

ERRATUM

ALNWICK SOUTH FIRST SCHOOL

UNIQUE REFERENCE NUMBER: 122172

Dates of inspection: 14 - 17 May 2001

Correction to 'WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?' on page 18 of the main report.

The final minor issue and paragraph references should read:

- Improve the quality of presentation of science investigations.

(Paragraphs 22, 51, 58 and 98)

Eclipse (Education) Limited
Friday, 29 June 2001

INSPECTION REPORT

ALNWICK SOUTH FIRST SCHOOL

Alnwick

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122172

Head teacher: Mrs J E Smith

Reporting inspector: Mr R S Moseley
16886

Dates of inspection: 14 - 17 May 2001

Inspection number: 193231

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
Category	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Avenue Alnwick Northumberland
Postcode:	NE66 1UL
Telephone number:	01665 602267
Fax number:	01665 603413
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Farnsworth
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

OIN	Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16886	Mr R S Moseley	Registered inspector	Science	Characteristics of the school.
			History	The school's results and pupils' achievements.
			Geography	How well is the school led and managed?
			Equal opportunities	
11368	Mrs K Lee	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
29188	Mrs G Ulyatt	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage	How well are pupils taught?
			Religious education	
			Music	
			Art and design	
28037	Mrs P Smith	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
			English	
			Design and technology	
14991	Mr A Hardwicke	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Information and communication technology	
			Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

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

Tel: 0191 4872333

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	13
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	16
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Alnwick South First school is an average size school with 218 pupils and 52 part-time children in the nursery. There are 137 boys and 133 girls. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. This is a popular school and the numbers of pupils are rising steadily with 39 per cent of pupils living outside the catchment area. An average number of pupils, nine per cent, are registered as being entitled to free school meals. Fifteen per cent of pupils are registered as having special educational needs, which is slightly below average. Seven pupils have statements of special educational needs including one child in the nursery, which is above the national average. The school also accepts, voluntarily, a number of additional pupils with special educational needs from other schools. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school with many good and very good features. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in English and science, and attainment is above average in these subjects by the time they leave the school. In mathematics, they make very good progress and achieve very well and standards are well above average. The quality of teaching is mainly good with 31 per cent being very good or excellent. The school has developed a very good and challenging climate for learning. This ensures that pupils' attitudes to their work and their relationships are very good and they gain a great deal of confidence by the time they leave the school. The school is very well led and managed and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It provides a successful and challenging climate for learning and pupils develop a very good attitude to their work. This has resulted in high standards in English, science and history and very high standards in mathematics by the time pupils leave the school.
- Strong teaching helps pupils to learn effectively.
- The arrangement for the care of its pupils, including those with special educational needs and the provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is very good. This ensures pupils' relationships are very good and they develop a great deal of confidence.
- The school's links with its parents are very good and the contribution of the community to pupils' learning is outstanding.
- The head teacher, with the support of the deputy head teacher, assistant head teacher and governors, provides very good leadership and sets a clear educational direction for the school.

What could be improved

- Although standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory, the school needs to continue to improve staff expertise and develop the assessment of pupils' skills and the use of computers to support learning in a range of subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. It has overcome most of the weaknesses and has improved in a number of other ways. Teachers use the records they get from assessments to plan work matched to the pupils' abilities. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. Schemes of work have been developed for all subjects. Pupils in the mixed age classes receive appropriate challenge in all subjects. Standards in information and communication technology have improved, although the use of computers to support learning in a range of subjects is still underdeveloped.

In addition, the school has improved in a number of other ways. For example, pupils' progress is tracked very well as they move up through the school and this information is used to set individual targets. The provision for children under five in the Foundation Stage has improved considerably. Pupils make particularly good progress in the nursery. There are now excellent links with the community, which greatly enhances the curriculum that the pupils experience. The school has successfully introduced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The school has been particularly effective in improving its links with parents. Pupils' targets are shared with parents and a home/school agreement and reading partnership have been set up. The school is very well placed to maintain these and other improvements and has a very good capacity to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	B	B	C	C	Very High A* well above average A above average B Average C Below average D well below average E
Writing	A*	A	B	B	
Mathematics	A	A	A	A	

- Although the results in the National Curriculum tests were lower last year in reading and writing compared to the two previous years, owing to a higher proportion of average and lower attaining pupils. Nevertheless, most of the results since 1998 are above average or better.
- The teacher assessments in science for pupils aged seven, in 2000, indicate above average results.
- When the 2000 results are compared to similar schools, they indicate average results in reading, above average results in writing and well above average results in mathematics.
- Current pupils in Year 2 are above the expectation for their ages in reading, writing and in science and achieving well. Attainment is well above the expectation for their ages in mathematics and pupils are achieving very well.
- Current pupils in Year 4 in their last year before leaving the school, are reaching standards in English and science which are above those expected for their age and they are achieving well. In mathematics, they are reaching standards well above those expected for their ages and achieving very well.
- All these results indicate good or very good progress from an average attainment on entry to the nursery.
- Attainment in literacy is above average and in numeracy, well above average, by the time the pupils leave the school.
- Attainment in history is above expectations for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4.
- Attainment is in line with the national expectation in all other subjects.
- Religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4.
- The school is well placed to meet future targets and raise standards even higher.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are eager to learn. They are responsive and show very positive attitudes in all they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of most pupils in lessons and around the school is good. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships at all levels are very good and contribute effectively to pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Very good.

Pupils are proud of their school. They demonstrate very positive attitudes in all aspects of school life. They care for each other and respect each other's views. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, develop a great deal of confidence by the time they leave the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 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.

Seventy-four per cent of the teaching is good or better and 31 per cent is very good or excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection.

The strengths of the teaching are many. For example, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and they use a wide variety of ideas and strategies to motivate them. Lessons proceed at a good pace; teachers' assessment records of pupils' capabilities are very good and the use of these records to plan future work is very good. These strengths encourage pupils' intellectual, physical and creative effort, ensuring that lessons are productive and that pupils retain interest to the end.

Every opportunity is given to encourage pupils to become independent learners. For example, in history, pupils are encouraged to carry out their own research into books and documents. In science, they are asked to suggest ways of investigating and setting up experiments. This approach helps pupils to develop confidence in their own abilities.

Teaching support for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Tasks are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs to ensure that their progress is good.

Opportunities are missed, however, to encourage the use of computers to support learning in a range of subjects. For example, little use is made of computers in science to record the results of experiments. There is limited use of CD-ROMs to carry out research in history and geography and teachers' knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology is underdeveloped. The school is, however, aware of this and is undergoing training at present.

Throughout the school, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective. Both are skilfully planned to include various levels of work for pupils with different needs and abilities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum for children who are five and under in the Foundation Stage is also good. It is particularly effective in the nursery. Extra curricular activities are very good and these, together with the many educational visits out of school, enrich the curriculum very well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Many of the pupils have very good individual educational programmes. All pupils experience the full curriculum and are totally included in all aspects of school life.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils with English as a second language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is very good and good for moral development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good arrangements for caring for its pupils.

The procedures for child protection are very good. The school has very effective links with parents. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school and their contribution to children's learning at school and at home, are also very good. The parents' direct involvement in the homework arrangements is particularly effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Leadership by the head teacher is very good. She is very well supported by the deputy and the assistant head teacher. Curriculum co-ordinators are developing their roles well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They fulfil their responsibilities very well. The chair of the governors works very closely with the head teacher. His understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is very good and he has a clear picture of all future developments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The head teacher, staff and governors are fully aware of the school's performance and have a very clear idea of what they want to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are readily available and used very well. All money available to the school is used wisely and carefully.

The head teacher has been very effective in deciding the school's priorities. For example, improving the quality of teaching has been a priority since the last inspection. Monitoring of the teaching, the teachers' planning and a scrutiny of pupils' work has been effective. The adequacy of staffing to the demands of the curriculum is very good and the school has found money for two extra staff to ensure a lower pupil/teacher ratio. This is important, especially in view of the rising school population. Learning resources are broadly adequate, although the number and type of computers and the range of software are in need of further development. The school always applies the principal of getting best value in all it spends.

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 child likes the school. • Their child is making good progress. • The teaching is good. • They can approach the staff with any problems. • Their children are expected to work hard and do their best. • The school is well managed. • The school helps their children to become more mature and responsible. • Behaviour is good in the school. • Their child gets the right amount of work to do at home. • The school works closely with parents. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very small number of parents felt that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. • A very small number of parents felt that the school does not work closely with parents.

All views expressed by the parents were brought to the attention of the head teacher.

Inspectors' support the parents' very positive views about the school. They also judged that the extra curricular activities are very good, although most of these involve pupils in the upper school. A very few parents also felt that they were unclear about the criteria used to determine in which mixed age class their child would be placed. The school has, however, had a number of meetings to explain the criteria and will be publishing further information.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 In the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 1 in 2000, pupils' attainment in reading was slightly above average, in writing above average and in mathematics well above average. Teacher assessments in science indicate standards were above average. When the 2000 results are compared to similar schools, the results in reading were average, for writing above average and for mathematics, well above average. Apart from the average result in reading in 2000, all other results in the National Curriculum tests since 1998 have been above or well above average.

2 At the end of Key Stage 1 this year, pupils are achieving similar standards to last year in writing, mathematics and in science. In reading, the standards are higher than last year and are now above the national expectation for their ages. This improvement is partly due to improved procedures for the development of reading, which includes good support from parents through a home/school reading arrangement. Pupils are achieving well in reading, writing and in science and very well in mathematics.

3 In Year 4 pupils' attainment in English and science is above the national expectation for their ages and in mathematics well above the national expectation for their age. Pupils are achieving well in English and science and very well in mathematics.

4 The attainment of children entering the nursery is average. They make good progress and attainment is above average by the time they enter Year 1. The improvements in provision for pupils age five and under in the Foundation Stage and the improvements in the quality of teaching throughout the school have not yet had time to produce even higher results at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time the pupils leave the school at the age of nine.

5 In English, standards in speaking and listening are good across the whole school. This is a strong feature of the subject. In reading, pupils use a range of techniques well to tackle unknown words. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy reading. Most pupils read expressively, conveying the story well to the listener. In writing, punctuation and spelling is strong throughout the school. Pupils write well, for a wide variety of reasons, with expression in literacy lessons through well-planned opportunities. For example, one pupil in Year 4 wrote "the gloom and fog would have looked great in a film, but a bit scary in real life". Teachers sometimes encourage pupils to write at length in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 in a history topic, write successfully and sensitively and at length about the plight of refugees. However, these types of links are underdeveloped and extended writing is limited in many subjects across the curriculum. Standards in literacy are above national expectations throughout the school.

6 In mathematics, pupils try different approaches when solving problems and in some cases, develop their own strategies for problem-solving. All pupils demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm in basic number operations and by the time pupils leave the school, their standards in number work is well above the national expectation for their ages. For example, they use a wide range of mental arithmetic with addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. In solving problems with or without a calculator, pupils check the accuracy of their results using their knowledge of the size and meaning of numbers. Standards in numeracy are well above the national expectation.

7 Throughout the school, pupils have a good knowledge of all the components of science. For example, in the work about materials and their properties they know that the specific properties make them suited to different purposes. By an investigation, well carried out, they can demonstrate the heat insulating properties of newspaper or felt wadding. Younger pupils can name a wide variety of materials seen and

used through the school building, such as metal, plastic, glass, fabric and wood and explain that glass and cling film are transparent. The use of a good scientific vocabulary is a strength of the subject.

8 In information and communication technology, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the age of nine, are in line with national expectations. Pupils in Key Stage 1 use the mouse and keyboard with confidence and are able to change the font or colour when writing stories or making pictures. Older pupils are increasing their skills and some are efficient at logging-on to the Internet. However, there are a number of weaknesses, which tend to inhibit the raising of standards further. For example, teacher confidence is only partially developed, as the training course for teachers is not yet complete; computer and software resources are limited and computers are underused to support learning across all the subjects of the National Curriculum.

