means that the school is well placed to raise standards further when updated resources provide the opportunity.

## MUSIC

84. As they move through the school, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. It is due to very clear and well-structured curricular planning and by the very good quality of teaching, which is also an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Teachers have very good levels of subject knowledge. They communicate their command of the subject clearly to pupils so that their skill and understanding are enhanced. This is seen in the very skilful use of symbol cards in order to prompt pupils' understanding of notation and the elements of music.
85. Teachers plan their work very carefully and revise previous lessons so that pupils build firmly on what has gone before. For example, before moving on to work on duration teachers remind pupils about their previous work on pitch, tempo and dynamics. This deepens their understanding and increases their confidence. Most pupils are very well behaved, enjoy their lessons and are eager to improve their playing skills on a range of percussion instruments. This is because teachers manage them very well and create a calm and purposeful working atmosphere where pupils' efforts are praised and children of all abilities are given equal opportunities to perform. This helps them to make very good progress. Most pupils sustain their concentration and apply considerable creative and intellectual effort in their work, because teachers have materials and instruments well organised and have high expectations. This enables time to be well spent. Pupils are challenged by the tasks and teachers' questions to improve their understanding and performance. This leads to pupils' very good understanding of duration and the use of symbols and the very good progress they make in playing percussion instruments.
86. During lessons, teachers listen to and observe pupils very carefully, so that they can guide them towards the next steps to be taken and help them to overcome any difficulties. For example, most pupils sing tunefully and enthusiastically in lessons and in assemblies, because teachers advise them about developing appropriate habits of breathing and posture. Teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to listen to music. They listen attentively to taped music during worship and when they are getting ready for lessons in physical education and enjoy moments of stillness accompanied by music. As part of extra-curricular activities, pupils are given the opportunity to play the recorder. They practise very enthusiastically and play very well in unison. They read notation and understand beat and rhythm very well.
87. The subject is very well managed. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning effectively. She works hard to support colleagues. The school has developed a very effective system of assessment and record keeping which is well used to help teachers with their planning.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

88. By the end of the key stage, achievement and progress are better than expected for pupils of this age. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is good and it too has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' performance in physical education is directly related to the quality of teaching. A significant feature of the teaching is the teachers' skill in closely observing and analysing pupils' movements. This enables them to give pupils clear advice on how to improve their performance. For example, pupils' skills in controlling and bouncing a ball improve when teachers explain and advise pupils about their hand and eye co-ordination.
89. Most pupils clearly understand the need for warming and cooling sessions at the beginning and end of lessons. They know about the effects of exercise on health and fitness. This is enhanced by the teachers' comprehensive subject knowledge, which is communicated clearly to them. Planning is clear and detailed. This is shared with pupils during lessons so that they know what is expected and what they have to do to improve. By the end of the key stage, most pupils move with poise and balance with a good understanding of how to use space. This is because teachers use careful demonstrations and explanations, although occasionally the pace of lessons sometimes becomes slow when these are unduly long. Most pupils are well behaved and eager to improve their skills because teachers use praise and encouragement effectively and manage pupils well.
90. Most pupils move well in time to music. They have a good sense of rhythm and co-operate well with others. They enjoy their work and take a delight in applying their interpretation of rhythm and pattern to traditional dance. This is helped by the teachers' efficient organisation of pupils and equipment. This enables lessons to run smoothly and pupils to exercise vigorously. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and use questions well to prompt pupils to think hard about their ball control and use of space. This effectively prompts pupils to reflect on their movements in order to improve their performance.
91. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning thoroughly, provides good support and advice for staff, and manages the subject very effectively. The school has a very clear understanding of the progress and achievement of pupils because it uses its comprehensive assessment and recording system very well to monitor and develop pupils' learning.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

92. By the end of the key stage, most pupils achieve above the levels expected by the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.
93. Although only one religious education lesson was seen during the inspection it is clearly evident that the school provides many high quality opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding in this area. This is why achievement and progress are good. Teachers present work in lively and interesting ways. For example, during lessons about Christian baptism, a mother and infant came into the school, a local clergyman explained the important features of the ceremony and pupils took part in role-play.
94. In learning about the Jewish festival of Purim, pupils made baskets and masks and acted out a simple dramatic production in order to deepen their understanding. This helped pupils to appreciate the importance of worship and that the idea of celebrations, such as Purim, Diwali



and Christmas, is common to many faiths. There are many attractive displays of artefacts and pictures throughout the school underlining religious themes. For example there are displays of Buddhist artefacts, a frieze depicting a Jewish menorah and a display related to the approaching celebration of Easter. As a result, most pupils recognise and know about the importance of some artefacts from different religions. For example, they understand the significance of Buddhist prayer wheels and the Christian cross.

95. Pupils know about important events in the lives of Buddha and Moses and relate in detail events surrounding the birth of Jesus and those leading up to his death. They retell the stories of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, and the story of how Buddha abandoned his life of privilege. Teachers take great care to reinforce pupils' understanding of right and wrong. As a result, they begin to understand that religious belief has implications for the way followers lead their lives and begin to relate such values as kindness and love in their own lives to the teachings of Jesus.
96. Since the previous inspection the newly implemented agreed syllabus has become well established and provision for the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of faiths other than Christianity has been very comprehensively improved. The subject is very well managed. The co-ordinator works hard to provide support and guidance to other colleagues and to organise the subject. The school has developed a very effective system for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress.