

INSPECTION REPORT

NEW BRANCEPETH PRIMARY SCHOOL

New Brancepeth, Durham

LEA area: County Durham

Unique reference number: 114119

Head teacher: Mr D Eason

Reporting inspector: Mrs Julia Bell
2456

Dates of inspection: 10 – 13 July 2000

Inspection number: 190980

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	New Brancepeth County Durham
Postcode:	DH7 7EU
Telephone number:	0191 3730736
Fax number:	0191 3730736
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Bell
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Julia Bell	Registered inspector	Science	What sort of school is it?
		Art	The school's results and achievements
		Design and technology	Teaching
		Physical education	Leadership, management and efficiency
		Under fives	
Mrs Ann Longfield	Lay inspector		Attendance
			Links with the community
			Personal support and guidance
			Welfare, health, safety, child protection
			Accommodation
			Monitoring of personal development and attendance
Mr John Atkinson	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
		Information technology	Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		History	Assessment and monitoring of academic achievement
		Religious education	
		Special educational needs	
Mr Roger Linstead	Team inspector	English	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Geography	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
		Music	Staffing
		Equal opportunities	Resources

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse (Education) Limited
14 Enterprise House
Kingsway
Team Valley
Gateshead
NE11 0SR

Tel: 0191 487 2333

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a primary school and admits pupils aged from three to eleven. It serves its immediate area in the village of New Brancepeth, west of Durham City. The village is an area of above average unemployment. The school is below average size, with 91 pupils on roll, 45 boys and 46 girls. The nursery has 79 children attending part time. The local education authority resources the nursery to admit children with special educational needs. There are 41 pupils on the register of special educational needs, seven of whom have a statement, which is well above the national average. The pupils are all from white, English speaking families. The school admits a number of children from transient families who move in and out of the area. As a result numbers fluctuate during the school year. The school has 31 pupils who are eligible for free school meals, 34 per cent of the school population, which is above the national average. The attainment of children entering the reception class is mainly well below the level expected for their age in language and literacy skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. It is very well managed and the head teacher provides very effective leadership. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and enables the pupils to make good progress. Standards show a steady improvement over time and by the age of 11 pupils attainment in English and mathematics matches national averages. Standards in science are too low. The financial management of the school is good and taking account of the low attainment of many children on entry to the school and their good progress over time, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed by the head teacher, with the good support of deputy head and staff.
- The teaching is good and this ensures that pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- The school's management of behaviour is effective and most pupils have good attitudes to their learning and behave well.
- Staff provide a high level of care, support and guidance to pupils and this effectively encourages their personal and social development
- Pupils have access to a rich and varied range of curricular opportunities and there are good links with the community and industry.
- The school's provision for children under five and those with special educational needs is very good.
- Numeracy and literacy are taught well and this is enabling the school to raise standards.

What could be improved

- The pupils' standards in science are often well below average by the age of 11. They have too few opportunities to plan and carry out their own experiments or to record accurately what they have found out. Only a limited amount of written work is produced.
- Written work is often rushed and careless and the presentation of work is frequently unsatisfactory in all subjects.
- Attendance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in dealing with the issues raised in the last inspection in 1996. Over the past four years it has improved curriculum planning to ensure that there is no repeated work in the mixed age classes and introduced procedures for termly and weekly planning that are used by all teachers. The school has formed a senior management team and this gives a common purpose to school development. The management role of the subject co-ordinators has been strengthened and the senior staff give a lead in monitoring and evaluating what the school does well and identifying areas for improvement. For example, the pupils' poor performance in science has been identified and priorities to deal with this are included in the school development plan. The school has employed specialist support for the teaching of geography and music; this has improved teachers' confidence and expertise. Useful written guidance ensures a framework for the curriculum in these subjects and is enabling the school to improve standards. The school has improved the assessment and recording of pupils' progress and staff use the information well to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils. The school has built on the good links with parents and has worked with Durham Business and Education Executive to establish useful links with industry. These help pupils to realise how the skills they learn fit into the world of work. The strong commitment of the head teacher, staff and governors ensure that the school is well placed to continue its planned developments.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	E	C	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	E	E	D	C	
science	E	E	E	D	

The standards achieved show great variations year to year. This is due to the small size of the school and low numbers of pupils taking the tests at the age of 11. The school also admits pupils from transient families and this has an effect on standards since many of these pupils have often missed areas of work or have special educational needs.

The school carries out a range of tests as pupils move through the school and has analysed the results of national tests. It uses the information to set realistic targets for improvement for individuals and groups of pupils and these are met. As a result, the trend in the school for English, mathematics and science matches the national trend and standards are sufficiently high given the low attainment on entry of many pupils. By the age of 11 pupils standards in English match those attained nationally and are well above the standards in similar schools. Their standards in mathematics were below national averages but match those in similar schools. Standards in science are well below average for 11 year old and below the standards attained in similar schools. Current work indicates that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and attain the standards expected for 11 year olds. They make unsatisfactory progress in science and standards in current work are often well below average for this age group.

Children under five make good progress in the nursery and by the time they enter reception classes the attainment of about two thirds of the children is close to the level expected for their age. However, the intake includes children from a wide area and many of these children transfer to the reception classes in different schools. Therefore the intake into New Brancepeth's reception class is still often well below expectations for four year olds, with a few children whose attainment is at the level expected for their age. The intake into reception often includes above average numbers of children with special needs. The good progress is maintained in the reception class and by the age of five, attainment matches the nationally defined expectations for this age in number skills but is still below the standards expected in language and literacy at the age of five, with a few children still well below the levels expected at five. The standards in the national tests in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are below the national average, although pupils make good progress and standards are improving. Standards in current work are close to the national average although few pupils attain at the higher levels and this keeps the school's performance below the national averages. Standards in the mathematics tests were well below the national average and when measured against similar schools but show a substantial improvement and current work matches the levels expected of seven year olds. Work in science matches the teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and is below average at the age of seven.

The improvements in mathematics and English are achieved through the successful implementation of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies, the extra support given to certain pupils and the good quality of teaching. Pupils make good gains in their learning and standards in information technology are at the levels expected of pupils at the age of seven and 11. Pupils achieve well in religious education and attainment is sound at the end of each key stage.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school and many are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in and out of classrooms is mainly good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good and pupils take responsibility and develop into confident individuals.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory.

The good range of activities in lessons motivates the pupils well and results in good attitudes to learning. The school has good strategies to manage pupils' behaviour and these are effective in developing their self-control. Staff set a high priority on building pupils' self-esteem and this has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. A few parents keep children off school for minor reasons such as shopping trips and some take holidays in term time; as a result attendance is below that of other primary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. It was satisfactory in 22 per cent of lessons, with 63 per cent of lessons where teaching was good and 15 per cent that was very good. There was very good teaching in a few lessons in the classes with children under five and at both key stages. Lessons are well planned and resourced to meet the needs of all pupils in the class, whatever their age or ability.

The quality of teaching in the nursery is good and sometimes very good. This ensures that the children make a good start to their education and this is maintained in the reception class. The high proportion of effective teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning at both key stages and this is having a positive effect on standards by the time pupils reach the age of 11. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught; they make good progress against their individual education plan targets and are well supported by the specialist classroom assistants.

Teachers are implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies effectively and the good teaching in these areas is enabling the school to improve standards in English and mathematics for all pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broadly based curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good; pupils are well supported and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision is very good and cultivates positive attitudes to school and learning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The staff provide a high level of care and support for all pupils and has good systems to monitor and support the progress of each pupil.

The school works well with parents to support pupils' learning. Parents are very supportive and have positive views of the school. The curriculum includes a range of interesting activities that motivate the pupils and their learning is enhanced by the good links with industry and the community. The effective links with other local schools and the secondary school to which pupils transfer at 11, have a very positive effect on the learning opportunities for pupils. All staff have a shared commitment to supporting the pupils and enhancing their self-esteem.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The school is very well managed and the head teacher provides very good leadership. He is well supported by the deputy head, staff and governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are supportive of the school and fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are good; initiatives are effective and have a positive effect on improving the school.
The strategic use of resources	All resources are used well to support pupils' learning and achievement.

The very good leadership results in high quality teamwork by all staff and a shared commitment to develop the school. This is enabling the school to make substantial improvements in the quality of learning and this supports pupils' achievement. The school has sufficient, suitably qualified teaching and non-teaching staff. All staff are deployed well to make best use of their expertise to provide effective support to all pupils. The school has adequate, well cared for indoor and outdoor accommodation. Given the below average attainment of many pupils on entry and the good progress they make due to the effective teaching and learning, the school provides good value for money.

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 school. • The school works closely with parents; they are well informed and feel comfortable about approaching the school. • The school is well led and managed. • The teaching is good and the school expects children to work hard and do their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few would like improvements in behaviour. • Homework • The range of activities outside of lessons.

The inspection team confirms the positive views of parents. They are rightly pleased with their school. The school has effective systems to manage pupils' behaviour and these are having a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school. The amount of homework is similar to that of other primary schools. Given the small size of the school, it provides a good range of activities outside of lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The school admits children from across the full range of attainment and previous experience. However there are wide variations in the attainment of children entering the nursery. Children enter the nursery from a wide area and, although about a third have poor language and mathematics skills, a similar number are average or above on entry. The local education authority also resources the nursery to admit higher numbers of children with special educational needs, and the number of statements is above average. Many of the higher attaining children transfer to the reception classes in other school at the end of the year and the level of attainment on entry to the school's reception class is often well below average. The effective teaching in the nursery and reception classes means that children have a good start to their education and make good progress in early language, literacy, number and social skills but attainment is still below, and sometimes well below, that expected of children at the age of five. This is lower than in the last inspection of the school in 1996. However, the school admits higher numbers of special needs pupils and also admits between 10 and 20 per cent of pupils from transient families who move in and out of the area throughout the year and these have a substantial impact on standards as many have missed work through frequent changes from school to school.

2 The pupils make good progress in their learning as they move up through the key stages and by the end of Year 6 standards in English and mathematics match the expected levels for 11 year old. However, standards in science are too low. This is recognised by the school and is a key priority in its development plan for the next school year. Teachers have high expectations in respect of work and behaviour and have worked hard to improve the motivation and self-esteem of all pupils. This has had a substantial impact on standards and ensures that the school matches the upward trend in national tests.

3 The school's tests results fluctuate from year to year due to the small numbers of pupils taking the tests. However, the results in the national tests for 11 year olds now match the national average in English and are well above those attained in similar schools. In mathematics tests, standards were below national levels but matched the attainment in similar schools. Standards in science tests were well below average for the end of Key Stage 2. When compared to schools with a similar intake of pupils, standards in science were below average.

4 The head teacher has been in post two years and has worked with the staff to analyse these test results and they have established effective systems to track the progress of individual pupils and to provide support where it is needed. The school has set realistic targets for the future and is well on target to meet them.

5 In the national tests at Key Stage 1, standards in reading were well below average and were below the levels attained in similar schools in 1999. They were below average in writing but matched the attainment in similar schools, although pupils make good progress and standards are improving, few pupils attain the higher levels. Standards in mathematics tests were well below national averages and also well below the levels attained in similar schools. Teacher assessment in science showed that pupils' attainment was below average for their age. The school's performance in tests is often below national levels because few pupils attain at the higher levels.

6 Pupils make steady progress in speaking and listening due to the teachers' encouragement and effective questioning. By the end of Year 2, pupils speak out to answer questions and to talk about their work. However, their vocabulary is often limited. By the end of Year 6 nearly all pupils speak

clearly and confidently. They are able to use language to match their speech to different situations and the people they are speaking to; for example, when discussing work with visitors.

7 Pupils' achievement in reading is sound due to the effective teaching of letter sounds and strategies to tackle unfamiliar word. By the age of seven nearly all pupils read books independently and accurately but their comprehension of what they have read is slower to develop. However, pupils do use their reading skills in other subjects. For example, when they read from worksheets in history or from computer programs. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils read at the level expected for eleven year olds, with some who achieve well for their age. They read regularly by themselves for enjoyment and this results in their use of a good range of words in writing. They now also learn through reading in most subjects. For example they find facts from the Internet or CD-ROMs.

8 Pupils make gains in their writing skills in Key Stage 1, for example Year 2 pupils write about books they are reading and re-tell Bible stories and parables. At both key stages writing skills develop well in religious education and history. Lower attaining pupils throughout the school write slowly and do not always complete their work. This results in gaps in learning in subjects such as science. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils achieve sound standards in writing for their ages. They write in a good range of forms and for different purposes. For example, Year 6 pupils write notes for debates, reviews of their reading, exciting stories and poems about hunting lions. However, standards of neatness and punctuation are not high enough.

9 The good teaching and impact of the national Numeracy Strategy are improving pupils' learning in mathematics and attainment has risen due to the pupils' increased motivation and enthusiasm. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory and are improving due to the recent emphasis on aspects of mathematics such as mental arithmetic, number work and problem solving. There are sound opportunities to use these skills in other subjects, such as science, geography and information technology. Progress throughout Key Stage 1 is good. By the end of Year 2 pupils carry out mathematical investigations and use and apply their mathematical understanding in a variety of contexts. They understand place value, are able to repeat patterns for sequencing numbers and are aware of addition and subtraction patterns. Pupils are competent in mental arithmetic and number work and have a good understanding of the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes.

10 At Key Stage 2 pupils build upon their very firm foundations and good progress is maintained. Pupils have good recall of multiplication facts and can make complex mental calculations involving several operations. Pupils are able to make accurate calculations using a range of methods. A particular strength of Key Stage 2 is the pupils' use of numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example Year 6 pupils represented their findings from a science experiment making effective use of bar graphs.

11 The school has adopted recent national guidance for the science curriculum at Key Stage 1 and this provides a clear framework for teachers' planning. As a result pupils are beginning to make good progress in their learning in science. Standards are improving although the changes are recent and by the end of Year 2, the work seen is still below expectations for seven year olds. They are beginning to understand the need for a fair test and are gaining an awareness of forces and can investigate what plants need to grow, but written work shows that their understanding is often at a superficial level. By the end of Year 6, pupils have an understanding of food chains and the habitats of different animals. They are developing an understanding of the importance of science in their lives. A few, more able, pupils attain the levels expected for their age but many attain standards well below those expected for the end of Key Stage 2. The amount of recorded work is limited; a great deal of their work is poorly presented and is often unfinished. Few pupils set out the investigations correctly to show what they have done and found out.

12 By the end of each key stage, pupils attain the standards in information technology expected for their age. Key Stage 1 pupils have good keyboard skills and are confident in using the computer for word processing and accessing information. Pupils learn the basic skills of how to move the mouse, choose options on the screen and print their work. Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress and extend their skills in word processing. They are able to store, retrieve and amend data, enter sequences of instructions and access information from CD-ROMs and the Internet; for example when Year 6 pupils were researching their history topic in famous events and people in the 1950s and 1960s. Pupils use the digital camera, load photographs onto the computer and incorporate them in documents that they then print.

13 By the end of both key stages, pupils' standard of attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils aged seven and 11. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and have a sound knowledge about Christianity and Bible stories. At Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress and by the end of the key stage have a good knowledge of the places of worship and the key symbols of a range of religions including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills and teachers develop thoughtful links between religions and the daily lives of the pupils.

14 Pupils consolidate their earlier work in most subjects as they move up through the school. Pupils make sound gains in their learning in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education; standards of work are mainly at the level expected for their age. Progress in art and design and technology is often good and there are examples of effective work at both key stages.

15 Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well in class and when withdrawn for group and individual activities with support staff. In the nursery the children with special educational needs often make very rapid progress due to the very good provision for them. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and their achievements match the realistic targets set for them. These are clearly identified in their individual education plans and build on what they have already learned. Assessment information is used well to match work to the needs of these pupils and work is linked well to work of the rest of the class.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16 The school has improved the standards outlined in the previous inspection. There is now little difficult behaviour to spoil the quality of teaching and learning. Over the last four years, teachers have developed very effective ways to encourage pupils to behave well. Relationships throughout the school are also good. Pupils like coming to school and are proud of their classes and their school. During the inspection they were eager to ask inspectors whether their classes were doing well!

17 Pupils of all abilities are often enthusiastic learners. They know teachers do their best to make new work interesting. Nearly all enjoy lessons. They are keen to say what they have noticed, to ask and answer questions and to work well. As a result, they concentrate well on their own work. Teachers manage pupils well and this ensures that they don't waste time or distract each other. Pupils look after equipment and move sensibly in classrooms and around the school. For example, in a music lesson, pupils found they needed pencils; they quickly got them from a shelf without a sound and went straight to work. Younger pupils occasionally irritate each other and tell tales. Older pupils say there is no bullying and that the head teacher and staff sort out any squabbles straight away.

18 Pupils respond well throughout the day to the teachers' high standards for behaviour. Play is lively and pupils enjoy the good amount of space available around the school. They often organise their own games and activities well. There have been no exclusions during the current school year, but there

were three fixed-term exclusions and a permanent exclusion in the previous year. Nearly all parents feel that behaviour in school is good. They are right.

19 Older pupils show initiative, for example in showing visitors round, and suggesting improvements through the school council. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 show both maturity and care in working with children in the nursery and reception years. Pupils in Key Stage 2 show team spirit and reliability in extra activities and sports. These include football, gymnastics, rugby, and recorder groups.

20 Attendance is unsatisfactory. The levels of attendance are below those of other primary schools. Each pupil represents a percentage of the total and therefore the absence of just one pupil has a very significant effect on the overall percentage figure. Absences are often due to parents keeping children at home for quite trivial reasons such as shopping trips. The high rate of absence at the time of the inspection was due to children going on family holidays in term time. Most pupils arrive at school on time, but there are a few who are regularly late. The educational welfare officer regularly monitors the register and follows up all cases of lateness and absenteeism. A prompt start is made to the start of the day and lessons beginning and finish on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21 Teaching is good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and there are more examples of good and very good teaching throughout the school. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching was good in 63 per cent of lessons, with 15 per cent of lessons where it was very good. It was sound in the rest. There was very good teaching in a few lessons in the classes with children under five and at both key stages. The high proportion of effective teaching throughout the school promotes high standards of work and behaviour. It ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning and this is having a positive effect on standards, particularly in English and mathematics by the time pupils reach the age of 11.

22 In many lessons, teachers provide a good range of challenging and interesting activities that are well matched to what the pupils already know. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils; they encourage them to think critically about their work and provide opportunities for discussion. They encourage pupils to take responsibility for their learning and to make choices of materials and to plan their own work. For example, in an effective design and technology lesson, Year 5/6 pupils looked at the different ways people in different countries and times had built shelters. The pupils planned and made scale models before making full sized shelters that the nursery children could use in their play activities. They made good choices from wood or plastic tubing to make a framework and were encouraged well by the teacher to use imaginative ideas for different shapes and materials to provide cover.

23 The quality of teaching in the nursery is good and sometimes very good. This ensures that the children make a good start to their education and this is maintained in the reception class. The quality of teachers' daily assessment of children's progress is good and detailed records are kept about each child. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is mainly good, with very good teaching in a few lessons. The children enter school with below average attainment, and about a third are well below the levels expected for their age. Teachers build well on the good work in the classes with children under five and use a good range of first-hand experiences to interest the pupils. For example, in a very good literacy lesson Year 1 pupils followed up their visit out of school to 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic' and wrote captions for photographs taken at the picnic to create a class book. The teacher effectively developed the pupils' imaginative and descriptive vocabulary and encouraged them to recall their feelings when riding on the train or watching the magician. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are clear about the skills pupils will learn and how these will be taught. This was evident in a very well planned

mathematics lesson where Year 2 pupils developed different ways of adding two digit numbers. The mental arithmetic session at the start of the lesson was well taught and the regular practice ensures that many pupils have good strategies for mental calculations and achieve a high degree of accuracy. The teacher's good subject knowledge ensured that pupils developed good skills in doubling numbers and found different ways to add numbers such as $68+26$ for example; they added $(60+20)$ then $(8+6)$ and added these answers to get the final total. The effective questioning ensured pupils' understanding and the meaningful activities enabled pupils to quickly gain new knowledge.

24 In Key Stage 2, teaching is frequently good and in a few lessons it is very good. Teachers have parallel classes each containing pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. This organisation enables the teachers to group the pupils in different ways. This reduces the possibility of quarrels between groups of pupils, a frequent occurrence in the past, and also enables the teachers to exchange groups and work with pupils according to their levels of attainment. This works well and pupils benefit from the skills and interests of both teachers. In a good religious education lesson, pupils from Year 4 and 5 were questioned well and showed a good recall of earlier work about Sikhism. The teacher had high expectations of the pupils and set them the challenging task of using ideas from the Sikh holy book to create their own poems to make a special book. The pupils were well managed and responded with well-chosen words such as 'kind', 'thoughtful', 'helpful' and 'unselfish' to describe God.

25 Teachers' subject expertise is at least sound and often good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is often good and this is enabling the school to improve standards in English and mathematics. Basic literacy skills are taught well; staff place a high priority on reading and books are well chosen to stimulate even the most reluctant readers. The school has focused on motivating pupils to write and in building their confidence. Pupils now produce some sound written work, convey ideas and use imagination to write stories. However, written work is often rushed and the presentation of work is unsatisfactory in many subjects.

26 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including those from families who move into the area and have missed earlier work, is good. Many make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. Those with statements of special educational need are well supported, both when they are withdrawn for extra tuition and when helped within the classroom. The integration of pupils with statements is good and enables them to be included in all activities at their own level. The work of the support assistants is very effective and they work closely with teachers to support lower attaining pupils and provide direct teaching in small withdrawal groups. Resources are matched well to the needs of pupils and regular liaison with class teachers ensures that the work done in withdrawal sessions is well linked to that done by the rest of the class. The staff motivate the pupils well and effectively promote their self-esteem. As a result these pupils achieve well and make good gains in their reading and writing. Relationships between staff and pupils with special needs are very good and support the pupils' learning. The effective support to pupils with special needs has a positive impact on the progress they make.

27 Throughout the school, teachers use a good range of strategies that include whole class, group and individual work. Pupils are well managed and discipline is good. Time is used well and pupils are encouraged to make choices of equipment and materials and to take responsibility for getting out and returning them.

28 Teachers and support staff work hard to provide a high level of care for pupils and to reinforce pupils' personal and social development throughout the curriculum. Relationships with pupils are very good. Staff encourage pupils' self-esteem through well-timed praise and verbal feedback about their work. However marking does not always provide sufficient guidance to enable pupils to improve their work. Teachers expectations of the quality of presentation and setting out of written work are not always high enough. Support staff are well deployed and briefed and their role

complements that of the teaching staff. Throughout the school, teachers give homework that has a positive impact upon pupils' reading, spelling and learning of number facts. In Key Stage 2, pupils' skills in finding information supports topic work in areas such as history.

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

29 Since the last inspection the school has improved its curriculum provision by introducing a three year planning cycle, providing detailed guidance in all subjects and monitoring the coverage of the planned activities. This has enabled the school to respond positively to the challenges presented by mixed age classes and fluctuating pupil numbers. Recently the school has further developed the good opportunities for promoting pupils' personal development by increasing the pupils' knowledge of the world of work through the very solid links that the school has established with the local business community. The benefits of this are shown in the mature and confident manner that many older pupils display.

30 The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and fully meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, including those for religious education. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and many subjects effectively contribute to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, attainment in English and mathematics is improving in the areas of reading, spelling and mental arithmetic. Subjects are taught separately but many effective cross-curricular links are well exploited through the use of topic work and reinforce the teaching of basic skills. For example, these are often linked in topics in design and technology, history, art, and geography. A number of pupils receive specialist music teaching from a visiting teacher. The curriculum admirably reflects the school's aims and values and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal, moral and social development.

31 The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibility and has approved a sex education policy that is taught sensitively through the science and personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils are made aware of the dangers of the misuse of drugs though the additional support given to the school by the local nurse and community police officer.

32 The school provides a wide range of activities to develop pupils' interests and increase their commitment to and motivation for school. They are given opportunities to work independently, particularly through the recent developments in information and communication technology, and are also required to assist in and around the school with designated roles and responsibilities. The pupils' curriculum experiences are enhanced by visitors to the school and visits to the community, museums and centres of interest. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and music. Lunch time and after school clubs enrich their experiences and contribute to the positive ethos of the school. All pupils are fully prepared for the next stage of their education and links with the high school are very good.

33 Both the organisation and curriculum of the school promote equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. The school's policy for special educational needs embraces the principles and practices of the Code of Practice and there are thorough arrangements for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. It is a combination of individual and group support by a specialist teacher and support assistant and in-class support with appropriate tasks set by class teachers. Individual education plans are detailed and set specific learning targets with careful attention to literacy and numeracy. These plans are closely monitored. There are good links with support services, reviews are held regularly and parents and pupils are kept informed of progress. A strength of the school's curriculum opportunities is the very good inclusion of pupils with statements of special educational needs in the full life of the school.

34 The good level of pupils' personal development is reflected in their ability to work independently with minimal supervision and in their growing mature and confident manner; for example pupils in Year 6 engaged in a thoughtful discussion with a local police sergeant about the responsibilities they have to rules and laws. Pupils have extended their interests into the community by raising money for national charitable causes. They value other people's opinions, beliefs and achievements, particularly in assembly where there is a regular celebration of pupils' successes. They undertake independent research linked to their topics in design and technology, history, geography and science by accessing the Internet. They treat the whole school environment with respect and are actively involved in school projects such as the planting of bulbs and shrubs. Good examples of respect are the way that pupils handle and value artefacts, such as the items collected for their history topic on the sixties, and keep the school grounds litter and graffiti free.

35 The school does all it can to give pupils equal opportunities and full involvement with all its activities. For example, the high quality provision for pupils with special educational needs significantly improves their involvement in all lessons. Careful checks on the progress of boys and girls ensures that they have equal opportunities.

36 The school has strong and positive links with the secondary school, with both schools working in the best interests of the pupils. There is a secure transfer of information and the meetings between the schools special needs co-ordinators help to maintain good communication and pupils' progress.

37 Visitors from the community and visits out of school extend the curriculum and provide useful first hand experience for pupils. The older pupils especially enjoyed the visits from Navy personnel; it helped them to understand why education was important and the reason for a discipline policy. The Nursery children enjoyed their visit to the local fish and chip shop and saw at first hand how to make fish and chips. The school has links with the local church, through visits and the minister regularly takes assemblies and talks to the year 2 pupils about Christianity and his role in the church.

38 The school's provision for the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is very good. The provision makes a significant contribution to promoting the stated aims of the school. Pupils receive many opportunities that lead them to become committed to learning with a good understanding of their role in society. The school provides a good ethos that maintains a happy and supportive learning environment.

39 Pupils' spiritual development is good and is promoted through carefully planned assemblies, religious education lessons, other curriculum areas such as art and science, and time is given to promote pupils' thinking skills. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of community which actively supports regular reflection on issues that impinge upon the pupils' lives; for example aspects of law and order. Pupils are provided with opportunities to examine their own and others' faiths and beliefs as they learn about Christianity and other world religions such as Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism and Hinduism.

40 The school's behaviour policy makes very good provision for pupils' moral development. It encourages respect, consideration and tolerance and is rooted in and supported by the very good quality of the relationships between adults and pupils. The staff provide very good role models by consistently taking advantage of the opportunities to make pupils aware of the differences between right and wrong. Adults reinforce good behaviour through the effective use of rewards and consequences and this leads to good standards of personal behaviour, honesty and courtesy. Many lessons emphasise the importance of listening to others, abiding by rules, playing fairly and taking responsible decisions and as a result pupils have a heightened sense of fairness and justice.

41 The provision for pupils' social development is good. Lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and co-operatively and develop independent research skills. The school is very successful in promoting pupils' enthusiasm for school and encouraging them to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of others. There are many opportunities to strengthen the positive links between older and younger pupils; for example Year 6 pupils help out in the nursery. The school is a very caring community that values its pupils by raising their self-esteem and listening to their opinions that are expressed in the school council.

42 The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. It is promoted through the good range of visits that are well planned to support many subjects of the curriculum. These visits provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the heritage and cultures of their local community. The school arranges for many visitors such as artists, authors and theatre groups to share their talents and ideas with the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43 The school has very good procedures in place for the care and welfare of the pupils. The head teacher takes the lead in setting the ethos of care, order and structure. There is a very good standard of care from teaching and non-teaching staff with strengths in the promotion of good behaviour.

44 Teachers are conscientious in their supervision of pupils in class. A trained member of staff is responsible for child protection. All staff are aware of their responsibilities and are kept up to date with child protection issues. Required health and safety measures and procedures are in place and regular inspections are undertaken. Effective use is made of visits from fire officers and police in conjunction with issues related to 'Stranger Danger' and drug abuse.

45 The school successfully promotes good behaviour through its comprehensive assertive discipline policy. Pupils, staff and parents know the rules and sanctions and parents are informed of all instances of their child's inappropriate behaviour. There were four exclusions in the last school year but none in the current year. Instances of bullying, racism or oppressive behaviour are dealt with promptly. Teachers often praise pupils for their response and behaviour.

46 The school has maintained the high standard of care of pupils established at the time of the previous inspection. Procedures to monitor attendance are sound. The school works in partnership with the educational welfare officer who carefully monitors attendance and contacts the parents of any pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. However, despite these efforts, attendance is unsatisfactory and a few parents keep their children off school for shopping trips.

47 Thorough assessment procedures are in place and a system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress has been introduced since the last inspection. As a result the school has a clear picture of how well pupils are doing and can intervene to give additional support as necessary. The children in the nursery are assessed on entry and this information is used effectively to analyse children's strengths and weaknesses and to support their learning. Throughout the school, all pupils are assessed regularly in all subjects and the information is used effectively to help teachers plan work that meets the needs of pupils. For example, in Key Stage 2, targets are set in pupils' planners and these are reviewed regularly. The information from assessment helps teachers to enable pupils to work in ability groups in English, mathematics and science. Teachers keep examples of pupils' work that has been marked and assessed against national standards and use this to monitor how well pupils have done over a period of time. The marking of pupils work is inconsistent throughout the school, in the best examples it provides guidance to enable them to improve their work but this is not the case in all classes. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is thorough and accurate. Information is used well

to produce individual education plans to support their learning. These are reviewed regularly to monitor progress and update targets. The statements for pupils with special educational needs are reviewed regularly with full involvement of parents, and outside agencies where relevant.

48 The school places a very strong emphasis on its role in caring for pupils and making sure that their personal development is well supported. The effective partnership of teachers with parents and external agencies enables the school to monitor the pupils' personal development in a systematic manner. Key features of the success in supporting pupils' personal development are the very good relationships between staff and pupils and the fact that each pupil is known well. The school involves all the pupils in the life of the school and operates a school council to give pupils a say in the running and organisation of the school. The staff make considerable efforts to give all pupils roles and responsibilities and expect these to increase as pupils move through the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 Parents and carers believe that New Brancepeth is a very good school. Their answers to the questionnaire and discussion with the registered inspector raised few criticisms. All who gave their views said that children like coming to school and make good progress. They feel that the school is well led and managed, teaching is good and the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Many parents state that the school ensures that children work hard and achieve their best. They feel well informed about how their children were getting on. They would all feel comfortable to raise questions or problems with the school. The findings of the inspection confirm these views. A few parents would like improvements in behaviour, more homework and a wider range of activities outside of lessons. Inspection findings show that the parents do not need to be concerned about behaviour; the school's systems for managing pupils' behaviour are effective in lessons and around the school. The amount of homework is similar, in terms of amount and frequency, to that of other primary schools. Given the small size of the school, staff provide a good range of activities outside of lessons.

50 The many one-to-one meetings between parents and teachers support the partnership between home and school. A lot of these talks take place at the beginning and end of each school day. Teachers give parents a full picture of each pupil's progress at well-attended parents' evenings. From time to time the school organises extra meetings to tell parent about new developments. For example there have been meetings on literacy, numeracy, home-school agreements and uniform. When the school asked parents in to see English and mathematics lessons one morning, a third of them came and enjoyed observing classes at work.

51 A clear home-school agreement underpins the partnership. As a result, nearly all parents are aware of the sort of support the school wants them to give; for example, in ensuring good attendance and punctuality. However, a few families do not back the school up in these two important areas and this affects the standards attained by these pupils. Few parents help in school, but one or two accompany children on visits out of school such as the recent 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'. Most parents help children with reading and homework. Parents and members of the village community raise hundreds of pounds for the school each year. These funds improve the quality of resources for learning. The school has good links with the parents and carers of children and pupils with special educational needs. They are fully involved in reviewing and supporting the individual learning targets set for their children.

52 The communication to parents has improved since the last inspection. The first aim of its mission statement is to work in 'partnership with parents'. Staff achieve this aim partly by sending home clear information about the school and parents get an informative and attractive prospectus and good, regular newsletters. Pupils produce their own newspaper. Once pupils are in Key Stage 2, parents share details of their children's progress through notes in individual planners. The school has produced useful guidance to help parents support their children to read at home. Pupils' annual reports

contain sufficient information about pupils' work and progress. However, they do not indicate what steps the pupils are to take to improve their work in each subject. Also some of the comments in them are written in jargon and make them difficult to understand. For example, 'basic grammatical structure of sentences' and 'common polysyllabic words' do little to describe clearly the pupils' work in English.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53 The school is very well led and managed by the head teacher, with the good support of the deputy head teacher, staff and governors. The head teacher provides very effective leadership and, since his appointment two years ago, has worked effectively to build an effective staff team. The high quality of teamwork is a key to the effectiveness of the school. For example, all staff share a commitment to improving pupils' work and behaviour. They work well together to raise pupils' self-esteem and set high expectations that have a positive impact on standards. The head teacher has a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and works well with staff and governors to identify priorities for school development-mainly linked to improving the achievement of all pupils, whatever their ability.

54 The school's well-defined aims are met effectively in its day-to-day life and work and focus on the development of pupils' on both intellectual and personal skills. The school has made good progress in dealing with the issues raised in the last inspection in 1996. The head teacher has established an effective senior management team and the senior staff give a lead in monitoring and evaluating what the school does well and identifying areas for improvement. He has strengthened the role of the curriculum co-ordinators and ensured that they are well supported in their management role. Due to the small size of the school, all teachers carry responsibility for several subjects. However, they work well together to ensure that their subjects are well managed and colleagues are supported. The planning of the curriculum has improved with a common format established for planning for the term and for each week. This ensures that there is no repeated work in the mixed age classes. All subjects now have written guidance to provide a framework for teaching and learning. The issues related to geography and music were dealt with by buying in the skills of specialist support staff. They worked with teachers to improve their expertise in these subjects and to produce useful written guidance as a framework for planning activities for these areas. This has ensured that standards in teaching and learning have improved in these subjects. The school has improved its procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress; staff use the information gained to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils and to build on what pupils already know. The school has continued to develop its good links with parents and has worked with Durham Business and Educational Executive to establish useful links with industry. These have enabled pupils to realise how the skills they learn fit into the world of work. The strong commitment of the head teacher, staff and governors ensure that the school is well placed to continue its planned developments.

55 The governors care about the school and work well together to support management. They are well informed by the head teacher and this enables them to take a full part in decision-making. They meet statutory requirements and are beginning to take a more active role in the school in order to gain an overview of the curriculum. Their role in monitoring the effectiveness of the work of the school has not yet been defined or developed.

56 The school development plan provides a useful framework for managing improvements and is based on an accurate analysis of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. The priorities are clearly identified and are monitored regularly to ensure that targets are met. The school is developing good procedures for monitoring teaching and learning, based on the good work done in the recent Literacy and Numeracy initiatives. This, together with the analysis of the results of school based and national tests, is enabling the school to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and to set realistic targets for improving standards in English and mathematics. As a result pupils are

achieving well and the school's procedures for these subjects provide a useful framework for improving standards in science where they are too low.

57 The school manages the provision for pupils with special educational needs very well and this ensures that they make good progress against their individual targets. A strength of the school is the very good inclusion of pupils with statements of special educational needs in the full life of the school. The local education authority resources the nursery to admit children with special educational needs and this provision is very good. The nursery staff work effectively to provide a good range of learning opportunities and enable these children, often with a wide range of learning difficulties, to make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. Liaison with parents and outside agencies is good.

58 There are sufficient teachers and support staff who are well qualified to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. As a result, pupils make good progress. All staff have access to in-service training linked to their professional needs and the priorities identified in the school development plan. Until recently the school used sound procedures to appraise all staff. These are now in abeyance as the governors plan to implement national guidance for managing the performance of teachers. The school has good procedures for the induction and support of new staff.

59 Financial planning is good and is linked closely to the educational priorities identified in the school development plan. Financial control and the day-to-day administration of the school are good and supported well by the school secretary. There are good links with other local primary schools and the secondary school to which most children transfer at the age of 11. The head teacher works hard with colleagues in these schools to bid for funding for joint initiatives to support pupils in all the schools. For example, the school is involved in joint initiatives to improve pupils' skills in information technology and these are improving pupils' competence and confidence in their use of computers to support their learning. Other funding has been gained through work in the local community where pupils have used links to local history to work with an artist to design gates for the local village hall. The head teacher and governors are keen to get the best value for the pupils in all resources and services and gather information before financial decisions are taken. They also compare the school's performance with other schools both nationally and locally. All resources devolved to the school are used well to support teaching and learning. Given the low attainment of many children on intake, the good teaching and the high quality learning opportunities, the good progress made by pupils and the improving standards, the school provides good value for money.

60 The school has good quality resources for most subjects; they help pupils to make good progress. For example, the school bought many new and interesting books to encourage older pupils to read more. As a result reading standards by the end of Year 6 have improved. The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory; there are sufficient classrooms for the current number of pupils and the outside play areas are good. The accommodation for the children under five is good and the fenced outdoor play area is used well by the nursery children. The hall is a good resource for whole school assemblies and physical education. The school is well cared for and satisfactorily maintained. The colourful displays of pupils work in corridors and classrooms enhance the learning environment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61 In order to further improve the attainment of pupils the head teacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Improve standards of work in science by:-
 - monitoring the curriculum more regularly to ensure that pupils complete sufficient work;
 - increasing the amount of time spent on science by identifying it more clearly in planning;
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to plan and carry out their own investigations;
 - ensuring that pupils set out their work to show what they have done and what they have learned;(Paragraphs 2, 3, 5, 11,98, 99, 100, 102, 103 and 105)

- (2) Improve the presentation of pupils' work in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that teachers have sufficiently high expectations of the quality of pupils' written work;
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient guidance on how to improve the setting out of their work.(Paragraphs 8, 25, 28, 89, 97, 100, 103 and 105)

- (3) Improve attendance by:
 - more actively working with parents to reduce the number of unauthorised absences;
 - reinforcing the importance of full attendance in the prospectus;
 - improving pupils' attitudes to attendance through incentives for classes and individuals;
 - working with the receiver secondary school to share joint strategies.(Paragraphs 20, 46 and 51)

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

- Improve the consistency and quality of teachers' marking so that it gives better guidance to the pupils on how to improve their work.
(Paragraphs 28, 47, 88 and 104)

The school has identified the need to improve standards of work in science and has identified priorities linked to this subject in the school development plan for the next academic year.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	63	22	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)	40	91
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	31

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR- Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	11	30

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.4
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
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	6	7	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	5	4
	Girls	7	7	7
	Total	12	12	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92% (87%)	92% (80%)	85% (67%)
	National	82% (80%)	83% (81%)	87% (84%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	7	7	7
	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85% (87%)	85% (87%)	85% (93%)
	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	2	11	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	1	1	1
	Girls	10	8	7
	Total	11	9	8
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85% (58%)	69% (33%)	62% (46%)
	National	70% (65%)	69% (59%)	78% (69%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	1	1	1
	Girls	7	7	5
	Total	8	8	6
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62% (58%)	62% (75%)	46% (71%)
	National	68% (65%)	69% (65%)	75% (72%)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	79
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	3	1
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)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2
Average class size	22.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	40

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	132

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	290,076
Total expenditure	293,580
Expenditure per pupil	2,068
Balance brought forward from previous year	37,527
Balance carried forward to next year	34,023

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	171
Number of questionnaires returned	26

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	36	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	35	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	35	12	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	55	32	9	5	0
The teaching is good.	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	31	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	23	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	27	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	69	27	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	81	19	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	38	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	35	13	0	0

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

62 The school makes very good provision for children under five in the nursery and reception classes. The staff in these classes work closely together to provide a stimulating curriculum and wide range of activities that ensure that the children get a very good start to their education. Staff create a lively atmosphere that encourages the children's learning and enables many of them to make good progress. The local education authority resources the nursery to admit children who have special educational needs. The provision for these children and for those under five is very good.

63 The nursery can admit 52 children to attend part time for the morning or afternoon sessions. There are currently 40 children attending each of these sessions. These children are admitted with a wide range of language, literacy and early number skills and attainment is broadly at the level expected for about two thirds of the children. However, many children come from a wide area and less than half the children will transfer to the reception class of New Brancepeth School. Children enter the reception/Year 1 class with a broad range of attainment and previous experience but many have language, literacy, number and social skills that are well below expectations for their age. However, many children are eager to learn. The intake into main school often includes above average numbers of children with special needs. The good progress made in the nursery is maintained in the reception class and by the age of five, attainment in number skills matches the nationally defined expectations for this age. Attainment is improving due to good teaching and the effective way in which the national literacy strategy is adapted to meet the needs of these young children. However, standards are still below the standards expected in language and literacy at the age of five.

64 The quality of teaching in the nursery and reception classes is mainly good, with a few lessons where it is very good. As a result, the children achieve well and make very good progress in their skills and understanding across all the areas of learning that underpin the subjects of the curriculum. The personal and social development of the children is very good and from starting in the nursery they are encouraged to be independent. They are encouraged to make choices of activities. This good practice is continued in the reception class and by the age of five, the children are responsible and competent learners. They get out and return equipment and show initiative. For example, when making a list of food to be taken on a picnic, a child checked the correct spelling by finding the words on a menu in the 'café' in the role-play area. Children with special educational needs are well supported in both their group and individual activities. Those who are immature or have physical difficulties are encouraged to take a full part in all activities at a level where they are confident. They are well supported by staff and make substantial gains in their personal and social skills.

65 Children under five receive a good start in their education for language and literacy. The teaching of language skills is good in the nursery where staff rightly set a high priority on the development of early speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. They plan well together to provide opportunities for children to practice their speaking and listening skills within all activities. The children respond well to the careful and purposeful questioning and many are eager to talk about their work. For example, a group eagerly discussed the different toy sea creatures as they worked at the water tray. Although many showed immature speech, all could name creatures such as the dolphin and killer whale. The staff create many opportunities for discussion; this enables the children to improve their listening skills, learn to take turns when speaking, follow directions carefully and widen their vocabulary. These opportunities are consolidated and built upon effectively when the children move into the class with both reception and Year 1 pupils.

66 In both the nursery and reception classes the children quickly develop a confident approach to speaking and listening activities and work well in small and larger group situations. Role-play promotes the development of language and social skills and children use experiences from outside of school to act out different situations. For example, in the nursery they work in the 'fish shop' and take 'orders' and 'write' lists to show customers what is on offer. The 'shopkeepers' carefully 'fry' the fish and chips and ask customers what they require 'Do you want them wrapped up?' or 'Do you want salt and vinegar?'. Speaking and listening skills are often well below expectations for their age for about a quarter of the children when they enter the nursery, but they make good progress. They listen carefully to stories and know many action songs and rhymes by heart. The children retell stories in their own words and a few tell stories accurately using picture sequences. By the end of the reception year, many children have sound listening skills. Their speaking skills are still below expectations for their age but the children make good progress and are developing the range of vocabulary they use and they increasingly speak in sentences.

67 Children share and enjoy a wide range of stories and rhymes with adults and visitors in the nursery. They know how to use books and are beginning to realise that print conveys meaning. Children learn to recognise their names from their name cards and can find these readily. They are beginning to recognise some letters, for instance, in books, in computer games and in their names. Most children in the reception class recognise a small number of commonly used words and can interpret labels and captions around the classrooms. A few repeat simple sentences from early reading books, and a few use letter sounds to tackle unfamiliar words. However, early reading skills are still below expectations by the start of Year 1, although children make good progress in the sessions when the teacher shares a book with the class. Children join in the story and many volunteer the correct word when the teacher points to those in the story. The teacher's questioning during the whole class literacy sessions involves all the children and in a good lesson the children began to recognise key words about their recent visit out of school for a 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' when the teacher wrote them on the board. The children make substantial gains in early reading; although skills are still below average, they are well prepared for work in Key Stage 1.

68 Children make attempts at their own writing; this includes playing at writing to emergent writing where their letter shapes are recognisable. They enjoy 'writing' captions for their pictures of the kinds of transport used to go on holiday. Many can produce single, recognisable letters and write them randomly on the page. Others dictate sentences for the teacher to write and copy carefully what is written. In the reception class, children initially write over the teachers' script to add captions to their pictures or tell stories. Most form recognisable letters and dictate sentences for their teachers to write and then copy accurately to produce their own captions. A few higher attaining children use word cards to write their own sentences to label illustrations. A few have made their own folding books to show how they grew sunflowers in science and have written simple captions to their pictures. Most pupils show sound control of pens and pencils by for their age. They are eager to write and many of the children attain well and make good progress in letter formation and early writing. However, standards in writing are likely to be still below expectations for their age by the time they are five, with a few children working at a satisfactory level for this age.

69 Children in the nursery and reception classes learn mathematical skills through playing a wide range of games that enables them to sort, count and create sets of objects by colour, shape and size. In the nursery children learn to recognise and name two-dimensional shapes such as circle, triangle and square through completing jigsaws that built these shapes as they were completed. Many learn to count accurately and to match numbers to objects through counting and action songs. The teachers' careful assessment of what children can do is used well in the reception class to enable them to learn to count and write numbers. In an effective lesson the children in the reception class counted to 10 and most knew how to count on $1 + 2$ and $2 + 3$. A few could double numbers and explain what they needed to add to 3 to get a total of 10. They made good progress in their learning due to the good joint planning in the class and the effective support of the classroom assistant who worked well with the reception age

children during their numeracy session with Year 1 pupils. Many children make very good progress in their number skills in the nursery and reception classes and attain the standards expected for their age by the age of five.

70 The children learn number songs and rhymes that are chosen well to reinforce their mathematical language and counting skills. They know many of these by heart and join in the actions with great enthusiasm. Children are developing their understanding of volume through practical activities that enable them to use sand, water, shells, beans, pulses and cubes to fill different shapes and sizes of container and to compare how much each will hold. By the time they are in the reception class they understand and use vocabulary such as 'full' or 'empty' and understand the terms 'more than' and 'less than'. In free choice activities, many children under five make patterns with beads, cubes and shapes and are beginning to repeat them. The well-chosen mathematical games reinforce their recognition of shapes and many of the children recognise the main primary colours of red, blue and yellow. For example children in the nursery made choices from red, blue, green and yellow paint to decorate their paper fish and knew which colours they had not yet used. The higher attaining children know a range of simple two-dimensional shapes and can name them. By the age of five, children's mathematical skills and understanding are developing well and they have a secure understanding of ordering numbers and how written numbers represent objects.

71 The nursery and reception staff plan well together to provide the children with a range of experiences that will enable them to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of the world about them. Many children who will go on to join the reception class have had a limited range of experiences before starting school and they learn quickly through the many first-hand experiences provided by staff. These activities are a sound foundation for the children's future work in science, design and technology, history and geography. They practise skills using computers, listening centres and tape recorders to support their learning. Children in the reception class have grown sunflowers and know that plants need light, air and food if they are to survive. They have used their numeracy skills well to measure their flowers and to record the number of centimetres that they grow in a week. In their topic on 'sound' the children in the reception class learned about the ways in which sounds are made with different percussion instruments and could identify methods such as shaking, banging, plucking or scraping the instruments. The teacher's good links to music enable the children to investigate how they make sounds with their voices. In a good practical activity the children placed their hands on their faces and necks and felt vibration caused by their singing. By the end of the session they were aware that sound travels and they could create different levels of sound using instruments and voices. By the age of five many attain sound standards for their age in early scientific concepts.

72 Children have opportunities to use computers and show sound control as they use the mouse to manipulate cursors and move pictures on the screen. Staff ensure that programs reinforce basic skills in literacy, numeracy and pattern or picture making. In the nursery, children are well supported by adults and learn to use a mouse to move cursors to indicate the colours they want to create the picture of a 'bug'. They make choices of colours and click on features such as eyes, mouth and wings to colour their chosen creature. They are gaining a sound understanding of the relationship between the mouse, cursors, keys and what they can see on the screen. In the reception class, many children use computers confidently and build on their experiences from out of school. They worked well in pairs to use a word processing program to create a list of things to take on a picnic.

73 The children attain standards in creative development that are at the level expected for children of this age and a few children achieve well. They are enthusiastic and keen to take part in all activities. In art activities, they explore colour and texture using a range of materials to create pictures, collages, prints and patterns. In the nursery staff ensure that creative activities are available on a daily basis and children have free access to paint, paper and collage materials at all times. In a very well planned and resourced activity, children were well supported as they dripped paint onto paper that had

been coated with sugar water and watched in amazement as the colours spread and merged to create colourful patterns on their drawings of fish. Others learned well and were supported well as they chose shells and seaweed to create their own collages of seascapes. In the reception class children have made and painted very effective giant sunflowers and created a lively collage of 'The Three Little Pigs'. The staff carefully mount the children's work and displays in the class bases are of good quality. They represent a wide range of areas of learning and promote the children's self-esteem.

74 Children in the nursery have frequent opportunities to create three-dimensional models in 'junk' modelling materials. They made good choices of cardboard boxes, tubes and other materials to make their own model of boats, lorries, planes and cars as part of their topic on transport. They explore and use malleable materials such as play dough to experiment with texture. Many children competently use a variety of techniques such as cutting, folding and sticking paper, fabrics, shells and seaweed. In the reception class the children worked on a topic on 'houses and homes' and created imaginative designs of different types of building using Lego, card, wood and have used straw to thatch their cottages. Children regularly experience musical activities; they memorise counting and action songs and learn to sing in tune. The staff demonstrate well the actions and movements and this encourages the children to join in. In one session the teacher made effective links with the topic of 'sound' in science as children made different sounds with a range of materials and percussion instruments. They were amazed to find that fewer pieces of spaghetti in a plastic cylinder create a louder shaker than one with many pieces.

75 The children in the nursery develop confidence and control of the way they move through opportunities for outdoor play. They use a range of balls and hoops, climb and travel across the climbing frame and confidently use the slide. During their physical education lessons the staff effectively reinforce the children's confidence in using space. The specialist support staff ensure that children who have special educational needs are encouraged to take a full part in the activities and to achieve success. Many children are developing sound hand/eye co-ordination and learn to handle tools and equipment safely. For example, they use their manipulative skills in practical situations to make models using construction kits, shape wood with tools, paint with different sized brushes and cut and paste to create collages.

76 Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good and sometimes very good; this enables children to make substantial gains in their knowledge and skills and supports their achievement. All staff have a good awareness of the learning needs of young children. Staff know the children well and make careful assessments of their progress. They use the information gained from these assessments effectively to match work to what the children already know and to provide extra support for those who need it. Relationships with the children are very good; staff provide a high level of care and support and this promotes the children's very good attitudes to learning. The children enjoy their activities and respond well to adults; many are keen to ask and answer questions. They work well together in pairs and small groups and sustain concentration within activities. The children's behaviour is mainly very good. The children are secure, confident and well settled into school routines; they move confidently about their classrooms and the wider areas of the hall and playground.

77 Resources are deployed and managed well to provide opportunities for children to take responsibility for getting out and returning their own equipment. The teachers establish good links with parents through a well-planned induction program that enables children to visit classes before they start nursery or move into the reception class. Useful written guidance helps parents to prepare their children for school. The provision for children under five is managed well and the co-ordinator works well with her colleagues and provides a clear direction for the organisation and development of the children's learning.

ENGLISH

78 Pupils are making good progress in all the classes. Standards are quickly rising after a dip in reading last year. Reading standards are close to those of schools like New Brancepeth, but below those of the national average. Writing standards are better than those in similar schools and close to those in the national average. Standards of speech are also lower than the national average. Children have low speaking skills when they come into the nursery. So they take longer to pick up new words, and skills in speaking, reading and writing and therefore standards in speech and reading are lower than in most primary schools by the end of Year 2.

79 Nearly all reach the reading and writing standards expected for seven-year-olds by the end of this year. However, no pupils attain at the higher levels and this keeps the school's performance below national averages. Writing standards have improved because teachers are very good at developing pupils' early writing skills. Reading and writing standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Girls do a bit better than boys, as the national picture. Pupils with special educational needs make good and occasionally very good progress. This is because they get very good one-to-one support. As a result most reach the targets identified in the individual learning plans. Standards in both reading and writing are rising because of the recent National Literacy Strategy.

80 Results in the 1999 national tests showed lower standards than those in current work in Year 2 pupils' files, books and lessons. This reflects the improvements brought about in the last year by better literacy teaching. In these tests, reading standards were well below and writing standards were below the national averages. The reading and writing standards have fluctuated in the years 1996 – 1999 but standards are improving in both subjects.

81 Standards by the end of Year 6 are as good as those in most primary schools. They are well above the standards of similar schools. They are close to those reported at the last inspection. The reason for pupils' good achievements is good quality English teaching. For example, teachers knew that pupils needed to read more widely and deeply so they made sure there was a suitable range of literature by the age of 11, two fifths of the pupils achieved reading standards similar to those of thirteen-year-olds this year.

82 The 1999 national test results tell the same story. Standards have gone up over the last three years even though there was a big dip in 1998. This reflects the small numbers taking the tests and the fluctuations in numbers year on year. Standards are in line with the national trend. Girls did much better than boys in this period. However, once teachers spotted this trend they made sure boys kept improving their achievement in reading. This year boys did just as well as girls.

83 Pupils make steady progress in speaking and listening. This is because teachers listen very carefully to what they say and often get them to say more. As a result, by the end of Year 2, pupils speak out to say what they notice, feel, think and remember. However they often use small numbers of words and ideas, and do not always speak clearly.

84 By the end of Year 6 nearly all pupils speak clearly and confidently. They match their words to the situation and the people they are speaking to. For example, Year 6 pupils described their geography work clearly to a visitor. They also had thoughtful class discussions on topics such as uniform.

85 Pupils' achievement in reading is sound. Teachers make sure they learn letter sounds, shapes and patterns thoroughly in their first four years. By the age of seven nearly all pupils read their scheme books by themselves. They work out how to tackle new words but their understanding of what words and sentences mean often lags behind. Reading sometimes lacks liveliness and expression. By the age of seven pupils use their reading skills in other subjects. For example, they read from worksheets and computer programs.

86 By the age of 11 most pupils read regularly by themselves for enjoyment. This results in their use of a good range of words in writing. They now also learn through reading in most subjects. For example they find facts from the Internet or CD-ROMs. Most pupils now read whole novels such as 'Tom's Midnight Garden'. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils achieve sound standards in writing for their ages. However, standards of neatness and punctuation are not high enough. Pupils have the expected skills in making and developing sentences. They write in a good range of forms and for different purposes. Year 6 pupils write notes for debates, reviews of their reading, exciting stories and poems about hunting lions. They choose words well, for example to explain, persuade, amuse and scare. However, their presentation and setting out of work is often poor and much of the work is rushed or unfinished. Pupils make gains in their learning in Key Stage 1 and Year 2 pupils write about books they are reading and re-tell Bible stories and parables. They write lists and labels to record learning in science, design and technology and geography. At both key stages writing skills develop well in religious education and history. Lower attaining pupils at both key stages write clearly but slowly. As a result they do not always finish their work, so there are gaps in learning in some subjects.

87 The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good in a fifth of lessons. In the very good lessons teachers respond well to the pupils' individual needs and monitor their learning closely. Pupils are very keen to share their ideas and learning is quick as a result. Teachers meet the learning needs of pupils of different ages and abilities. For example, pupils in the reception and Year 1 class worked very well together to make a book about their outing. Although they were tired after a 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' the previous day, they sorted words and pictures carefully to make pages of a big book about the trip.

88 Good relationships support the good quality of teaching and learning in most lessons. Teachers check pupils' progress carefully particularly in reading. This ensures that all pupils keep up their progress. Teachers also have good knowledge of children's books and all the steps of language development. Good quality books and equipment keep pupils interested. Teachers lead conversations well, involving the whole class in listening, thinking and speaking. Lessons have a good pace and activities are well timed to keep pupils busy. At the end of lessons teachers enable the class to discuss what they have done in the session and pupils share their new achievements and understanding with the class. Where marking is effective it provides guidance to pupils on how to improve their work but this is not consistent in all classes.

89 Although teaching is always sound, it is less effective in a few lessons when teachers talk too much, and pupils too little. In these lessons teachers miss opportunities to improve pupils' expression during work in the first half of the literacy lessons. For example, pupils do not get enough short sessions to practise reading aloud with the teacher.

90 The co-ordinator manages well the development of English. She assesses progress and effectively supports and guides other staff. As a result the school makes good use of the new national guidance for teaching reading and writing. Teachers have bought and made resources that match needs they identify in pupils' learning. The school is now in a strong position to continue improving standards in English.

MATHEMATICS

91 By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment is in line with what is expected of pupils aged seven. In the national assessments for seven year olds in 1999 the pupils' results in mathematics were well below the national average. When compared to similar schools, the results in 1999 were also well below the average. The current standards show a marked improvement when compared to recent years.

92 By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is in line with what is expected of pupils aged 11. In the national assessments for 11 year olds in 1999 the pupils' results were below the national average but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. The current standards maintain the improvement made in the previous year.

93 The improvement in standards is achieved through the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, the extra support given to certain pupils and the good quality of teaching. This has resulted in increasing the pupils' motivation and enthusiasm for mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs meet the targets set out in their individual education plans. They make good progress when they are given additional support in classrooms or when working in small groups on structured learning programmes with a specialist teacher. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory and are improving due to the recent emphasis on certain aspects of mathematics such as mental arithmetic, number work and problem solving. Further additional support is provided by the opportunities taken in other subjects, such as science, geography and information technology to promote number skills and data handling.

94 Progress throughout Key Stage 1 is good. Younger pupils are very confident at counting to twenty. They recognise and use numbers, write them down successfully and participate in mathematical games that reinforce their basic numeracy skills. These pupils have a good mathematical language and are able to work out how many more are needed to reach a number and explain the strategy they used to arrive at the answer. By the end of Year 1 the majority of pupils can sort, count, match, identify, form and sequence numbers. They can count up to 100, add and subtract numbers to 20 and are confident at working out problems mentally; for example pupils know that the cost of 7 items at 5p each is 35p. By Year 2 they have a good understanding of place value, they are able to repeat patterns for sequencing numbers and are aware of addition and subtraction patterns. Pupils are competent in mental arithmetic and number work. Pupils have a good understanding of the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes; for example pupils know that a solid square is a cube and a solid triangle is a pyramid. Pupils are confident when using the fractions $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$. There are many opportunities for pupils to carry out mathematical investigations and use and apply their mathematical understanding in a variety of contexts. Their knowledge and understanding of time and money is sound; for example they were able to add a number of coins and work out the change from up to one pound. Pupils have good opportunities to use information technology to supplement their mathematical skills.

95 At Key Stage 2 pupils build upon their very firm foundations and further develop their skills in using and applying mathematics. Pupils' mathematical reasoning is well developed, particularly at the end of the key stage and the good progress is maintained. Pupils have good recall of multiplication facts and can make complex mental calculations involving several operations. The school is promoting well the skills and understanding of measurement of length, mass and capacity and pupils are encouraged to apply these skills in their work. Year 5 and 6 pupils understand the relationship between fractions and decimals and have a very secure grasp of place value. Pupils are able to make accurate calculations using a range of methods. Pupils have a good understanding of the properties of a variety of angles such as right angles, acute, obtuse and reflex angles. A particular strength of Key Stage 2 is the pupils' use of numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example Year 6 pupils represented their findings from a science experiment making effective use of bar graphs.

96 The quality of teaching is mainly good, with a few lessons where it is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of different pupils' abilities and use this to plan activities and tasks that are at the right level for pupils. Very good teaching is seen when different work is set for different groups, expectations are high and time is given at the end of the lesson to check that pupils understand their learning. They are well motivated to learn and many demonstrate good levels of concentration. Good lessons have purposeful tasks, are taught at a brisk pace and involve opportunities for pupils to solve problems. In these lessons teachers captivate pupils' attention with their own enthusiasm and provide opportunities for pupils to reach their own conclusions. Pupils have positive responses and attitudes in class and participate willingly in discussions and practical work. They are able to work collaboratively and respond well when faced with challenging tasks. Pupils have the ability to work independently and enjoy investigative tasks and handle apparatus and equipment sensibly.

97 The curriculum co-ordinator provides good leadership and management. There is a detailed policy that explains what will be taught and when, this enables staff to provide experiences in a sequence that builds upon the pupils' previous work. Thorough arrangements are in place to assess and record pupils' progress and the monitoring and evaluation of the mathematics curriculum are improving. There is a systematic analysis of tests and assessments of seven and 11 year olds and this is used well to help with the planning. However the school could further the improvements in mathematics by having higher expectations of the presentation of work and setting and monitoring individual targets for pupils to improve. There is a good level of resources to support learning in mathematics.

SCIENCE

98 The school's performance in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 was well below the national average for pupils aged 11. Their attainment was below the average of similar schools. The school's levels suffer because too few pupils attain at the higher levels in tests. These results are below those reported in the last inspection. This is partly due to the fact that the school's numbers change year on year and the size of the cohort of Year 6 pupils is often small. The school admits between 10 and 20 per cent of pupils from transient families and has above average numbers of pupils with special educational needs. These factors also have a negative effect on standards year on year. The school sets realistic targets for improvement for pupils of and has identified science as a key priority for improvement and has put in place a useful and comprehensive programme to improve standards, particularly in investigative work. Standards follow the national upward trend but, due to the low numbers of higher attainers, the school's performance is low. Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average but matched the attainment in similar schools. There are few pupils who attain the higher levels by the age of seven.

99 Standards in current work are similar to the end of key stage results for pupils aged seven. Many pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in their learning but attainment on entry is often well below average for many children and by the end of Year 2 many attain standards that are still below expectations for their age. In the reception and Year 1 class, they begin to develop their investigative skills through a topic on sound. They used percussion instruments and discovered that sounds can be produced by striking, shaking and plucking and understood that, like the instruments, the human voice can produce a range of high, low and soft sounds. They placed their hands on their faces and necks to feel the vibration as they made different sounds. Few pupils understood the link between the sound and the vibration in the muscles used as they sang.

100 In Year 2, pupils built on their observations of caterpillars bred in the classroom to record the life cycle of a butterfly. Most could name the stages of development from egg to butterfly and drew and labelled these in the segments of a divided circle of paper to make a wheel of information. The

setting out of work was often muddled and written work was rushed. Although pupils could recall what they had seen and knew terminology such as chrysalis, few were able to produce work at the level expected for their age. Pupils have learned about push and pull forces through practical experiments and know which foods contribute to a healthy diet. They have looked at the way materials change when heat is applied and relate this to changes as food is cooked. Most pupils know that plants need water, light, air and food to grow and can predict accurately what might happen to a plant if denied any of these. Pupils are beginning to apply skills learned in numeracy to set out their findings in simple bar graphs. For example, they tested and made a graph to show the impact made by different sizes of ramp on the speed of their toy cars and lorries. Literacy skills have little impact on the quality of written work and pupils do not write up their investigations to show what they did and found out. The requirements of the National Curriculum have been covered but pupils have produced only a limited amount of work throughout the year. The school has recently adopted recent national guidance and this is beginning to provide a sound framework for teaching and learning and is enabling the school to raise pupils' achievement.

101 Year 3 pupils are taught in a mixed Year 2/3 class and are beginning to use computers to support their work and grew tomato plants in different habitats. They kept some plants inside near a heater and others outside. In a well-taught lesson pupils developed their understanding of the need for a fair test and how to make it fair. They decided to monitor the outside temperature using a sensor linked to the computer and were able to check changes during the day and print out their findings at the end. They kept a careful, manual check on inside temperatures using a thermometer. The well-timed intervention by the teacher ensured that they knew what they were doing and enabled them to make good progress in their learning. Many pupils made sensible predictions about the differences and possible impact of the temperatures and had the confidence to explain their ideas even if they were proved incorrect.

102 The newly adopted national guidance has not yet had sufficient effect on planning the curriculum or on pupils' achievements further up Key Stage 2. In the Year 4/5 class, pupils are beginning to find out about and record simple food chains starting from a green plant. In a well-planned and resourced lesson most pupils labelled the plant as the producer and identified consumers as creatures that eat the plant and others that then eat the first consumer. Pupils responded well in the oral session although answers were muddled. For example, when talking about different habitats and insects and animals that might be out in a sunny area a few pupils suggested tropical birds and animals. Pupils drew simple food chains but only a few pupils applied themselves to labelling them correctly or to writing about their findings. By the age of 11 pupils' attainment is often well below the levels expected for this age group. They know which materials make the best insulators and which conduct heat, can produce simple electrical circuits and investigate the effect of adding extra bulbs and switches. By the end of the key stage, pupils can plan an investigation and have planned, made and tested their own torches. There is too little work of this type and pupils have planned and carried out few investigations. They enjoy discussion but are less inclined to settle down to recording tasks. For example, in a well-prepared lesson pupils in Year 6 joined eagerly in a discussion about conservation before making a poster to show some aspect of the theme 'what man is doing to the world'. The teacher had resourced the lesson well with pictures, magazines and some of her own books. The pupils volunteered possible ideas for their posters and talked about global warming, the destruction of the rainforests, over-fishing and pollution. However, much of the discussion was superficial and only a few pupils produced effective ideas for their posters. These were not finished in the lessons and the work, particularly the text, was not carefully planned or set out.

103 The amount of work produced during the past year is unsatisfactory and much of it is rushed and careless. For example, there is only a limited amount of work in Year 6 files and it is often messy, poorly presented and unfinished. Pupils do not set out experiments to show the stages of the investigation and what they have used, observed and found out. More effective work was done when

pupils worked in pairs to make their own booklets linked to environmental science. They produced some careful work on topics such as 'bees' and 'spiders' and used computers to generate pictures and text. This did not have an impact on their regular work in science. Pupils' attainment in science is not as good as in the other core subjects of English and mathematics. This reflects the strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy and the time given to science has not always been sufficient. For example, during this half term science sessions in Years 5/6 were lost through other events in the school.

104 The quality of teaching is sound and sometimes good throughout the school. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. At Key Stage 1, they are responding well to implementing the recent national guidance adopted by the school as a framework for teaching and learning. Staff are committed to improving standards through the school's planned priority to promote pupils' interest and achievement in science through a greater focus on investigative approaches. This has been trailed with pupils who have special educational needs and has improved their progress. Teachers respond positively to pupils' suggestions, encourage pupils to develop enquiry skills through their scientific studies and teach pupils to observe carefully. Pupils are well managed and this ensures that they respond well in lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good; this sets a good example and pupils work well together in pairs and groups. Teachers encourage pupils' personal development through positive feedback that supports their self-esteem. This feedback is not consistently used in the marking of work to enable pupils to improve their skills. Pupils learn to take responsibility and take care of scientific equipment.

105 Planning is improving in Key Stage 1 due to the framework provided by recent national guidance. Teachers' planning for this key stage often identifies the skills pupils will learn and how they will be taught. This is not so successful at Key Stage 2 where the new guidance has not yet been adopted and staff still use existing, less useful materials to plan lessons. Teachers assess pupils' progress at the end of each topic and keep samples of work in order to identify and deal with gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils' recording of what they have learned is superficial and reflects too low an expectation by teachers. There is little advanced work to challenge the higher attainers and written work does not reflect the depth needed for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. There are some opportunities for pupils to apply skills they have learned in information technology, numeracy and literacy to their work in science but these have little effect on the standards of finished work.

106 The co-ordinator provides sound leadership of the subject. She provides satisfactory support to colleagues and has worked with them to trial new national guidance to support teaching and learning at Key Stage 1. The trend in the results of national tests is known and the school has analysed the reasons why the results are well below average and below those of similar schools. As a result the school appreciates that its focus on literacy and numeracy has resulted in little evaluation of work in science and have put in place plans for improving work in science in the next school year. These are clearly identified in the school development plan and are supported by a clear framework for improvement.

ART

107 No lessons were seen during the inspection but it is evident from teachers' planning, displays of pupils' work and discussion with pupils that pupils make good progress in their learning as they move through both key stages. By the time they are seven pupils have sound skills in art. They know their colours and how to use different shades within the same colour to meet their purpose. They know about the impact of strong colours and pupils in Year 1 painted giant sunflowers and used shades of yellow, deep gold and orange to give depth to their flowers. Following a walk in the village they made a colourful three-dimensional collage of the different types of houses they saw. Pupils in the Year 2/3 class worked with an artist from the Grounds Trust Project to make very effective masks of their own faces. These were very well made with the use of computer-generated enlargements of photographs of

each pupil's face. These were used to create moulds for the masks. The masks were linked to the theme of the mythical 'Green Man' and pupils mixed a very effective range of greens, blues and purples to create atmospheric effects. Pupils in this class learned about the work of artists such as Paul Klee and made good attempts to paint their own pictures in his style.

108 In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and develop a range of techniques and demonstrate sound skills. They know how striking the use of colour can be and demonstrated this in seascapes and landscapes in the style of Monet. They use shade well to give pictures tone and depth. Pupils are aware of repeated designs in materials and create their own patterns. They develop an eye for details and can produce careful and accurate still life pictures, for example, of plants and commonly used articles. They appreciate that art can bring alive other subjects, such as work linked to local history. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have worked well with an artist and worker in wrought iron to produce very effective designs for gates to be erected at the local village hall. Pupils created their designs using themes linked to the past and present way of life in the village. These were then put together to make the final design that resulted in a prototype of one gate prior the creation of the real thing. The designs showed pupils' command of a good range of media and an awareness of shape and scale.

109 Although no teaching was seen during the inspection it is evident from the good progress and effective work done that teaching is at least sound. Work is well planned and ensures that there is increasing challenge in the work as pupils move through the school. By the time pupils transfer to secondary school they have sound skills and produce imaginative work for their age.

110 The co-ordinator manages the subject well; she supports colleagues and advises on display. Although she has not visited other classes to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning, she scrutinises colleagues' planning. She advises teachers on the qualities of pupils' work so that samples of work showing progress can be kept to show the achievement of each pupil. The co-ordinator has also devised a useful, annual assessment task that involves every pupil in producing a drawing on the same theme. For example, pupils have drawn self-portraits or pictures of their home. These provide information about the ways pupils develop their drawing skills as they mature. Staff work hard to display work effectively around the school and this raises pupils' self-esteem.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

111 Two lessons in design and technology were seen during the inspection, one at the end of each key stage. Additional evidence was obtained through discussions with teachers and pupils, and scrutiny of teachers' planning and work on display. The good and sometimes very good teaching ensures that most pupils make good progress in their learning in design and technology. By the ages of seven and 11, pupils attain sound standards in their finished work. They understand the need to plan and select suitable materials for their purpose. They develop manipulative skills as they move through the key stages and making skills are often good. Pupils work well in groups and support each other. Those with special educational needs work well in paired and group activities with their friends; they take a full part and their progress is similar to the other pupils.

112 As part of their topic on homes, Year 1 pupils have walked around the village observing different kinds of houses. They carefully drew the houses and planned how they would make models of them. They made imaginative choices of materials to make walls and doors and made tiles for the roof or used straw to make their own thatch. The finished houses were well made and pupils were able to describe the process and give reasons for choices of materials. A few pupils used Lego to create their houses and made, evaluated and improved them as they worked. At the end of Key Stage 1, Year 2 pupils had responded well to the challenge of making a moving vehicle that could carry an animal and allow it to get on and off. They had planned and made a wide range of vehicles to carry their chosen

animal. For example, a few decided to make a horsebox, others made a tall vehicle for a giraffe. The teaching was good and the teacher's clear directions and high expectations of work and behaviour ensured that pupils thought about their designs and chose materials carefully to match their purpose. Her good subject knowledge ensured that the design and make process was fully understood and that pupils were aware of the need to evaluate and refine their work. This was evident as pupils checked their work against a useful evaluation sheet and initially decided that they would not make any changes. Many then realised that, in the excitement of making and decorating their vehicles, they had forgotten to devise a way to allow an animal to get in or out. They quickly amended their vehicles and tested them to check that they would move easily, making refinements to axles and wheels where they were needed.

113 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' work is often integrated carefully with work in mathematics, science, history and geography. In a very well taught lesson Year 5/6 pupils worked on a topic of shelters and had used books, a CD-ROM on the computer and accessed the Internet to find information about how people made different kinds of shelters in other times and places. For example, they looked at those made by North American Indians, homes made by Celtic peoples and timber framed Tudor houses. The investigation was very well planned by the teacher to ensure that the work had purpose and pupils were challenged to use what they had learned to design and make a shelter that could be used by children in the nursery. They worked well in pairs and groups to plan their designs and to choose materials to make a scale model. The teacher encouraged pupils to work together and they helped each other to begin to translate their smaller models into the full sized shelter. The teacher provided a good range of resources such as wood, cardboard, plastic piping, canvas and plastic sheeting. Pupils enjoyed the practical tasks of sawing piping to make a frame for their 'tent' or worked well to make dovetail joints to create a wooden frame. The teacher ensured that tools were used safely and, for example, ensured that goggles were worn when using a heat gun. Pupils demonstrated a secure grasp of the design and make process. They are supportive of each other when things were difficult. For example, joining pieces of pipe proved tricky as pupils tried to create a tent frame but by working together they solved the problem. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and enjoy this subject.

114 The co-ordinator provides a good lead and is aware that pupils enjoy and work well in this subject. She has ensured that links are made with other subjects so that staff can develop pupils' skills through a range of projects that support their learning. For example, pupils use literacy skills to find information and numeracy skills are reinforced through the need for careful measuring. The school has ensured that pupils understand the relevance of their work to real life situations and an engineer has worked with Key Stage 2 pupils to design and make their own bridges. These are of high quality and show a good understanding of the concept of fitness for purpose.

GEOGRAPHY

115 There were no geography lessons during the inspection. This is because the school plans and teaches geography every other term. So each term, pupils have either geography or history lessons.

116 Talks with Year 6 pupils showed that they remember key points of learning well, even after several months. For example, they explained how rivers were of different kinds. They knew how the local rivers Brownney, Deerness and Wear linked together and joined the North Sea. They understood how temperature, location, climate and environment related to each other. Pupils of all abilities recalled in detail how climate and environment governed the life of the Eskimo.

117 The school uses the latest national guidelines for geography. Pupils' books and files show that they use correct geographical words and questions. They develop sound skills in observation and the use of information from fieldwork. They know how to find geographical information from books, atlases, CD-ROMs and databases on the computer. There are useful links with history. Pupils in

Years 2 and 3 make good use of modern and Victorian Ordnance Survey maps to study their village and its surroundings. They see how the colliery and railway have disappeared.

118 The school has fully met key issue three for this subject from the last inspection by using good quality planning and topics which link well with pupils' interests and experience. Standards are at the levels expected for the age of pupils at the end of each key stage. The co-ordinator manages the subject well and ensures that colleagues are supported in their planning. For example, links are well planned with design and information technology to enable pupils to find information about the way people in other countries make shelters and then to make their own models.

HISTORY

119 By the end of both key stages pupils are working at a level that is expected for their age and making sound progress in the development of historical skills.

120 In Key Stage 1 pupils develop their understanding of the differences between the past and the present by comparing the characteristics of old and new toys and looking at old and new houses in the local community. Year 2 pupils have a sound knowledge of the lives of famous people from the past such as Florence Nightingale and can say why such people were important. They develop the skills of investigation by looking at photographs of New Brancepeth from the past and answer and formulate questions about the village.

121 By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are aware of how sources of evidence can inform them of the past; for example pupils in Years 5 and 6 use the Internet, books, photographs and objects to develop their knowledge of lifestyles in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Pupils deepen their understanding of these periods by interviewing parents, friends or grandparents as sources of evidence. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils have a sound knowledge about the periods in the past that they have studied and have acquired a satisfactory historical vocabulary. They have sound skills in organising, evaluating and presenting information derived from historical sources. Older pupils have carried out a study of the Greeks and wrote good imaginary accounts of the experiences of the first marathon runner.

122 Only two lessons of history were observed during the inspection but evidence from these lessons and from completed work shows that the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, are enthusiastic for the subject and make effective use of a number of resources such as books, photographs, objects, CD-ROMs and the local community. Pupils' responses are good in both key stages and the pupils are well motivated. They are able to concentrate well when varied and interesting tasks are set. Pupils readily enjoy the good opportunities to develop their investigative skills and participate willingly to discussions; for example when pupils in Years 5 and 6 were researching the details of famous events and people from the 1950s and the 1960s.

123 The curriculum is well planned over a three-year cycle to take account of the mixed age classes. There is a detailed history policy statement and scheme of work to ensure that pupils experience a range of history topics. The school has an effective means of assessing and recording the progress that pupils are making and the levels of achievement that they are reaching. The resources to support teaching are good and there is a range of objects to stimulate pupils' interests and support the curriculum. Good use is made of visits to museums and places of interest to develop pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

124 By the end of both key stages pupils' attainment in information technology is in line with levels expected of pupils aged seven and 11. In the past two years improvements have been good and

pupils are making good progress in using their skills to access information to support their work in a range of subject areas. For example pupils in the Year 5/6 class supported their work in design and technology by using computers to learn about the ways people in different times and places had built shelters.

125 In Key Stage 1 pupils have good keyboard skills and are confident in using the computer for word processing and accessing information. Pupils learn the basic skills of how to move the mouse, choose options on the screen and print their work. Year 1 pupils are familiar with simple reading, counting and matching programs that help them to improve their reading and number skills. Year 2 pupils can use insert graphics into text using the program, 'clip-art'. They are able to word process some of their writing and can access the Internet to acquire information about topics they are researching; for example when they were seeking further information about the author, Dick King-Smith.

126 In Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress as they consolidate the achievements of earlier years. In Years 5 and 6 there are a small number of pupils attaining above the national expectation. Pupils extend their skills in word processing and are able to store, retrieve and amend data, enter sequences of instructions and access information from CD-ROMs and the Internet; for example when Year 6 pupils were researching their history topic in famous events and people in the 1950s and 1960s. Pupils in Year 4 use a program to enter, save, edit and print a combination of text and pictures and used these skills effectively when producing their own newspaper. There are good opportunities for higher attaining pupils to gain experience of a range of information technologies and complete challenging tasks that enhance their progress; for example Year 5 and 6 pupils are able to use spreadsheets to enter information about the cost and value for money of a number of brands of soft drinks. Information technology skills are well used in the presentation of work and the combined use of different technologies in Years 6 and 5 reflect a high level of attainment; for example pupils took photographs of the pupils' sports day with a digital camera, loaded the photographs onto the computer, imported them into another program, saved and finally printed their work. Pupils are now using electronic mail and have been involved with video conferencing with pupils in local high and primary schools.

127 Information technology is taught as a discrete subject in Key Stage 2 and effectively supports most curriculum areas in both key stages. The small amount of direct teaching observed was good. Pupils were seen using computers confidently in many lessons. Teachers carefully plan opportunities to use information technology that enable pupils to have regular practice. Teachers give pupils appropriate access to computers, audio equipment, a digital camera, programmable toys and calculators; for example pupils in Years 5 and 6 use the digital camera for a number of projects. The pupils' attitudes to their work are good and they are able to work with commitment and enthusiasm. They are keen and thoroughly enjoy using the range of information technologies. They listen to instructions carefully, take care of the equipment and are eager to develop their skills. Teachers are enabling pupils to make increasingly effective use of CD-ROMs and the Internet when carrying out independent research on topic work. Pupils share resources and acquire good collaborative skills when working in pairs or groups. Pupils show considerable initiative and self-discipline when working with minimal supervision.

128 The information technology curriculum is well managed and meets National Curriculum requirements. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and is very committed and enthusiastic. There is a good policy statement and a detailed scheme of work. This ensures that teachers are aware of the skills that will be taught in each year and that pupils are provided with activities in an appropriate sequence that builds upon their previous learning. Pupils are given a wide range of experiences. Resources are good with each class having access to a number of computers. The school has recently improved its range of software, particularly integrated packages, that allow

pupils to use a word processor, spreadsheet and art package all within the same piece of software. The school has an effective means of recording the progress that pupils are making and the levels of attainment that they are reaching. Computers are regularly used to reinforce numeracy and literacy skills for pupils with special educational needs.

MUSIC

129 By the ages of seven and 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding of music are at the standards expected for their ages. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However their skill in singing by the time they leave is lower than in most primary schools. This is because the school does not hold regular singing practices. There is plenty of cheerful singing in the younger classes. After that each class just does a small amount of singing in weekly music lessons.

130 The school has ensured that the concerns of the previous report have been met by using a published scheme to provide a framework for teaching and learning. Pupils gain sound experiences of hearing good music and of saying what they notice and feel about it. They understand and follow sign notation, and compose simple percussion pieces. All pupils have the opportunity to learn recorder in two lunchtime groups. The school also supports tuition in tuned and untuned percussion. Small groups of pupils in Years 4 and 5 learn to play drums, glockenspiels and xylophones in this way.

131 The quality of teaching is satisfactory; staff have sound knowledge of the topics. They use the published scheme and tapes effectively and time activities well so that pupils get the most out of the weekly lesson. Ethnic Instruments from other ethnic groups such as Moroccan drums and Aboriginal rain-sticks hold pupils' interest and broaden cultural awareness in some lessons. Teachers give priority to pupils' enjoyment of musical experiences. Teaching is effective when pupils take part all the time either as listeners or performers. For example Year 4 pupils enjoyed composing percussion accompaniments in pairs using tapping, clapping and stamping sequences.

132 Teaching and learning were good in a lesson linked to science for pupils in reception and Year 1. Pupils joined in with interest as the teacher made percussion instruments. They predicted how different amounts and shapes of pasta in different containers would make different sounds. As a result listening was good. Pupils responded well to the teacher's enthusiasm and energy.

133 The co-ordinator has worked hard with staff to improve provision and standards since the last inspection. This has resulted in a sound framework for planning the curriculum and to ensure increasing challenge as pupils move through the key stages. Well-planned training has ensured that staff are more confident and subject expertise in sound.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

134 During the inspection it was possible to observe only one lesson, in Key Stage 2. However, from discussions with staff and pupils, the examination of documents and teachers' records it is clear that the physical education curriculum is broad and balanced and the areas of physical education are taught according to the season. Standards are sound and similar to those identified in the last inspection. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities that include netball, football for both boys and girls, rugby and rounders. These activities are very well attended and school teams compete successfully in tournaments and inter school events. The skills learned in these activities are used to improve performance in games lessons.

135 In the lesson seen, Year 4/5 pupils made good progress in their warm up as they worked in pairs to practise a variety of ways of throwing and catching. The teacher's subject expertise is very good and this ensured that the pupils were able to plan their own group activities. The lesson had good

pace and activities contained a good level of challenge as pupils worked well together to plan, test and improve a sequence of activities to improve their fitness. The teacher set high expectations of work and behaviour and managed the pupils very well. The pupils showed a clear understanding of what was expected and devised courses that included skipping, throwing, dodging through a 'slalom' of cones and using a hula-hoop. The pupils responded well as they tried the different group activities and were interested and enthusiastic because their classmates had set up the sequences. Pupils showed a good level of control and co-ordination as they worked and evaluated each activity. They learned well through good opportunities to watch each other's work and to improve their own performance. The lesson was particularly effective because the teacher enabled the pupils to take responsibility for planning and managing their activities.

136 The teachers' planning ensures that pupils have opportunities to watch each other's demonstrations, to evaluate what they see and to refine their own performance. They plan for a sound balance between direct teaching and opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. The school sets a high priority on pupils learning to swim. Pupils attend the local pool during their time in the Year 2/3 class. Any non-swimmers in Year 4, 5 and 6 also attend until they can swim. By the time the pupils transfer to secondary school, most achieve the National Curriculum requirement in swimming and many swim well. Pupils have a sound understanding of the effect of strenuous activity on their bodies and understand the need to warm up and cool down after exercise.

137 The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject and offers sound support to other teachers. She works well with colleagues to ensure a good range of extra-curricular activities. For example, outside agencies are used well to provide extra coaching in football and pupils play in the local leagues. There is a sound policy and the school uses written guidance from the local authority and is also evaluating recent national guidance. There are no opportunities for pupils to take part in outdoor physical activities such as orienteering. The school has a good range of resources and accommodation for physical activities is satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

138 By the end of both key stages, pupils' standard of attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils aged seven and 11. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity and other world religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism.

139 Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve good levels of knowledge and understanding in religious education in Key Stage 1. Their knowledge about Christianity and Bible stories is sound. They can describe the Christmas story, recognise the symbols related to Easter celebrations and can recall aspects of the life of St. Francis of Assisi. They are aware that Buddhists and Christians share similar values such as kindness and generosity. A particular strength of Year 2 pupils is the writing that they undertake to support their learning.

140 At Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress and build on their earlier learning. Pupils in Year 3 develop their understanding of religious values and beliefs by listening to parables, looking at religious books and handling objects special to Christianity and Judaism, such as candles, a cross and a Torah. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are able to compare the purpose of different confirmation ceremonies from the past with the present. They have a good knowledge of the places of worship and the key symbols of a range of religions including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills and thoughtful links are made between religions and the pupils' own daily lives.

141 Teaching in both key stages is good. Lessons are well planned and prepared and pay good attention to the objectives as set out in the Local Agreed Syllabus. Teachers use a good range of resources to make lessons interesting and tasks challenging. As a result the pupils are attentive, have positive attitudes and concentrate well in lessons. Teachers question pupils thoughtfully about the similarities and differences between Christianity and other world religions. This leads to pupils recognising and respecting individual differences. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 offer their own personal feelings and opinions, ask sensible questions and relate the issues raised to their own lives and experiences. Younger pupils share their feelings in a kind manner and are interested in caring for others.

142 Religious education is well organised, led and managed. This is reflected in the improvement in the careful attention given to the long term planning to ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Resources are enhanced by the objects loaned to the school that help pupils to gain a better understanding of the special features of different religions.