9 In religious education, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and by age nine is in line with that expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils in Key Stage 1 study the parables of Jesus and compare these to their own actions. They know about Christianity and Judaism and other main religions of the world. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 know a number of basic facts about the Old Testament and they are clear about the meaning of Christian Festivals like Christmas and Easter.

10 In history, attainment is above the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. Pupils have a good knowledge of chronology and have a good understanding of people who lived in the past, such as the Vikings, the Romans, the Tudors and the Victorians. History skills are well taught and pupils are beginning to understand how to research the different sources of historical knowledge, such as through memory, books and old documents.

11 Within the remaining subjects, attainment is in line with national expectations for the age at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4.

12 Pupils with special educational needs make good and often very good progress when compared with their prior achievement. They make good progress within their individual and clearly defined programme of learning. Standards have been raised since the last inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13 Pupils show a very good attitude to their work and their life in school. This has continued to improve since the previous inspection and plays an important part in the good progress seen in school. Pupils want to learn and respond very well to the challenging ethos set by class teachers. In lessons they sustain concentration, are well motivated and eager to do their best. For example, in a history lesson, Year 4 pupils were totally involved in researching areas of life in Ancient Greece which have been passed down to modern times such as education and the theatre.

14 Behaviour is good in school and in the playground. There has been one necessary fixed term exclusion recently. The vast majority behave well and are not distracted from their work by the occasional restlessness of a small number of pupils. This is due to the very good support and class management of staff. While rare incidents of bullying do occur, pupils are confident that these are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Pupils show respect and sensitivity to the values and beliefs of others. For instance, in a religious education lesson, Year 1 and 2 pupils treated the Jewish ceremony of the Shabbat meal with reverence and sang the Shabbat hymn with feeling.

15 Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good. Pupils work well together in groups and appreciate each others' success. In a Year 2 numeracy lesson, there was a good spirit of friendly competition between groups of pupils counting forwards and backwards in fives and tens and spontaneous applause when someone did well.

16 The personal development of pupils is good. Opportunities for responsibility and independence are more limited in Key Stage 1 but increase as pupils get older. Pupils gain a great deal of confidence by the time they leave school. Year 3 pupils showed this in a class assembly about the island of St Lucia where they spoke their parts from memory and with good clear voices. Parents are rightly pleased with this feature of the school's work.

17 Attendance rates are very good. Most pupils attend school regularly and on time. Parents agree their children like to come to school. Pupils are so enthusiastic about school that Year 4 pupils spoke about being sad to leave and when asked if this was a really good school, Year 2 pupils replied with a resounding "Yes! – with a capital Y and an exclamation mark at the end".

18 Pupils with special educational needs mainly show positive attitudes to their everyday work. They respond positively to the praise and encouragement given by class teachers and support staff. They grow in confidence and independence. They work productively in groups with other children, readily accepting friendship and support. They willingly accept classroom responsibilities, and participate fully in all class activities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19 There have been good improvements to teaching since the previous inspection where it was judged to be at least satisfactory in most lessons. Many of the current teaching staff are relatively new to the school and teaching is now mainly good, with 74 per cent of lessons being good or better, 31 per cent being very good or excellent and 26 per cent being satisfactory. Teaching is systematic and thorough and its quality allows all pupils to make progress that is at least good overall. The school has recently devised a teaching and learning policy which supports staff well and gives them guidelines on planning and suggestions for using a variety of styles and strategies.

20 The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is predominantly good. Adults have made a concerted effort to plan the curriculum using the Early Learning Goals. Plans show clear learning objectives. Consequently, children are acquiring many new skills and developing their understanding. Adults question them effectively and this ensures that children think for themselves. Activities are well planned to match individual needs and offer children a very good range of learning opportunities. Adults set high expectations for good behaviour and place strong emphasis on children's listening skills. This has a very positive impact on pupils throughout the school.

21 Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well to all pupils in the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. All lessons are carefully prepared and teachers question children effectively to check for understanding. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to use the skills taught in literacy to support other curriculum areas. Homework is set and used well to consolidate learning. In mathematics, teachers challenge pupils well and achievement is high, especially in number work. Teachers clearly explain mathematical language, consequently pupils have a good understanding. Good cross-curricular links are made with other subject areas, such as in design and technology and mathematics, where pupils discuss 'pivots' and 'rotation'.

22 Planning of the curriculum is beginning to be effective. However, new schemes of work have been recently devised by the school in light of national initiatives and teachers have yet to review medium term and short-term lesson plans to match the new schemes of work. Overall, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects in the National Curriculum, with the exception of information and communication technology where they are still undergoing training. Also, teachers have not devised many strategies to use the computer to support learning in different subjects.

23 Teachers know pupils very well and make accurate ongoing assessments of their work showing a precise understanding of their ability. They use this knowledge effectively when planning future activities

for them. They take particular care when planning for pupils in mixed age classes, which results in all pupils making good progress. Relationships between pupils and all adults in the school are very good. They are built on mutual care and respect. Teachers use good and varied methods in their teaching. They praise pupils who are keen to learn and show pride in their work. They encourage pupils to have a mature and responsible attitude to their work and their behaviour is invariably very good. Consequently, pupils reward their teachers with intellectual, creative and physical effort. They work at a good pace on nearly all occasions because the work provided for them is challenging yet attainable. Pupils know what they are good at and where they need to improve.

24 Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. The pace of lessons is brisk and in English and mathematics in particular, the work is always very well matched to the ability of the pupils. Where, in other subjects, the work set is similar for most pupils in the class, those who do find it more difficult are given the support needed to make it achievable for them. At times, teachers sometimes do not pace the lessons accurately and they then do not have enough time at the end of the lesson. Teachers are always clear about what they want pupils to learn and they make a habit of sharing this with them at the beginning of each lesson. They review the learning objective at the end of the lesson to check for understanding.

25 The management of pupils is very good. Teachers are skilled at gaining and sustaining pupils' attention. They appreciate that pupils need to be attentive if they are to learn effectively and from the first day at school, pupils are encouraged to listen very carefully to their teachers and to other adults.

26 The school acknowledges the importance of classroom support staff. In most classes they are used well. Student teachers and visitors to the school also work well with pupils. However, in some classes, during whole class teaching, the deployment of support staff is not always effective, as they were not fully employed to support the teaching. Since the last inspection, additional literacy support is delivered by trained support staff to groups of pupils. This has had a good effect on individual pupil's achievements.

