

INSPECTION REPORT

**BIRTLEY EAST COMMUNITY PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Birtley, Chester le Street

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108337

Headteacher: Mr. A. Suthren

Reporting inspector: Mr. D. Brown
OIN: 8285

Dates of inspection: 7th – 11th February 2000

Inspection number: 190343

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Highfield
Birtley
Chester le Street
County Durham

Postcode: DH3 1QQ

Telephone number: 0191 4102551

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Michael Hood

Date of previous inspection: 18th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. D. Brown	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage	What sort of school is it?
		Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
		Special educational needs	What the school should do to improve further
Mr. S. Vincent	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	How well the school cares for its pupils
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr. J. Barley	Team inspector	Mathematics	How high are standards?
		Geography	
		Music	
Mr. D. Earley	Team inspector	Science	Attitudes, values and personal development
		Design and technology	
		History	
		English as an additional language	
Mr. N. Parish	Team inspector	English	How well are pupils taught?
		Physical education	
Mrs. W. Gibney	Team inspector	Art	How good are curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Information technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The large county primary school provides education for children aged 3 – 11 years. It has 289 full-time pupils, 31 of whom are taught in the reception class. The nursery provides 60 part-time places for children from the locality. Taken together, children's attainment on entry is well below that found nationally. One-hundred-and-nineteen pupils have special educational needs, a figure much above the national average. Pupils are from the locality and a number attend from outside the normal area by parental choice. All are white except for one child. A high proportion of pupils enter or leave the school during the year, and this level of mobility has a significant effect on the work of the school. There are high levels of unemployment and the percentage of pupils eligible for free meals is well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective in helping children make progress. They enter the school with lower than average abilities but by the time they leave, the standards achieved in lessons are at the levels set out in the National Curriculum. A dedicated and hard working team of teachers and support staff provides very good teaching throughout the school. The headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership. Governors give good support to the school. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides high quality teaching that helps children learn and make good progress.
- Provides very good lessons in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers assess children's attainment and progress extremely well, and plan new work that is hard enough to help them learn more.
- The well-planned lessons are interesting to children and enable them to learn.
- Pupils behave well and are good learners, trying hard in lessons.
- Has a strong management team of teachers.
- Provides equal opportunities for all children, and helps those with learning difficulties make good progress.
- Has very good links with the community and other schools.
- The school has good relationships with parents.
- It takes very good care of its pupils.
- Provides a wide range of out-of-school clubs.

What could be improved

- Standards in information technology are not high enough for older pupils.
- The attendance and punctuality of a small number of pupils are not as good as they should be.
- Plans about how the school can be improved cover too short a period.
- The governor's view about the longer term development of the school cover too short a period.
- The school's arrangements for the provision of teaching and learning for children under five.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in November 1996 good progress has been made overall. The quality of teaching has risen significantly. Good progress in monitoring the curriculum has been achieved by teachers with special responsibility for subjects led by the Curriculum Manager. A strong feature of lessons now is the close match of work to children's abilities, including children with learning difficulties, and this helps the children make good progress. Good progress has been made in the levels of supervision provided by teachers at playtimes, and by midday meals supervisory assistants at lunchtime. Very good progress has been made in the arrangements for children with learning difficulties. Suitable procedures are put into place as soon as teachers identify that a child has a difficulty, and this recognition ensures that children are offered special help at an earlier time. Good progress has been made in art lessons so the children know more about the work of different artists. Governors now have a greater awareness of their roles and responsibilities, and are more involved in the work of the school. There is still some way to go in developing a longer-term view of what the school needs to do to improve. Excellent progress has been made in reducing the incidences of vandalism so that more of the budget can be spent on education.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E	C	C	B
mathematics	E	D	D	C
science	B	C	D	C

Key

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

Standards in lessons are higher in mathematics and science than these results indicate. For example, an increased number of children are working at higher levels. Results of tests show a steady improvement in English and mathematics, but a dip in science. Much very detailed analysis of pupils' results has been carried out, and suitable targets for improvement term by term have been drawn up. The organisation of lessons in literacy and numeracy has been altered in the drive to raise standards for all children. This helps to make the work more closely match the abilities of the children so that they achieve well in comparison with children in similar schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have good attitudes. They are eager to come to school and enjoy working together.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most children's behaviour is very good in lessons and they behave well around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between adults and children are very good, and this contributes to the whole life of the school.
Attendance	Despite the best efforts of the school so far, overall figures are unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	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.

Overall, a half of teaching is excellent or very good; half is good or satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in English and mathematics is very good, and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are very effectively taught. Teaching has many strengths; of particular note are the thoroughness of lesson preparation and the way teachers assess children's learning. The high quality of this work means that teachers meet the learning needs of all pupils. There are no significant weaknesses.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Teachers plan and arrange interesting work that helps children learn and make progress.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The management and organisation are very good. Planning of work is thorough and ensures that children with learning difficulties are able to make progress towards their targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils with English as an additional language are well integrated into the life of the school. They receive good support and make good progress as a result.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall. Provision for children's social and cultural development is particularly good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very strong area. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Procedures for assessing children's attainment and progress are excellent.

Parents have positive views of the school and make good contributions to their children's work in a variety of ways. They are kept well informed about academic progress and the work of the school as a whole.

The quality and range of learning opportunities are good, and there is an appropriate curriculum in place to meet statutory requirements and to meet the needs of the pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	A strong team has been created in which the special knowledge and skills of individual members are used very well to lead and manage the work of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of most of their roles, including the role of critical friend. Their strategic role is less well developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Extremely thorough procedures are used to analyse test results and performances. Teaching and learning are modified as a result in an effort to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	There is a very limited budget, and little is left for development work when essentials have been paid for. The time covered by the written development plan is too short to guide the very best use of available funds.

There are good levels of suitably qualified teaching and support staff. Although two classes are taught in temporary accommodation, there is sufficient space overall to teach the full curriculum. The location of the nursery classroom means that staff can feel somewhat isolated. There are generally sufficient resources for teaching and learning, but nursery children have access to too narrow a range of equipment. Many computer systems are out of date, but a three-year plan shows how this deficiency is to be addressed. The senior management team provides very good leadership and management. The school applies well the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school • Their children make good progress • The good teaching • They feel comfortable in approaching the school • The school expects children to work hard and to do their best • How the school helps children become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of out-of-school clubs • The way the school works closely with parents • The information they receive about how their children are getting on.

Inspectors agree that the school has much to offer its pupils as listed in the table. The inspectors found a good range of suitable out-of-school learning opportunities. Parents are well informed about their children's progress, and this is an example of how the school works closely with parents. On occasions the parents of nursery children do not receive as much information as other parents receive. Concerns over the external door to the nursery, raised at the meeting for parents, were investigated and no safety issues were found.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children enter the nursery with low skills in personal and social development, language and literacy and mathematics. Compared to the abilities of other groups of children of the same age attainment is well below average in five of the six areas of learning, but is average in physical development. Recent assessments taken in the reception class show that attainment is approaching the targets for children's learning by the age of five. It must be noted that, as yet, there is no bank of evidence of trends over time, and caution must be used in interpreting one set of figures. However, attainment in the current reception class means it is likely that the majority of this class will achieve the targets by the time they enter Year 1.
2. In the under-fives classes, children make good progress in their physical development where they learn to balance, jump and land well and complete the sequence with a forward roll. Very good progress is also made in personal and social development and children learn to play and work in groups and to manage part of their own learning. Standards in children's spoken language are very low at entry and the most rapid progress is achieved during activities led by or involving adults. Review times in the nursery are less effective in the development of language but lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy in the reception class bring about very good progress in children's literacy skills. Similar lessons in numeracy bring about children's understanding of number to 20 and beyond and the vast majority of children correctly sequence numbers using cards and a washing line. Standards in children's knowledge and understanding of the world are also lower in some aspects than the targets for their learning.
3. Three very important factors have a strong impact on the achievements of the school. Firstly, there is an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties who are unlikely to achieve national standards. The second factor is the high number of children who have joined or who have left the school since their year group first started. This means that the children have not had consistent teaching, and so it is likely that their total knowledge is different from that of the rest of the class. In one class as many as 25 per cent of pupils fall into this category of "high mobility". Overall, a higher than average number of children are eligible for free meals, and the school's performance needs to be compared with children from similar backgrounds.
4. Results of the last four annual National Curriculum tests and assessments show that standards in reading for seven-year-old boys were lower than those of girls, whose reading is average. Boys' writing is a little below the average while girls' is a little above. Standards in mathematics were well below average for boys, and girls' mathematics were about average. Over the four years, standards in writing have improved while standards in reading and mathematics have taken a dip.
5. Results in the 1999 tests and assessments for seven-year-olds show standards in reading and mathematics to be below the standards achieved in all schools and in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Writing was average for all schools, and above average when compared with standards in similar schools. Overall, fewer pupils reached the expected Level 2 in reading and mathematics, and fewer pupils reached Level 3 in each of the subjects tested.

6. In the last four annual National Curriculum tests and assessments for eleven-year-olds, overall standards in English and science were average while mathematics standards were below average. Boys' standards were shown to be improving in English and science so that attainment is now about the same as the girls'. The boys still have some catching up to do in mathematics as their performance over the four years was well below that of the girls. However, trends show that standards are improving in each of the three subjects, and that improvement is most noticeable in mathematics where standards are rising faster than the national picture.
7. Results of the 1999 tests and assessments for eleven-year-olds show standards in English to be average when compared with all schools, but were above average in comparison with standards achieved by children from similar backgrounds. Standards in mathematics and science were below average when compared with all schools, but were average for children from similar backgrounds. Average numbers of pupils reached the expected Level 4 in each subject, but the number of pupils reaching Level 5 was lower.
8. In speaking and listening most seven year olds are beginning to speak clearly in a variety of contexts. They listen attentively and are beginning to express themselves confidently. By the time they are eleven pupils talk in a wider range of contexts, paying close attention to what others say, qualifying and justifying what they think for instance when drawing comparisons with characters from different novels.
9. By the age of seven pupils are reading their own work and other texts aloud. Some change their voice to make the reading more interesting. They show enthusiasm for books and like hearing stories. By the time they leave the school pupils are reading more fluently and for enjoyment. Some are beginning to express strong opinions about what they like and dislike in the work of different authors. They are able to select information to answer questions and are able to refer to text to support their views. Not all pupils know the difference between fiction and non-fiction.
10. Children's writing is developing well by the age of seven. They are writing in sentences, using some punctuation, with some children using speech marks in their work. They spell simple words correctly but few use imaginative and descriptive words when writing stories. By the age of eleven, pupils are writing for a variety of purposes and audiences such as character studies, book and television reviews, and newspaper reports. Handwriting is taught and practised regularly but this practice is not transferred to pupil's general work, where they often still print.
11. Standards of work in mathematics seen during the inspection in Year 2 are appropriate for the age of pupils but only a few are working at the higher levels. Pupils are confident in recalling number facts and using them to solve problems. They have developed a good understanding of place value, which enables them to add and subtract numbers up to 100. They show a good recall of multiplication facts for the 2, 5, and 10 times tables. Key Stage 2 work seen during the inspection indicated that many more pupils are working in the higher levels than was indicated by the 1999 test results and that many more are likely to achieve the higher level in the 2000 National Curriculum tests. By the age of eleven the vast majority of pupils are confident mathematicians and have a wide range of mathematical skills. Of particular note is their very good understanding of angles and triangles, which they can identify, name and draw with accuracy. Less well developed is their understanding of data handling and probability.

12. The skills developed in literacy and numeracy are used well in other areas of the curriculum such as history, geography and science. Pupils use charts and graphs in these areas and use research skills for their topics.
13. In science, seven-year-olds know how to observe and compare different properties of materials and record and interpret their findings accurately on charts. They understand the effects of exercise on the body and know about the importance of a healthy diet. By the time they are eleven most pupils have a clear understanding of how to conduct a fair test. They recognise the factors necessary for promoting and supporting life and have a thorough knowledge of the food chain. Most pupils know about the permeability of different rocks and understand the differences between solids, liquids and gasses.
14. By the age of seven, pupils are achieving standards appropriate to their age in information technology. They communicate their ideas and handle information. They are able to change font size and colour, alter text work on drawing packages and print their work. With help they are able to insert graphics and create effects to enhance their work. By eleven years some pupils still need help with simple word-processing skills and pupils are still finding their way round the keyboard. Standards in Key Stage 2 are below what they should be. Some work has been done in Year 6 with an Internet link for research into plants. Some pupils have worked on a data handling package and have worked with spreadsheets and produced graphs.
15. Only three lessons of art were seen during the inspection but it is clear from other evidence that pupils are given the opportunity to develop their skills using a variety of media. They now study the work of other artists such as Klee and Picasso.
16. Despite no design technology lessons being seen during the inspection, evidence indicates that by seven and eleven pupils' learning is at an appropriate level. Older pupils have a clear understanding of the design process and produce well-finished models and artefacts.
17. No lessons in geography were seen in Years 1 or 2 as geography is not planned to be taught until the following term. Evidence indicates that in Key Stage 2 an appropriate programme of geographical skills is taught and pupils use these skills to study their own environment and other countries such as Kenya and the tropical rainforests. Pupils in Year 6 use four-figure references to locate position on maps.
18. Evidence from scrutiny of work in history and from displays around the school indicates that pupils develop a sound understanding of chronology and this is helped by their work on time lines and by their studies of different periods such as ancient Egypt and the Victorians. However there is less evidence in Key Stage 2 of pupils' knowledge and understanding of different interpretations of history.
19. In music, singing is good throughout the school and the older pupils have a very good understanding of the technical language of music such as *ostinato*, *allegro* and *adagio*.
20. In physical education it was possible to see two only lessons, which were at an appropriate level for the ages of the pupils. By the time they leave the school 80 per cent of pupils achieve or exceed the national expectations for swimming.

21. The work undertaken in religious education closely matches what is expected for pupils of different ages in the locally agreed syllabus. Seven-year-olds know stories of the creation and how people celebrate special events. Eleven-year-olds have a sensitive understanding of the responsibilities undertaken at baptism and at other times when people confirm their religious beliefs. This is based on a developed understanding of the customs and symbolism of different world faiths.
22. The school's very good arrangements for pupils with special educational needs ensure that suitable targets are included in individual education plans. Class teachers, teachers with special knowledge and learning support assistants are clear about the small steps to be taken by each child to achieve the targets. Suitable lessons are provided and very good encouragement is given so that the children achieve well and make good progress. They learn how to blend new sounds that help them read unknown words. The children grow in confidence as they overcome difficulties with reading and writing, and learn how the different parts of literacy work. Special work is also provided in mathematics and this helps the children to understand more about our number system.
23. Although the 1999 National Curriculum tests showed a significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls there was no evidence to support this during the inspection week. The school has carefully analysed the results and apparent differences and is monitoring the situation effectively.
24. The school uses a wide range of analysis of national and standardised tests to set targets for individual pupils and for groups of pupils and uses the information gleaned to agree realistic but challenging targets with the local education authority.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

25. At both key stages pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good. As the previous inspection indicated, they are a strength of the school. Most pupils are eager to come to school. They participate enthusiastically in such interesting activities as educational visits and concerts and are keen to take part in extra-curricular activities provided by the school such as sport, choir and chess.
26. Most pupils sustain their concentration and are fully engaged and interested in lessons, because most lessons are lively and well presented. They listen attentively and are confident to share opinions, for example when listening to a well-selected story or when explaining calculations in number. Most pupils work hard and co-operate well with each other, for example during investigations in science. They work well when not under the immediate supervision of the teacher. This is because most teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. They communicate these clearly, for example during assemblies and lessons. Most pupils are eager to learn and are keen to be involved in lessons. This is enhanced by teachers' careful planning and their sharing of the aims of lessons with pupils, so that they know very clearly what is expected. Throughout the school relationships within and between groups of pupils and staff are very good. There is a warm, friendly and purposeful working atmosphere in which teachers encourage and challenge pupils to do their best. This helps children to work productively and take advantage of what the school has to offer.

27. Most pupils behave well in and around school. They are generally polite and courteous to each other and adults, in lessons and at break and lunch time. They take care of equipment and materials and respect their own and others' property. The school has clear guidelines for behaviour and effective procedures for dealing with bullying. During the inspection no instances of bullying, sexism or racism were observed. The guidelines and procedures are understood by pupils and generally implemented consistently. This enables pupils to know clearly what is acceptable and contributes significantly to the general good behaviour. There were no exclusions during the previous school year.
28. Pupils respect the opinions of others and readily share in their achievements, as in a physical education lesson when the class applauded good gymnastics movements. The majority of children want to contribute to the life of the school community. Children are involved in the daily routines of the school and responsibilities increase as they get older. Pupils look after the resources and equipment they use and help staff to ensure that classes are tidy, pleasant places for them to learn. By the time pupils are in Year 6 and have gained in confidence, they help to organise others during indoor playtimes, reading stories to the younger children. They also put out the soft play equipment in the hall for Key Stage 1 children. They readily ask visitors if they can be of assistance and are very willing to guide them around the school. Pupils deliver registers, help maintain the school garden and tidy up in the school hall after lunch.
29. In spite of the efforts of the school to promote good attendance and punctuality, there is still a number of pupils who do not come to school regularly and are frequently late. This reduces the overall standards of attendance and punctuality to well below the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

30. The teaching is a strength of the school and is very good overall at all stages. In one half of all lessons the teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching often varied considerably between classes with children of the same age, and unsatisfactory teaching was often seen in two classes.
31. At Key Stage 1 teaching is very good in half of the lessons, with some excellent teaching; 45 per cent is good and the rest satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the National Curriculum subjects and use this effectively to ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers plan their work clearly. They ensure that it is built on previous work so that pupils can see the links with their existing understanding and move onto the next steps confidently. Throughout the curriculum, particular attention is paid to literacy and especially to developing and extending pupils' vocabulary. Lessons are usually conducted at a good pace, which helps to ensure that pupils concentrate well and persevere with their work. Learning support assistants are effectively deployed to support pupils' learning.
32. Teachers' classroom control and management of pupils are generally very good. They use a range of teaching methods and organisation patterns with their classes and there is generally an interesting mixture of whole-class, group, paired and individual work. They are used selectively and effectively to achieve the planned

educational outcomes. For example, the introductory stages of lessons frequently assess, revise and consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding, set the lessons in context of previous learning and inform pupils of the purpose of the activity. In all classes teachers interact well with pupils and give a very good level of support, relationships are very positive.

33. At Key Stage 2, teaching in 54 per cent of lessons is very good or excellent. Twenty-one per cent of teaching is good. The remainder is sound. Teachers plan interesting work for the pupils of all abilities which challenges them to extend their learning and enables them to make good progress. Teachers often share their planning and tell pupils at the beginning of lessons what and how they are expected to learn. This gives them a sense of purpose and enables them to identify how well they have done. Most pupils use a considerable amount of intellectual and physical effort in their learning. They usually sustain their concentration and become fully engaged in their tasks. This is helped by the high expectations teachers have of their work and behaviour. For example, teachers use questions skilfully and effectively to check understanding, extend vocabulary and to make them think hard and encourage them to think for themselves.
34. Subject knowledge and understanding are good. Teachers are confident in, and have good command of, the requirements for teaching literacy and numeracy. They develop reading, writing and speaking skills whenever appropriate opportunities arise in other subjects. They effectively manage the behaviour of pupils, who mostly respond with good co-operation and enthusiasm. The pace of lessons is generally brisk: time limits are set for the pupils to complete their work and there is an expectancy for them to work hard when they are not being immediately supervised.
35. Resources within the classrooms are well organised, readily accessible and used with purpose and effect. Displays are used effectively to celebrate pupils' achievements and also to provide reference points for further learning. A particularly good example of this was the vibrant whole-school input into the display in the school hall, which had a musical theme.
36. Most teachers use on-going assessment effectively in order to help pupils with any difficulties. This enables them to clarify their understanding and understand what to do next. Learning targets are often set, which helps teachers in their assessment of pupils' learning.
37. Work is marked regularly and some teachers' comments are very helpful in giving pupils guidance on how they can improve. Teacher's expectations of standards of presentation are variable: although pupils are given regular handwriting practice in a joined up style, it is not continued into their work, where many pupils are still allowed to print.
38. Homework is effectively used by the teachers to support learning. Pupils are encouraged to complete work at home, in the form of reading, spelling, maths and occasionally from other areas of the curriculum.

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

39. Since the last inspection, a great deal of work has been done to ensure that the planned curriculum is cohesive and takes due account of the need to develop the

basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education and for children aged five and under. There is a detailed curriculum map for each subject to ensure breadth and balance across both key stages and this then forms an annual plan for each year group. Detailed schemes of work for each subject then give short-term learning goals that are then translated into weekly plans. However, although subject co-ordinators suggest priorities for the school development plan, there is no long-term strategic view of curriculum development, which is a weakness.

40. The school has very effective strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. As a result of extensive assessment procedures, setting has recently been introduced in both key stages and progress is regularly monitored. "Additional Literacy Support" has been put into Years 3 and 4 and "Booster Groups" run in literacy and numeracy for Year 6 pupils.
41. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good in both key stages and takes into account the targets identified in pupils' individual education plans. The school draws on the expertise from outside agencies as appropriate and pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum.
42. There is equality of opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress. A wide range of extra-curricular activities supports the formal curriculum, with opportunities for pupils to take part in sports such as badminton, basketball, cross country, and football. A dance club meets weekly and lunchtime clubs include chess, newspaper, choir, creative writing, gardening, and guitar.
43. Provision for personal, social and health education is good but not formally built into the curriculum. The school nurse visits annually to deliver the sex education programme to Year 6 pupils and drugs education has a high priority within the community. The school has visits from external agencies to raise awareness of drugs and is a "non-smoking" environment. Some classes have taken part in "The Healthy School Award".
44. Links with the community are strong. Pupils go out frequently into the locality and visit places such as Bamburgh, Hadrian's Wall and Beamish Museum. They have links with a nearby factory and regularly go out into Birtley as part of their studies. Visitors frequently come into the school – the emergency services visit pupils in Key Stage 1 and other visitors include the community policeman, representatives from local churches and agencies involved in drug awareness. There are strong links with partner schools – Year 6 pupils attend workshops in a range of curriculum areas prior to transfer and the head of the art department is coming into school to develop pupils' skills at watercolour painting. A project linking the schools through ICT is planned, to include video-conferencing and web authoring.
45. Overall, the school makes good provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is satisfactory, principally through the daily act of collective worship, with separate key stage assemblies on four days. They make a powerful contribution to the spiritual development of the pupils, as they provide a time for reflection. Pupils walk into the hall quietly and listen attentively to stories with a Christian message. Visitors from the local Church come along once a month and the pupils obviously enjoy their singing, which forms an integral part of the assemblies. The school needs to consider how provision could be made more widely through the subjects of the curriculum.

Provision for moral development is good. There are effective behaviour policies and adults are good role models. Staff signal clearly what is acceptable and there is a shared understanding which permeates the whole school. Displays around the school promote high standards of behaviour and help pupils distinguish right from wrong. A large anti-bullying display in the corridor informs pupils what to do if they think they are being bullied. There are classroom codes of behaviour and the pupils' role in supporting the Home-School Agreement is clearly displayed in the corridor. Provision for social development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and use their initiative in a variety of ways. There is a "monitor system" by which Year 6 pupils are encouraged to take care of pupils in younger classes. Year 6 pupils help clear the hall after dinner and "pair up" to help in other classes during wet dinner times. There is a school council where pupils "have a say" in the decision making, and even the youngest pupils are encouraged to be independent – taking registers to the office and doing jobs for the teachers. The school promotes cultural development very well and in a variety of ways – visits to the theatre, the study of religions, and looking at the work of artists. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn about life in Kenya and there are good displays with appropriate artefacts to stimulate the pupils' interest. There is a school choir and the dance club takes part in festivals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. The care and attention given to the welfare and development of its pupils is a strength of the school and is based upon the very good relationships which exist at all levels.
47. Responsibilities are defined and procedures are in place to ensure health and safety. Child protection is dealt with very thoroughly. The behaviour policy is very effective in promoting respect and tolerance. The pupils know exactly what standards are expected of them in both the classroom and the playground. In discussion, they say the school is an enjoyable place to be and they feel confidence in the adults around them. Regular attendance and punctuality are strongly promoted and the pupils enjoy the rewards which result. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents confirmed that their children enjoyed coming to school.
48. There is an excellent range of assessment procedures for the monitoring of pupils' progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The analysis is used to inform staff and governors in order to set targets for raising achievement in English and mathematics and to set individual pupil targets. As a result of this analysis, setting was introduced in English and mathematics for a trial period. There is thorough record-keeping system in place for the day-to-day assessment of core subjects. Towards the end of the year, Qualification and Curriculum Authority materials are used for the interim assessment of English and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5. Data from these tests are analysed and used to inform setting arrangements for the coming year. Very good short-term plans give details of formative assessments.
49. Every child in the school keeps a portfolio of assessed work and teachers have undertaken agreement trials to try to ensure consistency in standards. Annual reports to parents now meet statutory requirements, although targets for improvement are not included in the annual report. Records show clearly where pupils are having difficulty, either academically, socially or in their attendance, allowing the school to respond quickly. This may simply mean additional attention from a teacher, but may involve additional specialist support where appropriate. The monitoring of attendance is

done thoroughly each week and the close relationship with the educational welfare officer ensures that support can be provided wherever it is needed.

50. Pupils with special educational needs are identified on the short-term plans with details of differentiated work linked to their individual education plans. This helps to ensure that good progress is maintained. Comprehensive records are built up so that details of their progress are available for review meetings and further target setting.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents and carers are supportive of the work of the school. Through the questionnaires and at the parents' meeting they have confirmed their satisfaction with standards achieved; they feel that teachers work hard to help their children learn and make progress; they feel the school promotes the right values and encourages their children to work hard.
52. Parents of children entering the nursery and reception classes have induction meetings where the routines are explained. There is a very good range of information to parents based on regular letters, pupil-produced newsletters, topic information sheets, as well the twice-yearly parent consultation evenings. As necessary, in response to developments and changes in the National Curriculum, the school has held seminars to explain the literacy and numeracy initiatives and other matters. Parents are generally satisfied with the clarity and depth of information in their children's annual report, although these could be improved by the inclusion of more specific, individual targets for improvement. Informal contact with teachers is encouraged and parents say they feel able to approach the school with problems. Parents of children with special educational needs are well informed about progress and contribute to periodic reviews. In the questionnaires parents say the school works closely with them and they feel well informed about progress.
53. Parents make a good contribution to their children's education. A good number work alongside teachers in the classroom, helping with a variety of activities. Many help on visits and all have the opportunity to support the school's homework policy. At the parents' meeting there was wide support for the introduction of the home-school agreement. There is a very active parent teacher association and the funds raised go directly into resources for use in the classroom. They also organise many social activities, bringing together the staff, pupils and parents as a community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The headteacher and key staff are determined to raise standards. They provide very good leadership, and set out a clear educational direction for the school that is bringing about improvements in many areas of school life. A senior member of staff has taken responsibility for overseeing the introduction of curricular initiatives, and has been successful in this, so that the school meets the learning needs of all pupils through its taught curriculum. A new member of staff has led the school in analysing the results of tests and assessments, and as a result the school now has very explicit targets for the attainment of each child. Teaching has been re-organised as a result so that it more closely reflects the needs of pupils, and regular monitoring ensures that suitable progress is being made towards the written targets.
55. The school's deputy head has taken responsibility for organising and managing the school's teaching of pupils with special educational needs. This is now very effective in providing suitable lessons for all children identified as having learning difficulties.

For example, class teachers have drawn up individual education plans for the children, and a teacher with special skills teaches literacy and numeracy to small groups of children, and this enables them to make good progress.

56. The co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy have been able to support and monitor teaching and learning in lessons for which they have management responsibilities. This has had a very positive effect on the quality of work so that children make good progress in acquiring basic skills. Co-ordinators of other subjects support and monitor work in different ways, such as checking on planning and the progress made by children of different abilities in each year group. At present there are no long-term plans to show when a subject is to be reviewed and teaching and learning to be more closely monitored as part of the review.
57. The Governing Body are now having a far greater involvement in the life of the school and in the decision making process. They are kept fully informed by regular reports on the financial situation and regular presentations are made to the governors by subject and area co-ordinators in order to keep governors up to date. At present there is no formal strategic plan for the development of the school and governors need to be fully involved in this process. The governing body are beginning to evaluate the impact of their decisions and are constantly seeking best value when making decisions. They ask appropriate and challenging questions of the headteacher about standards achieved in the National Curriculum tests. Governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities.
58. There is a good number of suitably qualified teachers and support assistants for the demands of the curriculum. Although some classes are taught in temporary classrooms, there is sufficient accommodation. Resources for teaching and learning are generally adequate although more small toys are needed in the nursery, and there are not enough up-to-date computer systems.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. **To raise standards the school should:**
 - I. Fully implement the development plan for information technology, paying particular attention to the structured development of pupils' skills.
 - II. Find further ways of improving the attendance and punctuality of the small group of children for whom these are unsatisfactory.
 - III. Introduce methods of creating a longer term plan for the development of the school, possibly three years in length. The plan should be skeletal in form and be derived from evaluations of current practice carried out by members of staff with responsibility for subjects and aspects of the school. Involve the governors in creating and prioritising the plan so that a common strategic view of school development is achieved. Use the long-term plan to identify when subjects or aspects are to be reviewed, so introducing a more methodical and thorough cycle of review. The teacher with responsibility for a subject or aspect should draw up an action plan of the methods to be used for the review and include details of how success will be recognised.
 - IV. Introduce policies and arrangements for a consistent approach to the teaching and learning for children under the age of six in preparation for the introduction of the Foundation Stage of Education at the beginning of the next academic year.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	74
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	42	34	16	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 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	289
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	100

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	88

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	22	21	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	18	19
	Girls	18	20	18
	Total	33	38	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (74)	88 (83)	86 (88)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	17	18
	Girls	18	19	19
	Total	31	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (75)	84 (83)	86 (83)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	31	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	14	15
	Girls	23	22	25
	Total	36	36	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72 (63)	72 (49)	80 (73)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	14	16
	Girls	19	19	23
	Total	30	33	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (66)	66 (63)	78 (86)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	258
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 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52

Number of pupils per FTE adult	15
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	527742
Total expenditure	509415
Expenditure per pupil	1469
Balance brought forward from previous year	999
Balance carried forward to next year	19326

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	319
Number of questionnaires returned	125

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	35	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	5	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	48	9	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	48	13	5	4
The teaching is good.	54	40	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	39	12	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	35	5	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	46	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	42	14	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	42	42	8	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	50	7	2	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	34	16	9	17

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

60. The nursery provides part-time education for children from the local area, some of whom transfer to other primary schools as part of normal procedures. Most children enter the nursery class in the September before their fourth birthday, although a small number of places are occasionally available to younger children. Transfer to the reception class takes place in the September before their fifth birthday and children receive full-time education from this time. A teacher and two part-time nursery nurses provide teaching in the nursery. A teacher and a full-time nursery nurse provide teaching in the reception class.
61. Assessments completed early in their nursery life indicate that children have lower than average abilities in all six areas of learning, although their physical development is more pronounced. By the end of their time in the two classes, very good progress has been made overall, and many children attain or almost attain the national goals for their learning. Physical development continues to be the best area of learning, especially in physical activity. For example, children balance as they walk up an incline, jump from the horse, land well, and complete the sequence with a forward roll. Very good progress is made in personal and social development, so that children learn how to play and work in groups, and to manage parts of their own learning.
62. Overall, standards in children's spoken language are very low at entry, and the most rapid progress is achieved during activities led by or involving adults because new words and phrases are introduced. Review times in the nursery are less effective in this development of spoken language because many children copy what the adults say, as they find difficulty forming their own sentences. Also at review time, because of the number of children in each group, many have to sit and wait while others speak, and this is inefficient use of their learning time. In the nursery there are too few chances for the children to see written words and phrases on a very regular basis, and time is lost in helping children understand how meaning is communicated through words and symbols. Lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy in the reception class bring about very good progress in children's literacy skills, and already they know about capital letters and full stops. Similar lessons in numeracy bring about children's understanding of number to 20 and beyond, and the vast majority of children correctly sequence numbers using number cards and a washing line.
63. Standards in children's knowledge and understanding of the world are also lower in some aspects than the targets for their learning because of the difficulties over spoken language. Teaching and the organisation of both classes pay good attention to helping children understand their world, but many of the children are unable to talk in sentences about what they understand and know about. However, when adults lead small group activities, greater progress is made. For example, when making pizzas in the nursery, children were taught about the colours, textures and flavours of the raw vegetables being used. They enjoyed tasting cheese and learned more about co-ordinating the movements of their hands and fingers. During the running commentary of the activity, the adult introduced new words and helped children formalise their thoughts, which could then be spoken.
64. The report of the previous inspection made no reference to attainment, so it is not possible to draw comparisons or to make judgements about trends over time.

However, children enjoy their time in the two classes, and slowly learn how to co-operate with other children. Sometimes in the nursery, children find difficulty in getting on with one another because of their immaturity and behaviour is poor. As they become older they concentrate for longer periods and develop a deepening interest in what others have to say. Procedures in the nursery help children learn how to put away equipment, and this caring for resources lays good foundations for the rest of their time in school.

65. Teaching in the nursery is good, and it is very good in the reception class. In both classes the staff have very good relationships with the children and their parents. This helps children settle quickly to routines and to grow in confidence. Planning for both classes includes all six areas of learning, but the organisation of lessons in each is different. In the nursery, emphasis is given to “plan, do, review”, but this is not always the most effective way of teaching and learning because of the large size of the teaching groups and the difficulties the very young children have over spoken language.
66. The reception classroom is a much richer place in which young children may learn because of the many displays of children’s work, displayed words and phrases, and emphasis given to displays that encourage children’s mathematical understanding. A much wider range of teaching and learning resources is available to children in the reception class, but children in the nursery learn more about the natural world by caring for class pets such as the rabbits, fish and hamsters. The pace of lessons in the reception class is very good, and there is always a good number of adults to lead work in the follow-on activities so that learning at their own level is achieved by the children. Equipment for the groups is very well organised and the volunteer adults are very well briefed by the teacher.
67. In both classes teachers assess what is being learned, but this sometimes means that in the nursery too much time is spent on managing and assessing children’s learning rather than on teaching. In both classes children enjoy coming to school because of the relationships adults have with them, and because of the high level of care given to them.
68. The role of early years co-ordinator would benefit from development. There are significant differences in the approach to teaching and learning in the classes. New arrangements are needed for the co-ordination of the work in the classes in preparation for the introduction of the new Foundation Stage at the start of the next academic year.

ENGLISH

69. Standards of attainment are below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1, and are broadly in line at the end of Key Stage 2. These findings reflect the results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests and assessments. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 3 in Key Stage 1 and Level 5 in Key Stage 2 was well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, results at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading were below average while standards in writing were average. At the end of Key Stage 2, results in English were above average when compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds and average when compared with all schools. The children with special educational needs are making good progress towards the tasks identified for them in their individual educational plans.

70. In speaking and listening, most seven-year-olds are beginning to speak clearly in a variety of contexts. They listen attentively and are beginning to express themselves confidently. Pupils are encouraged to read out their work to the rest of the class and are introduced to a range of activities, which include partners or work in small groups. They carry out instructions accurately, are willing to answer questions and some can explain why things happen. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils talk in a wider range of contexts; paying close attention to what others say, qualifying and justifying what they think after listening to the opinions of others. For example, they discuss quite freely when drawing comparisons and differences between characters in novels.
71. By the age of seven, children are reading aloud their own work and simple texts with few mistakes, some can change their voice when they see speech marks to make the story more interesting. The majority of children show enthusiasm for books and like hearing stories, they can talk about what is happening in a story and some can explain the reasons why characters act as they do. They are beginning to use a variety of strategies to help them read, such as, picture cues and word recognition. Most pupils use letter sounds to help them read unfamiliar words like 'persuade'. The majority of children know the purpose of the contents page and index and can name the author and illustrator of books. Many are able to use their knowledge of the alphabet to use the index in books to find information.
72. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are reading more fluently and for enjoyment. Some are beginning to express strong opinions about what they like and dislike in the works of different authors. They are encouraged to read from a variety of texts, including books, leaflets, poetry and plays. They select information to answer questions and can refer to the text in order to support their views. Not all pupils know the difference between fiction and non-fiction but all can use the contents page and index to retrieve information.
73. Children's handwriting is developing quite nicely by the age of seven. They are writing in sentences using some punctuation. Some children have begun to use speech marks in their writing. They spell simple words correctly, but few use imaginative writing and descriptive words when writing stories. Children are given opportunities to write in response to a variety of stimuli including stories, poems, personal experience, letter-writing and newspaper reports. Not all can read what they have written.
74. By the age of eleven, pupils are writing for a variety of purposes and audiences; such as character studies, book and T.V. reviews, newspaper reports, posters advertising Gateshead, reports on visitors to the school, poetry and letter writing. Pupils are encouraged to draft and refine their work, working collaboratively to achieve better results. The majority write in sentences, using appropriate punctuation, including speech marks, exclamation marks and commas. Spelling is usually accurate. Handwriting in a legible joined up form is practised regularly and competitions for handwriting held half-termly. However, this practice is not transferred to the pupils' written work where many are still allowed to print.
75. Since the previous inspection very detailed analyses of pupils' results in National Curriculum and school-administered tests have been undertaken on a regular basis. This has enabled the school and individual classes to set targets as a way of raising standards further. The school is now aware that more must be done to meet the learning needs of pupils of higher ability and has introduced setting throughout the school for literacy lessons.

76. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is never less than good, with a half being very good. In Key Stage 2, 46 per cent of teaching was very good, 18 per cent was good and 36 per cent satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and share the objectives with the pupils so that they know clearly what is expected. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and use good questioning to challenge pupils so that they develop ideas, extend their thinking and increase their understanding and vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to use word banks, dictionaries and thesauruses, and in Year 6 they become familiar with the etymological dictionary.
77. Effective pupil management, by which work is closely matched to the needs of pupils, along with good use of praise and pace in lessons ensures that pupils are well-motivated, sustain their concentration and show interest in their work. This is reflected in the productivity of the pupils and the pace at which they work independently. Time is managed well to develop phonics, spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. Literacy is given high priority in the curriculum. All classes have literacy boards displaying key words. Teachers understand what children need to learn next, and texts and tasks are closely matched to pupil's stages of learning. Good routines are established throughout the school, following the National Literacy Strategy, which enables children to make good progress in their learning. Pupils' work is regularly marked and is most effective when it includes comments to help the pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. Many teachers set individual targets for pupils. Support staff are used very effectively and make a positive contribution to the attainment and progress achieved.
78. There are good links between reading, writing and spelling which reinforce knowledge about language and provide good opportunities for children to use literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science six-year-olds are encouraged to use adjectives to compare materials. In design and technology, eight-year-olds describe how they made a pneumatic system; in art, eleven-year-olds describe how they made an original clay tile, with decorations, based on the work of M.C. Escher. Information technology systems are used throughout the school to develop English skills. Pupils use the computer for word-processing, editing and drafting their work, producing school newsletters as well as using various CD-ROMs to improve phonics, grammar and punctuation.
79. The role of the subject co-ordinator has been developed since the previous inspection to include the monitoring of teaching and learning in English, which is carried out effectively. The co-ordinator has worked hard over the last year to ensure the successful implementation of the literacy hour, as well as facilitating the necessary training. This has been effectively carried out with the help of a very enthusiastic and supportive staff. Detailed analyses of all test and task results are monitored and trends, strengths and weaknesses are examined and targets set accordingly. There is a detailed Literacy Action Plan for 1999/2000 and English features in the school development plan. However, there is a need to extend this vision for the subject over a period longer than one year.

MATHEMATICS

80. The standards of work seen in Year 2 during the inspection are appropriate for the age of pupils but very few pupils are working at the higher levels. This is a reflection of the results of the 1999 National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 1,

which showed that although 82 per cent reached Level 2 only five per cent achieved the higher levels. The school reached the agreed target set for in 1999 for the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 but was five per cent short of the target for Level 3. When compared with the results of schools with a similar context Birtley's results were below average. Although the last inspection found that standards of mathematics was sound in Key Stage 1, there has, since then, been a very significant increase in the numbers of pupils identified as having special educational needs which have risen from 0.8 per cent in 1998 to over 30 per cent currently. In the present Year 2 class this figure is even higher.

81. As a result of the effective work done in introducing the numeracy hour, standards are improving. Pupils are now very confident in recalling number facts and using them to solve problems. They have developed a good understanding of place value, which enables them to add and subtract numbers up to 100. They show good recall of multiplication facts for the 2, 5 and 10 times tables.
82. Results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 was average, but was well below average at Level 5. Evidence from the inspection indicates that there are now many more pupils who are working in the higher level and who are likely to achieve Level 5 in the National Curriculum tests in 2000. This improvement is due to the work undertaken by senior teachers and the class teachers. It includes the effects of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, and the introduction of "setting" children of similar ability into teaching groups. This latter important development is the result of careful analyses of previous test results, which have identified weaknesses in pupils' learning and the subsequent modification of teaching programmes to eradicate weaknesses.
83. The test results are in accordance with the previous report, which found that standards were close to national expectations. Results from last year are broadly in line with similar schools. Results from the last four years show a steady improvement.
84. By the age of eleven the vast majority of pupils are confident mathematicians and have developed skills in a wide range of mathematics. They display good recall of a wide range of number facts such as table facts and addition and subtraction facts. They have developed a very good understanding of angles and triangles and can identify and measure angles accurately. They are confident in solving number problems where brackets are involved. Less well developed is the area of data handling and in particular the investigation of probability.
85. The improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection is a significant factor in the school's development. Teaching of mathematics throughout the school is now very good, overall, sometimes excellent and never less than satisfactory. The teachers prepare challenging and interesting lessons, which engage the pupils' interest immediately. The pace of learning is good and this maintains their interest throughout the sessions. Lessons follow closely the recommendations of the Numeracy Strategy, beginning with a mental session that sets a high challenge for pupils. For example in a Year 6 class, pupils had to work out the time if the minute hand pointed to the four and the hour hand was 135 degrees further round the clock face. In a session in a Year 2 class, the teacher picked a number at random and asked pupils to tell what they knew about that number. They were able to identify whether it was odd or even whether it was a multiple of any other number, what it was

when it was doubled and a whole host of additional facts. The pupils were stimulated by these sessions and were keen to answer and enthusiastic in their approach.

86. Enjoyment is a clear factor in many lessons as the teachers increase the challenge and pupils try to solve the problems. In another excellent lesson the teacher set up a table test where two pupils tested one another against the clock, trying to beat their own personal time. The relationships in all lessons between teacher and pupils and between the pupils themselves are very good. This enables the teachers to be challenging to the individual without being threatening and allows pupils to work collaboratively.
87. Teachers give good support to pupils with special educational needs by either modifying the task or by giving extra support and this enables those pupils to make good progress. The best lessons build carefully on what is already known or understood and in one lesson this previous knowledge was clearly identified on the planning sheet. All lesson plans contained clear objectives for learning, which enable the teaching to be well focussed. Teachers are very skilled in class management, ensuring that pupils are kept concentrating on their tasks and any incidents of minor misbehaviour are dealt with effectively and quickly. Teachers give due emphasis to the language of mathematics and the plenary sessions are effective in reiterating the main teaching points and in assessing the progress made by the pupils.
88. The skills learned in numeracy are used well in other subjects, such as the tables created and the graphs drawn in science and geography lessons. Information technology is used in mathematics particularly in work involving databases and graphs but also in shape and space.
89. The co-ordinator is a very able teacher and is very knowledgeable about mathematics. She is determined to raise standards and has set in place strategies for doing so. She analyses test results and sets attainment targets for individual and groups of children. She demonstrates mathematics lessons to teachers from this and from other schools, and leads further training on teaching mathematics. In order to ensure that the school was well placed to introduce the National Numeracy Strategy, she led the school in starting similar lessons the year before.

SCIENCE

90. At the end of both key stages the majority of pupils are achieving the standards expected of seven and eleven-year-olds. About a fifth of pupils attain higher levels than expected by the age of eleven. This shows an improvement in the standards achieved in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, which were below the national average but in line with the results for similar schools. Attainment is mostly in line with findings of the previous inspection, with an improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels at Key Stage 2.
91. By the age of seven most pupils know how to observe and compare the different properties of materials and record and interpret their findings accurately on charts. They understand the effects of exercise and know about the importance of a healthy diet. They identify the different parts of plants and understand that living things grow and reproduce. They understand the functions of the external parts of the human body such as the eye and the ear. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have a clear understanding of how to conduct fair tests in their investigations into micro-organisms. They recognise the factors necessary for promoting and supporting

life and have a thorough understanding of food chains. Higher achieving pupils make reasoned hypotheses about the diet of predators, such as sparrow hawks. Most pupils know about the permeability of different kinds of rock and understand the differences between solids, liquids and gases. They recognise how the forces of gravity work in different situations and understand how knowledge about insulation and conduction is used in everyday utensils. At both key stages most pupils have a sound knowledge of the different aspects of the subject, and understand and use scientific vocabulary effectively. The presentation of their work is neat and well structured.

92. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is mostly good and sometimes very good. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is mostly good and sometimes excellent. This is directly linked to the overall good progress and learning made by pupils at both key stages, including those with special educational needs.
93. Most teachers have a very thorough knowledge of the subject. This enables them to explain their work very carefully and clearly, so that, for example, some pupils' knowledge of how to set up a fair test on micro organisms is extended and others develop new knowledge and efficient skills in work on materials and classification. Most teachers plan their work well. They ensure that it is linked with, and built onto previous work. For example, in lessons on gravity pupils are given a thorough revision of their existing knowledge and understanding. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. Teachers share the outlines of their planning with pupils. This shows the children what is expected - for example, in work on materials they moved efficiently from one activity to another without interruptions to their learning of new skills and knowledge. Teachers provide work that is suitable for all pupils. They provide appropriate support for lower achieving pupils. Work for more able pupils is planned to extend their understanding of how to classify and name the properties of materials accurately.
94. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. This ensures, for example, that in interpreting graphs on food chains they apply considerable intellectual effort, and in working on materials pupils sustain their concentration when they are not under the immediate supervision of the teacher. Pupils are well managed and controlled. They usually behave well and this means that most time in lessons is devoted to learning. They co-operate well with teachers and with other pupils in the use of materials and equipment. Pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations and present their writing and diagrams increasingly neatly and accurately. Relationships are good and teachers use praise and encouragement effectively so that pupils are eager to improve their work and complete the targets they have been set.
95. Teachers use questions well to prompt pupils to think hard and during lessons they assess pupils' work skilfully so that difficulties are addressed and pupils' understanding is reinforced. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular, encouraging and helpful. For example, in work on insulation pupils are given guidance on thermal and electrical aspects, thus extending their understanding. Most teachers present their lessons and displays in lively and interesting ways. They use practical investigations and problem solving so that pupils sustain their enthusiasm and curiosity and work hard. Most lessons are conducted at an appropriately brisk pace and teachers prepare and use resources and materials for investigations efficiently. This enables lessons to run smoothly and helps to sustain pupils' concentration.

96. Where the quality of teaching is very good, teachers have very high expectations and very good class control, so that the pace of their learning is very brisk and pupils are very well behaved. Teachers use very challenging questions and are careful to use the relevant scientific vocabulary. This encourages pupils to reflect on their work - for example, in comparing different materials - and extends their vocabulary and understanding. Where the quality of teaching is excellent teachers inspire the interest and curiosity of pupils so that they become fully engrossed and engaged in their work. Teachers have very thorough subject knowledge and excellent professional relationships with their pupils. They use these to challenge all pupils to work to the best of their ability so that the quality of their learning is excellent.
97. At Key Stage 1 most pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in investigational work. However, there are too few opportunities for them to recognise when tests or comparisons are unfair. At Key Stage 2 most pupils have a thorough understanding of how to plan investigations, including fair testing, but higher achieving pupils, particularly, are given too few opportunities to make independent investigations.
98. The subject is well co-ordinated. The co-ordinator works hard to provide staff with support and guidance, to monitor planning and work, and to organise resources. The school has successfully addressed criticisms from the previous inspection by ensuring that policy guidance is followed by all staff and by the introduction of an effective system of assessment.

ART

99. At the time of the previous inspection art was found to be unsatisfactory. The school has since taken steps to improve its provision. There is a comprehensive art policy in place linked to schemes of work for each year group, which ensures that pupils have a range of art experiences. As the art curriculum has been reduced by 25 per cent across the school in order to give greater emphasis to the teaching of English and mathematics, a curriculum map now identifies which aspects of the scheme are to be covered each term in order to maintain a balance.
100. Only three art lessons were observed during the period of the inspection – one in the reception class and two lessons at Key Stage 2 so it is not possible to make secure judgements about teaching and learning. From displays around school, there is evidence to show that pupils are given the opportunity to develop their skills using a variety of media. Links with other subjects are apparent: everyone in the school contributes to a large music display in the hall to illustrate songs and instruments of the orchestra; the reception class uses “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” from their literacy lesson to provide a stimulus for painting and collage work; the work in art links to information technology, with drawing software used at both key stages.
101. “*Looking at the work of other artists*”, an area of weakness identified at the last inspection, now forms part of the curriculum. Pupils draw faces in the style of Paul Klee at Key Stage 1 and in Year 3 pupils study the work of Picasso. They write about the feelings that the work evokes and go on to create their own work in a similar style. Pastel work in the style of Monet and instructional lessons on techniques such as perspective are in evidence at Key Stage 2.
102. There is still very little evidence of creative three-dimensional work. For example, clay tiles produced by pupils in Years 5 and 6 show limited skills in this area. However,

efforts have been made to look at art in other cultures and Year 4 pupils are looking at African art while studying Kenya. They are producing a collaborative piece of artwork using fabric crayons. The local secondary school is keen to develop links with the school and the head of the art department there teaches lessons to pupils in Year 6, sharing her expertise and teaching the techniques of watercolour painting. An “express” group of able pupils has been identified by the secondary school for additional tuition as the school has Arts College status.

103. Pupils enjoy art and respond very well. Reception pupils are able to select materials and, with help, are able to plan and design a picture. Parental help is well used and pupils are able to achieve very good results for their age. In Year 3 they talk about different paintings by the same artist and offer sensible opinions about why they like particular pictures. Pupils listen attentively to learn how to use a new drawing package in information technology in Year 4, and in Year 5 are able to sustain their concentration and put in fine detail when undertaking observational pencil sketches of fruit. Year 6 pupils are able to access the Internet to carry out research for their artwork, the results of which are later translated into a variety of responses. They are very well behaved while being taught watercolour techniques by the secondary school teacher and are enthusiastic to try out their newly acquired skills.
104. The use of sketchbooks is not well developed in the school and a more consistent approach would provide a useful assessment tool as the pupils move between classes and key stages. Provision for art has improved since the last inspection and within the time constraints, the school is achieving satisfactory results.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. It was not possible to see any lessons during the inspection. However, talking to pupils and teachers, scrutiny of pupils’ work and photographs, displays and planning evidence indicate that most pupils’ learning and progress are at the level which would be expected for pupils aged seven and eleven.
106. As they become older pupils at both key stages develop a clear understanding of the design process and produce well-finished models and artefacts, such as puppets, pneumatics, fabrics and models with moving parts. They use an appropriate range of materials and develop effective skills in measuring, joining and fastening, cutting and finishing. They evaluate their work well, for example in the production of toys using cams, and are aware of safety issues.
107. The subject is well co-ordinated. The co-ordinator works hard to monitor work and planning and to support staff and organise the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

108. It was not possible to observe any geography in Years 1 and 2 and therefore no judgements are possible about teaching and learning in Key Stage 1. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2 and therefore no secure judgements can be made on teaching and learning. However, evidence from the one lesson seen and from scrutiny of pupils’ work in books and around the school indicates that a programme of geographical skills is taught including mapping and research skills. Pupils use these skills to study their own environment and other countries such as Kenya and the

tropical rainforests further afield. Pupils in Year 6 use four-figure map references to locate position on a map.

109. The co-ordinator does much to promote the subject throughout the school and is already preparing for the introduction of the new curriculum later in the year.

HISTORY

110. During the course of the inspection it was not possible to see any lessons in this subject. However, evidence from scrutiny of pupils' work, displays, photographs, teachers' planning, and discussions with pupils and staff, indicates that pupils' learning and progress are as would be expected at ages seven and eleven.
111. As they move through the school most pupils develop a sound understanding of chronology. This is helped by their work on time lines and by their studies of different periods, such as ancient Egyptians and Victorians. At both key stages pupils develop a thorough knowledge about people and cultures in the past. For example, they know about Neil Armstrong and Florence Nightingale and understand the religious beliefs of the ancient Greeks and Romans. As they become older children understand that the study of history is an investigative process and know that a range of sources such as books, picture, artefacts and buildings can reveal information about the past. They make effective use of visits to such places as Beamish and Vindolanda and use the locality well, as, for example, in a local study of Victorian housing. Most pupils develop a sound factual knowledge about the past and can compare different periods and life styles. As they move through the school most pupils develop a widening vocabulary and talk confidently about such ideas as conquest, settlement and civilisation.
112. Most pupils enjoy their work in history and are eager to find out about the past, particularly when they go on visits. However, there is less evidence in Key Stage 2 of pupils' knowledge and understanding of different interpretations of history.
113. The subject is well co-ordinated. The co-ordinator works hard to monitor and organise the subject and to support staff. The co-ordinator has been particularly successful in developing schemes of work and in addressing a criticism of the previous inspection by the introduction of an effective system of assessment.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Since the previous inspection there has been very little development, until recently, in information technology. This is reflected in the standards that are achieved at the end of Key Stage 2, where pupils' attainment is generally below what would be expected at age 11.
115. At the end of Key Stage 1, however, pupils are achieving standards appropriate to their age, sometimes above. They communicate their ideas and handle information. They have basic control of the computer mouse and are able to change font size and colour, alter text, work on drawing packages and print their work. With help they can insert graphics and create effects to enhance their work. They use tape recorders independently and can use programmable toys. Many of their skills are developed through other subjects, particularly literacy and numeracy, where information technology is an integral part of lesson planning.

116. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils still need help with simple word-processing skills like *underline*, *bold* and *save*. Children are still finding their way around the keyboard and work slowly when typing. Although there is a computer in every classroom, some of these are inadequate to meet the demands of the National Curriculum, and this is the most important factor affecting attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. However, new computers are being purchased on a rolling programme and this has already improved the provision at Key Stage 1.
117. An Internet link in the library has recently enabled pupils at Year 6 to carry out research into plants as a stimulus for art lessons. The pupils have worked on a data handling package, working with spreadsheets and producing graphs. A link with the local secondary school will provide another computer with Internet access and plans are in hand to involve cluster schools in video conferencing.
118. Although no information technology lessons were observed during the inspection at Key Stage 1, a wide variety of work was observed within the teaching of other subjects. In these lessons the teaching of information technology was very good. For example, in mathematics lessons, pupils explore tessellations and create pictures using mathematical shapes. They print their work and explain what they have been doing. In literacy lessons, pupils listen to tape recorders, CD ROMs, write instructions to programme a toy, and learn basic word-processing skills.
119. Teaching is very good at Key Stage 2. It is necessarily instructional rather than participative, because of a lack of resources, so pupils spend a great deal of time listening rather than practising new skills. This means that progress is inevitably slow, as new skills have to be consolidated over a long period. As identified by the co-ordinator, there is a need in both key stages to develop a more structured approach to the learning of skills in information technology and to ensure that there is progression throughout the school.
120. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work in information technology and listen to what they are being told. They work well collaboratively when sharing a computer with a friend and are happy to compromise when their work entails making a joint decision. In a Year 2 class, a sand timer helps pupils to learn that it is fair for each person to spend the same amount of time using a computer. In this respect, the subject contributes to pupils' personal and social development, as co-operation is essential.
121. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by staff and particularly good use is made of the classroom support assistants, who work in close partnership with the teachers. Assessment takes place through rigorous short-term planning and assessments carried out each half term.
122. The recent appointment of a new information technology co-ordinator has already had a very positive effect on raising standards across the school. Although resources are still inadequate, teachers now plan weekly information technology lessons and plan the use of the computers in almost every subject. There is a very good curriculum plan that identifies the aspects of information technology to be covered each term by each year group. The co-ordinator has written an excellent three-year Information and Communication Technology Development Plan. This is linked to the training of two teachers under the New Opportunities Fund initiative, the purchase of hardware, and the provision of an information technology suite in the school so that basic skills can be developed at a faster rate. The development plan also has clear

targets to raise achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 and includes strategies for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning of the subject.

MUSIC

123. It was possible to see only the performance element of music during the week of the inspection, but evidence from other sources indicates that a full programme of music is taught. Teaching is very good. The class teachers and the visiting specialists have very good musical knowledge, which they use effectively to provide interesting lessons. Pupils respond well to the challenges set and to the enthusiasm of the teachers. Teachers use the correct musical language throughout the lessons and consequently pupils have developed a good musical vocabulary, which includes terms such as *ostinato*, *allegro* and *adagio*. By the age of eleven, pupils confidently perform a range of songs accompanied by their own voices with the addition of instrumental ostinato and voice drone. Singing throughout the school is of good quality and is enjoyed by the vast majority of pupils.
124. The co-ordinator makes a major contribution to the promotion of music in the school, often writing his own music for school concerts. He is an able musician in his own right and his natural enthusiasm for the subject generates interest and enjoyment in the pupils. He is well supported in his work by visiting specialists and the other members of the school team.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. During the period of the inspection it was possible to see only two lessons and to accompany the children to swimming. However, work in the lessons observed was suitable for the ages of the pupils.
126. Pupils in Year 2 know the importance of a warm-up activity. They follow the instructions closely, are sensible, eager to participate and enjoy the activities. They are prepared to attempt more difficult movements when experimenting with rolls. They can put together a simple sequence involving attempted cart wheels and rolls and are prepared to persevere at the task set, modifying and consolidating their skills.
127. In Year 3, pupils produce imaginative travelling movements to link balances together and produce a simple sequence both on the floor and on the apparatus. They are generally confident in using the apparatus and practice to refine and attempt to improve their performance.
128. Most pupils enjoy physical education and work with enthusiasm and interest. They listen well to instructions, respond positively to exercise and pay due care and attention to health and safety.
129. One swimming lesson with Year 4 pupils was observed. About half the pupils were close to achieving the National Curriculum requirement of being able to swim 25 metres unaided. They are developing confidence in the water, many can swim, know how to rest, float and adopt support positions in the water. A few pupils who are good swimmers are achieving well above the National Curriculum requirements. By the end of Key Stage 2, 80 per cent of pupils leave the school having reached or exceeded national expectations in swimming.

130. Since the last inspection large apparatus has been purchased to enhance the quality of the curriculum and is being used to good effect. The time available for each class to use the school hall continues to be limited because so much time of the school day is given over to literacy and numeracy lessons.
131. Teaching observed was good and both lessons had a series of planned activities that built pupils' skills. The pupils are challenged with various activities that maintain the pupils' attention and enthusiasm and extend their skills. This helps learning to take place. Teachers intervene to give feedback to the pupils about their work and they are given opportunity to discuss their work with one another.
132. The co-ordinator has overview of the curriculum and has monitored some lessons, organised and encouraged staff training and is responsible for purchasing resources. A range of extra-curricular sporting activities is available for the older pupils, including; football, dance workshop, athletics, netball and cross-country. These activities contribute to the standards achieved by the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Lessons in this subject follow the Gateshead Agreed Syllabus, and children work at the correct levels. For example, at seven years of age children know the bible story of the creation and about the celebration of special times such as harvest and Christmas. They have been encouraged to develop their feelings and care for others. Eleven-year-olds know that the bible is an example of a sacred book, and this is very effectively reinforced in acts of collective worship as the bible is unwrapped from its special cover so that it may be read. The pupils understand that personal responsibilities are important parts of religious customs such as baptism and confirmation. Over the time they are in school, children learn about major world religions such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, in addition to Christianity.
134. Standards at the time of the previous inspection were good, but no indication was given whether this judgement was measured against the agreed syllabus, so no comparison can be made.
135. Teaching in this subject is good and is shared between class lessons and acts of collective worship. In both cases, teaching is sensitive and this leads to children being prepared to discuss their innermost feelings. Mature discussions are held with older pupils, such as in the Year 6 lesson about baptism and confirmation. Teachers are knowledgeable and use methods that help children learn well, such as the act of collective worship based on consideration for others. Teacher's good use of questioning ensures that children continue to learn and achieve well. Pupils have good attitudes and are prepared to discuss important matters sensibly. They try hard to understand the views and beliefs of others. Behaviour is generally very good in lessons and in acts of collective worship.
136. The co-ordinator left the school recently and another member of staff has only just taken responsibility for the subject. He is experienced in managing this subject, having done so in another school. The teacher is aware that a modified agreed syllabus is to be introduced, and that developmental work for the staff will need to be undertaken.