27 Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Teachers, together with the special educational needs co-ordinator, plan clearly defined individual targets in small meaningful learning steps to help pupils to achieve well. Teachers and support staff work effectively together using methods that enable pupils to learn effectively. Behaviour is very well managed. Teachers use appropriate learning resources to suit individual pupils.

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

28 The school provides a good curriculum for all pupils; this is an improvement over the previous inspection which found it to be satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements for teaching about the misuse of drugs, and sex education. Religious education conforms to the locally agreed syllabus. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities and the excellent contribution of the community to pupils' learning.

29 The school is in the process of adopting the government-recommended schemes of work, and teachers' long term planning now conforms to these. There is a need to continue this process, so that medium and short-term lesson plans fit more closely with the new approach.

30 The previous report made positive comments about pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Provision for these aspects has been sustained and built-upon, and is now very good overall.

31 The school has done well to preserve a rich curriculum while at the same time giving careful attention to new initiatives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These strategies have been very well implemented, and the adoption of an agreed approach to teaching and learning has ensured

that pupils of all abilities, and of different year-groups within the same class, achieve well.

32 Equality of opportunity and inclusiveness are at the heart of the school's ethos, and these principles are evident in the everyday life of the school. Girls and boys were equally involved, for instance in an assembly about St Lucia. Every child in the class, including those with special educational needs, had a part to play. The assembly was linked to class-work, and an awareness was shown of the similarities and differences between their own lives and those of people in St Lucia. The assembly was a valuable opportunity for pupils to share their sense of enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning.

33 Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Sex education and drugs awareness are given appropriate attention, the school's involvement in the 'Healthy Schools' initiative is having a positive effect, and the 'Life Education Bus' had a successful visit. The school is working with the local police on issues of safety. Staff training has been undertaken, and the school now aims to draw all these initiatives together into a cohesive programme.

34 The school provides a very good range of clubs and extra-curricular activities which together make a very good contribution to the life of the school. During the inspection the school choir, computer club, football coaching by staff from Sunderland Football Club, the 'Minimus' Latin club, as well as cookery, gardening and French clubs and many others all met, either at lunchtime or after school, and involved a large number of pupils. Visits are made, for instance to the Castle Garden Project, Alnwick Fair, and the Bondgate Gallery, and the school makes very good use of visitors, such as representatives from many local churches, an Armenian music group and 'Heartsong' from Uganda.

35 Very good attention is paid to pupils' spiritual development. Collective worship has a very good spiritual dimension and pupils are very attentive and thoughtful during this time. Spiritual understanding is fostered through quiet reflection and prayer, through the use of music in assemblies, and through the enjoyment of singing. Worship is of a broadly Christian nature, but opportunities are provided for pupils to explore the values and beliefs of other major faiths. Very good spiritual development is also fostered through the appreciation and awareness of art and design, music, poetry, nature and the local environment. There is time during a variety of lessons for pupils to wonder at the mysteries of life, for instance where Year 1 pupils were making a garden. They looked at the plants carefully and used the computer to produce pictures of the garden. Their sense of wonder as the new plants grew made a very good contribution to their spiritual development.

36 Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school's caring environment promotes a strong moral code, and teachers are very good role models, promoting clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour and for caring attitudes. From the earliest age pupils learn the difference between right and wrong, and teachers expect them to behave well and to respect others. Kindness, fairness and honesty are all well fostered, together with a strong emphasis on self-esteem and the development of personal independence. Personal and social education is an area which the school is developing, and circle time is being used increasingly to consider personal and moral issues.

37 The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' social development. Older pupils take responsibility for those in the younger classes, for instance in the way that they help supervise tables at lunchtime. Throughout the school, pupils hold various classroom responsibilities. In assemblies and concerts, pupils participate enthusiastically and confidently, working very well together. Consideration for others, both within school, and in society in general, is promoted through charitable and community work, such as the 'Northumbria in Bloom' project.

38 Pupils' cultural development is very good. Across the curriculum teachers incorporate work about other cultures and civilisations from the past and present. Pupils learn about food and music from different parts of the world, for instance, by tasting and comparing snacks from Britain and India, as Year 2 pupils did during the inspection. The music curriculum is enriched by visits from musicians from other

cultures, and by pupils singing and playing music from, for instance, the Caribbean. Participation in the annual Alnwick Fair gives pupils a very good understanding of the local culture. These experiences broaden pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures, as well as enriching the whole curriculum.

39 There are excellent links with the community. The school actively seeks out every opportunity to involve the community and be a part of it for the benefit of pupils' learning and experience. For instance, many pupils attend the football skills coaching by members of Sunderland A.F.C. and the school regularly takes part in Alnwick Fair. The very good relationship with the Middle school helps to ease the transfer of pupils into Year 5.

40 Pupils with special educational needs have equal access to the range of opportunities provided, including extra-curricular activities. These pupils are effectively supported within the classroom to enable them to make good progress in all curriculum areas. Pupils who are withdrawn from the classroom for additional literacy support do so during the literacy hour.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41 This is a very caring school which seeks to develop children to their full potential. The very good relationships promoted by class teachers and all adults encourage pupils to do their best. Pupils spoke of their teachers with affection and all agreed that they make it fun to learn. Pupils appreciate the weekly "Achievement Assembly" and the termly gold awards for the most improved pupil in each class.

42 The school's arrangements for monitoring the academic progress and personal development of pupils, which were judged satisfactory at the previous inspection, are now very good. Pupils now have individual targets, which are monitored and reviewed regularly and progress is shared with pupils and parents. The school involves older pupils very well in recognising their own progress. Year 4 pupils spoke confidently about "success criteria" and knowing what they "must, should and could" learn in a lesson. The regular "class focus" discussions between the head teacher, class teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator work very well for monitoring the progress and personal development. Attendance is monitored thoroughly as part of the class focus and the school stresses the importance of regular attendance to parents in the prospectus.

43 There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. These are successful as they result in good behaviour throughout the school. Pupils know the "Five Golden Rules". They are very confident in their knowledge of the rewards and sanctions in the behaviour policy and know whom to turn to if there is a problem with bullying. The school has now approved a very clear anti-bullying policy, which has a very useful checklist to help identify signs of suspected bullying.

44 The school has very good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety. Child protection procedures are very detailed and work well in identifying pupils who may be at risk. The head teacher makes sure that all adults in school are familiar with the policy and procedures. There are very good health and safety procedures with full records kept, for example of fire drills. The school takes very good care of its pupils, including the facility of the Tic Toc Club, which provides a very good level of supervision and care for pupils out of school hours.

45 Very good systems are in place throughout the school to assess pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' work continuously. Teachers know their pupils very well and monitor their personal development very sensitively. Social and personal elements are included in pupils' learning targets. Teachers mark pupils' work well. They make supportive comments, give praise and encouragement and frequently refer to individual targets. Very detailed regular assessments are made in English and mathematics, with assessments in other subjects made at the end of a topic. Religious education is the only subject where assessment procedures have yet to be put into place. At the end of every year, pupils' attainment is tested in English and mathematics using optional and compulsory standardised tests. Pupils'

achievements are recorded comprehensively.

46 The use made of assessment information is very effective. The information gained from detailed English and mathematics assessments are closely linked to individual pupils and fully inform future planning. This ensures that new learning matches pupils' ability well, regardless of which class they are in. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Initial assessments made when children enter nursery act as a good reference point from which progress is tracked. The information gathered from regular testing is very carefully analysed and realistic learning targets are set for all pupils at an individual level. The head teacher examines the results of the tests very carefully to identify any weaknesses in pupils' learning, and to meet the need for improvement. She monitors National test results thoroughly to pinpoint any weakness in curriculum provision and works with staff to plan for improvement.

47 Pupils with special educational needs are identified early, sometimes but not always through testing. Pupils are assessed regularly against their individual learning targets before new "small steps" learning targets are set. The head teacher, special educational needs co-ordinator and class teacher, meet regularly to discuss individual progress. The special educational needs co-ordinator is very well organised and keeps records meticulously.

48 Pupils' with special educational needs are very well provided for in this secure, caring and stimulating environment. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school makes very good use of the support from a variety of sources, including the speech therapist and educational psychologist. Support staff in the school are well briefed and work well as a team with the class teacher. For example, very effective teamwork in Year 3 between the support and class teacher benefits all of the pupils, as well as the pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 The school has a very good partnership with parents, which contributes to the happy atmosphere and the good progress seen in school. Most parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the welcome they receive. Parents are very pleased with the progress and standards achieved by their children. They agree that the teaching is good and that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. The inspection team agrees with all the positive views of parents. The school has continued to improve its links with parents, introducing more consultation with parents over decisions, such as the alteration of the timing of the school day.

50 The school provides very good information for parents, ranging from the notice boards outside every classroom with the latest information to the well-presented prospectus and annual reports of the governing body. The annual reports on pupils' progress are particularly useful, giving parents a clear picture of their children's attainment and what they need to do to improve further. The school involves parents well with pupils' individual targets which are to be the focus at school and home. A few parents feel less well informed of the school's criteria for placing pupils into different classes. To ensure that every parent is aware of the criteria, the governing body is including a statement in this year's annual report.

51 The school involves parents in a shared commitment to do the best for all pupils. This begins in the nursery where there are strong links between school and home. The home/school reading partnership is very effective to aid pupils' progress. The reading diaries show a good communication between home and school. The "Friends" group is active in raising funds in support of the school. The school also uses the expertise of parents well by using their skills in the class and for special topics. For example, as part of a project on materials, a parent brought his diving suit to show pupils and explain the way it is made.

52 The school works very closely with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Termly formal meetings are arranged to review pupils' progress. In addition, they are invited to parent and teacher

discussions twice a year with other parents. The school values the contribution of parents to meetings and to the learning support they give pupils at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53 Overall, the quality of leadership is very good. The head teacher displays very good qualities of leadership and management. She is very well supported by her deputy head teacher and assistant head teacher, all staff, governors and the school secretary. She has enabled all her staff, by her many personal skills, to develop their various roles in the school well. There is now a strong team spirit and an agreed sense of purpose. This is a strength of the school and is central to the school's drive for success and one of numerous reasons for the many improvements the school has made in recent years. The last report stated that the head teacher provided strong leadership, this is still the case. She provides a very clear vision and a distinct educational direction. This has resulted in the creation of a very effective school where educational standards in some important subjects are above average and pupils are given every opportunity to achieve well.

54 The head teacher effectively monitors the performance of teachers. There is an agreed timetable of observations of all staff, during which the head teacher makes judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. Feedback is provided and the outcome of observation is discussed. This monitoring has been effective in improving the quality of the teaching so that it is now a strength of the school, with almost three-quarters being good or better and almost one-third being very good or excellent. All national tests are carefully analysed. This has resulted in the setting of targets for improvements. All these targets have been achieved or exceeded.

55 Subject leadership is good and all support their subjects well. There are co-ordinators for all subjects and other areas, such as assessment. In some areas, there is still a considerable amount of development taking place. The co-ordinators for some subjects, for example science, history, design and technology and geography have developed new schemes of work to fit in with national developments. The teachers' short term lesson planning is therefore being reviewed and improved to link more closely the schemes of work. Co-ordinators examine teachers' planning and occasionally observe their colleagues teaching. All information is used carefully to identify strengths and weaknesses and to prepare an improvement plan for their subject, which is incorporated into the school development plan.

56 The governing body is very supportive and effective. The chair of governors is fully committed to the school. He is involved in the life of the school, is a regular visitor and often engages in professional dialogue with the head teacher. He is particularly effective in working on behalf of the school in the local community and gaining support for new projects and developments. He is fully aware of future developments and the accommodation problems that could arise from the increasing number of pupils in this popular school. A number of other governors visit the school and are involved in aspects of the curriculum. For example, support from the governors with responsibility for special educational needs, literacy and numeracy, is particularly effective. Most governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and all support the head teacher and the aims of the school very well. They have been involved in the setting of performance targets for the head teacher and the school's performance management arrangements are fully in place.

57 All the school's aims, values and its policies are implemented very effectively in the school. The yearly school development plan gives a very clear framework for action. It is evaluated regularly by the governors and the head teacher to ensure that it is being implemented as the year progresses. The leadership has developed a very good ethos in the school. This has resulted in the development of very positive attitudes to learning; pupils are enthusiastic about school and there are very good relationships. There is a commitment to equal opportunities for all. All pupils are included in every aspect of school life and all receive the same support, guidance and encouragement.

58 The school has sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and other staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. Procedures for Performance Management are in place. The caretaker and other cleaning staff make a valuable contribution to the working environment, and the school office operates efficiently. Support staff are generally well deployed and work well in partnership with teachers. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. Those for English, mathematics and design and technology are good, while computers for information and communication technology are insufficient and some are outdated. There is a shortage of books suitable for pupils with special educational needs, which can slow their progress at times.

59 The provision for special educational needs is very well managed. The co-ordinator is very effective. The designated governor plays an active role and has a good knowledge and understanding of the effectiveness of the provision. The regular monitoring of pupils' progress is a particularly strong and effective aspect of the provision. The school fully complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice.

60 The school secretary, by good financial planning and administration, supports educational developments and priorities very well. The quality of financial support through the head teacher, school secretary and chair of the governors financial committee is very good. They target money for special purposes very well. For example, the school has identified the need to keep the pupil/teacher ratio low in spite of the rising numbers of pupils and have found the money to provide extra staffing. This has been effective in not only supporting pupils with special educational needs but also allowing the formation of smaller groups in some of the mixed age classes where different work is thought appropriate. The school uses all the money at its disposal very well and is fully aware of the need to get the best value for its pupils. The management systems now in place have ensured many major improvements since the last inspection. The school has a very good capacity to remain effective and introduce further improvements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61 To maintain the quality of education and promote further development, the governing body, head teacher and staff should address the following issue:-

Continue to improve provision for the teaching of information and communication technology by:

- 1) Maintaining the programme of in-service training so that the confidence and subject knowledge of all teachers is brought to an appropriate level;
- 2) Replacing outdated and inadequate software and hardware as a matter of urgency;
- 3) Improve the scheme of work for information and communication technology to ensure the systematic development of pupils' skills;
- 4) Developing the use of aspects of information and communication technology as tools for learning in all subjects of the curriculum.
(Paragraphs 8, 22, 86, 94, 99, 108, 116, 118, 119, 120 and 121)

In addition to the key issues above, the governors should consider the following minor issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- Developing extended writing in a number of subjects.
 - Continue to match the teachers planning to the new schemes of work.
 - Increase the stock of books for supporting pupils with special educational needs.
 - Improve the quality of learning science investigations.
- (Paragraphs 22, 51, 58, 98 and 99)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	26	43	26	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 – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	218
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	38

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	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.09
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
	2000	18	15	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	18
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	31	29	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94% (95%)	88% (86%)	100% (99%)
	National	83% (82%)	84% (83%)	90% (87%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	18	17
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	31	33	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94% (95%)	100% (95%)	97% (100%)
	National	84% (82%)	88% (86%)	88% (87%)

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	178
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	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.7
Average class size	27.3

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	187.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	48.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.3
--------------------------------	------

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
----------------	-------------

	£
Total income	403,703
Total expenditure	409,616
Expenditure per pupil	1,518
Balance brought forward from previous year	26,326
Balance carried forward to next year	20,413

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	219
Number of questionnaires returned	86

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	30	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	49	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	58	7	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	65	10	0	4
The teaching is good.	53	45	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	48	7	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	41	5	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	50	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	35	50	5	6	5
The school is well led and managed.	38	50	5	3	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	52	6	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	41	11	2	11

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 has made considerable improvements for children who are five and under in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection, when much of the provision was satisfactory. Adults working with the children in both reception and nursery classes are planning well with clear, defined objectives. Assessments are detailed and effectively include all six areas of learning. Teachers working in both nursery and reception classes are new and provision is now good, with the quality of teaching ranging from sound to very good.

63 Children enter the nursery with average skills in speaking and listening, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development, when compared with children of similar age. Lesson observations and scrutiny of children's work show that by the time they enter Year 1, all children, including those with special educational needs, make at least good progress. The majority achieve well in all six areas of learning and some exceed the learning goals in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. A minority reach very high standards in mathematics.

64 The school admits children into the nursery for either a morning or afternoon session during the academic year in which they will be four years of age. If places are still available additional children are accepted, after Christmas and after Easter, following their third birthday. Therefore, some children who are born between September and December benefit from five terms in the nursery. The majority of children transfer to the reception class into the school to start full-time education at the beginning of the academic year in which they become five. At the time of the inspection there were 26 children attending the morning session and 26 attending the afternoon session. In reception classes, 29 children were in one reception class and 11 were in a class with Year 1 pupils. Children from the nursery visit the reception classes in the summer term before they are due to transfer and so they are familiar with their new class and teacher.

Personal, social and emotional development.

65 Children in both reception and nursery classes make good progress in personal, social and emotional development and achievement is good for all children. Adults have a good understanding of the early years curriculum and know that young children learn best through practical experiences. In the nursery, they provide a good 'hands-on' approach to learning, consequently all children are interested and motivated to learn. In the reception class children confidently speak out in front of the whole group. Adults throughout, praise children frequently and this helps them to build up their self-esteem. Well-planned activities and good adult support help children in reception classes develop very good concentration skills. This is particularly evident in mathematics sessions. Nursery children learn to nurture plants and seedlings as they take care of their own small garden outdoors. They handle mini-beasts, including snails, very gently and become quite excited when the dandelion plant produces seeds. Children in the nursery are encouraged by adults to show initiative and independence when selecting their own activities and resources are placed in easily accessible locations. However, there are limited opportunities for child-initiated activity in Reception classes and this prohibits children taking responsibility for their own learning.

66 Children are learning about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people. They find out about Christianity through stories about baby Jesus; nursery and reception children take part in a Nativity play and reception children regularly attend school assemblies and experience spirituality as they listen to a variety of stories about major faiths around the world. In the nursery they make dragon masks and in reception classes they match their birthday to the Chinese calendar. In this way children develop an understanding of differences between people. Very good relationships exist throughout. Adults are very good role models for the children. Consequently, children are quick to establish good relationships and

friendships with each other, sharing equipment and toys and playing harmoniously. Behaviour in the nursery is very good and in reception classes it is good overall. The majority of children manage their own hygiene and are learning to dress and undress themselves when playing in role or when getting ready for physical education.

67 Teaching and learning opportunities in this stage are very good overall. Teachers help children develop good self-esteem through appropriate praise and encouragement. However, reception teachers do not provide enough planned activities for children to select for themselves. Some children become restless at times when they have to sit for extended periods of time.

Communication, language and literacy.

68 In this area of learning all children make good progress and some children exceed the learning goals by the time they are ready to start Year 1. A minority reach high standards, particularly in reading skills. The promotion of speaking and listening skills is very strong and has a significant impact on children's learning throughout the school. In the nursery children learn rhymes and songs and listen well to stories. In reception they can easily express their ideas, using good, clear sentences. Adults encourage children to listen and respond to questions. For example, when listening to music, they ask children to explain how the music makes them feel. All adults encourage children to talk about their activities and explain what they are making when using materials and glue, for example. In this way children learn to talk to adults with increasing confidence. Adults make very good use of books to promote new vocabulary and the role-play scenarios change from time to time to encourage children to use many new words as they play. Adults in the nursery and reception classes effectively teach children all the skills needed for early reading; they teach them to identify letters and familiar words. The majority of children in reception classes are confident readers. They show clear recognition of most letter sounds and have a good sight vocabulary. Writing is well taught. Children in the nursery draw pictures to communicate their thoughts and ideas, the staff write their ideas for them and children are encouraged to write for themselves. In reception, children continue to make good progress and learn to write some words for themselves, for example they confidently write simple three letter words to match pictures. Adults in reception classes teach children how to form letters and their writing is clear. In the nursery, they learn to identify their own name.

69 The planning for communication, language and literacy is good throughout the Foundation Stage. Adults work closely with children in small groups and encourage them to express their ideas. They specifically target speaking and listening skills to increase children's understanding. Adults use assessments effectively to plan work for the children so that each child is given appropriate work.

Mathematical development.

70 This area of learning is particularly well taught. All children make good progress. By the end of reception, most children will have exceeded the early learning goals for mathematics. Number operation is taught in a particularly challenging way. For example, children routinely learn to count and in reception classes they count forwards and backwards, sometimes up to 50. Number stories and rhymes, are used effectively to help them learn how numbers work. They learn, for example, how one can be added on or taken away in practical ways. In the reception classes, children find the number between 46 and 48, using the hundred chart as support. By the time they are ready to move into Year 1, the majority successfully add and subtract numbers within ten or twenty and accurately record their work, using the correct symbols. Numbers are clearly displayed to support their learning in ways which are meaningful to the children, for example in the nursery, numbers are displayed with the appropriate number of mini-beasts. In reception classes, they are large and stand out well. Children learn to handle and discuss equipment of various shapes and sizes. They learn to copy and repeat simple patterns as they thread beads and record patterns of mini-beasts in the nursery. Children in reception classes understand and use appropriate vocabulary, as they learn to move their body forwards, sideways and backwards. They learn to identify

shapes, name them and talk about properties, for example, they know a rectangle has four sides. Planned activities help them to learn to use mathematics to solve problems in a practical way, such as the garden shop role-play. Children also work out different combinations of numbers, for example to reach seven or 10.

71 Teaching is good. Adults use assessments effectively to identify the learning needs of all children. As a result, challenging activities within mathematics are well planned and staff have high expectations.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

72 Children's progress and achievement in knowledge and understanding of the world is good and adults provide many interesting activities to develop children's understanding. Children have good opportunities to learn about living things. Nursery provision in this respect is excellent. There is a small nursery garden plot where children plant and nurture many vegetables. They grow seedlings indoors and can see plant root systems. They watch snails in their habitat and identify many mini-beasts from the garden. Children handle all creatures carefully and notice differences. Water and sand are readily available with suitable equipment and children are encouraged to question why things happen. Children learn the basic skills of designing and making models. In reception classes they make good models of their own home and models of Alnwick Castle. They learn to use recyclable materials, joining them together with glue and spreaders. Children use the computer and programs to support artistic work. Children have good opportunities to develop an idea of the passage of time when they talk about their news from home. In reception classes very good emphasis is given to learning about their local community and its buildings through interesting topic work on the market, shops and Alnwick castle. Children are learning about the wider world through planned activities. For example, they know about cultural events that occur throughout the year, such as May Day and Maypole dancing; they take part in activities to celebrate religious events such as Christmas and Easter. They have also become aware of Chinese New Year celebrations.

73 Teaching is good in this area of learning. Adults have a very enthusiastic approach to teaching children about the world in which they live. They make very good use of resources and spend time preparing very interesting activities which encourage children to be excited and motivated to learn. Displays throughout are inspiring and show how much staff value children's achievements.

Physical Development

74 Progress in physical development is good. Throughout the week children have access to a good range of apparatus. Nursery children use wheeled toys and learn to negotiate around others. Children in reception play with small skills apparatus during playtimes, for example balls and beanbags. Children run vigorously showing good body control and are developing an awareness of safety. Reception children use the school hall regularly and learn to balance and climb on the apparatus. However, children in the nursery do not have access to climbing apparatus, consequently their skills are less well developed. All children learn to move with imagination and control, during music and movement sessions. They learn about their body as teachers draw their attention to changes in body temperature after exercise. They know why it is important to wash their hands. Hand-to-eye co-ordination is effectively developed through the regular use of small skills apparatus. Children have access to a range of commercial construction equipment and can push and pull to effectively join pieces together. They use tools correctly when manipulating malleable materials, such as dough, and handle small items of class equipment well. They learn to carefully pour liquid or sand from one container to another without spilling any.

75 Teaching for children's physical development is good. Adults interact well with children and support their skill development. They teach children to control and handle tools correctly and this supports fine finger control. They make good use of the resources, however in the nursery, staff are waiting for

guidance in the use of climbing apparatus.

Creative Development

76 Children's achievements and progress in creative development are good. Adults encourage the children as they work and show how much they value their efforts by displaying their work in an inspiring way. Children work with a variety of media and learn to experiment with texture, shape, space and form. Displays and observations of their work show that children produce well-formed drawings and paintings and know how to mix colours to create good effects. They paint flowers for competitions, from direct observation. All children enjoy singing and they use musical instruments. In reception classes they listen to music from around the world and discuss their ideas. Most can clap to a steady beat. There are well-planned activities each day to encourage imaginative play and most children make up stories, as they play. All children are encouraged to express their feelings through creative dance. For example, an exciting session in the reception class encouraged children to dance and pretend to visit a scary castle. All children express their ideas and communicate their feelings well.

77 Teaching is good. Adults give good emphasis to all aspects of creative development. They provide a good range of opportunities with appropriate equipment and resources. Adults value children's efforts and help them develop their creativity through praise and encouragement. They display their work in an inspiring way.

ENGLISH

78 Standards in English are good. They have risen since the last inspection. Over the last few years there has been a fluctuation in standards, which the school has monitored closely. Standards have always been above the national average. This school has a shared commitment for improvement and extended the time for the teaching of English to allow pupils greater opportunity to extend their writing skills beyond the literacy hour. This is beginning to have an impact on writing standards, although there are still missed opportunities to develop writing at length in other subjects. Parents are very supportive and the successful home school partnership has a positive impact on reading standards.

79 Pupils make good progress across both key stages. Their achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school is good. Pupils with special educational needs make good and sometimes very good progress throughout the school because they are very well supported. Children now enter Year 1 above the level expected for the age group because of the current good provision in the Foundation Stage. This was not the case when the current Year 2 started the National Curriculum. Pupils achieve well because of the sustained high quality teaching and their very good attitudes to learning. In the national tests last year the school's results were close to the national average but standards this year have risen. Standards do fluctuate year by year because of the differing abilities of pupils. Good additional support has been effectively targeted to less successful pupils. The picture is an improving one. The current Year 1 pupils are making good or very good progress. Pupils in Key Stage 2 successfully build on to their prior achievements and by the time they leave the school at the age of nine they reach standards above the level expected for the age group. Pupils are present in this school for only two years of the key stage and this is insufficient time to push standards to an even higher level. A small minority of high achievers reach standards well above those expected for the age group.

80 In the national tests, girls outperformed boys in English. This trend follows a national pattern. The school has monitored this closely to ensure that both boys and girls have equal opportunity to make progress. Inspection evidence found no significant differences. The school has significantly more boys than girls on the special educational needs register.

81 Standards in speaking and listening are good across the whole school. This is a strong feature of the subject. Most pupils listen well because lessons are so interesting. They follow the clearly given

instructions precisely. They are keen to ask and answer questions. They confidently share their views and express their own ideas in front of an audience. Pupils speak clearly and audibly because they are encouraged to do so. Pupils in Year 3 for example, confidently shared their knowledge of St Lucia with the rest of the school and their parents. Most pupils use a good range of vocabulary. They use correct and specific terminology in lessons across the curriculum. For example, words such as “pivot” and “rotate” learned in numeracy and “transparent”, “rigid” and “flexible” learned in science are effectively absorbed into pupils’ basic vocabulary. Teachers seize every opportunity across all subject areas to introduce new words, and they constantly check that pupils understand their meaning.

82 Standards in reading are good. Pupils achieve well across both key stages. They use a range of techniques to tackle unknown words. Most pupils read the text quite fluently and confidently because books are well matched to their level of ability, with sufficient challenge to extend their learning. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy reading. Most pupils read expressively, conveying the story well to the listener. This is a direct result of the good teacher example set in the literacy hour, and the emphasis placed on the expressive quality of reading. Pupils readily understand what they have read. Younger pupils talk about the story confidently; they recall details and make simple predictions about what might happen next. Most discuss characters within the story to a simple level. Higher achieving pupils discuss books at length. They clearly state their reading preferences and discuss favourite authors. They understand stories at a more in-depth level, chuckling at the humour as they read. By the end of Year 2, all pupils know the difference between fiction and non-fiction and demonstrate a good understanding of how information can be found using contents and index pages. By the end of Year 4, pupils make good use of their well-developed reading skills to find information for themselves. Year 3 pupils successfully select key information from a text and reorganise it into note form. Pupils in Year 4 show an in-depth understanding of texts. Pupils read frequently both at home and at school across a range of texts. Parents and teachers successfully promote positive attitudes to literature.

83 Standards in writing are good. In last year’s national tests writing was above the national average and inspection evidence confirms this. Punctuation and spellings are accurate. Guided writing is taught well. Pupils successfully write for a wide variety of reasons in literacy lessons, through well-planned opportunities. The good vocabulary used by pupils enriches writing effectively. One Year 2 pupil created the scene outside a door by writing, “Maybe outside is a castle, dark, spooky and full of monsters and witches”. By Year 4, pupils writing has developed and matured, their stories are well crafted and vocabulary is very well chosen. For example, “his gaze riveted on the headmaster’s face.” and “the gloom and fog would have looked great in a film, but a bit scary in real life” are both high quality responses to the very good teaching.

84 Spelling standards are good. Spelling is systematically taught throughout the school and regularly tested. Pupils in Year 1 successfully gain confidence because they are encouraged to be “brave spellers”. Parents support pupils well with homework tasks. Handwriting is well and systematically taught throughout the school. Pupils take a pride in their work and by the time they reach Year 4, handwriting is fluent, neat, joined and legible.

85 English is taught well and often it is taught very well. Particularly effective teaching was seen in Key Stage 1. The Literacy Strategy has been successfully introduced since the last inspection and this has resulted in a consistent high quality approach to teaching. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. They know their pupils very well and employ the most appropriate methods to ensure lessons are stimulating, enjoyable and effective. Teachers successfully involve pupils in their own learning. All pupils have individual learning targets, and these are often referred to during lessons. At the beginning of lessons, teachers tell pupils what they are going to learn and, together, they check at the end of the lesson if they have been successful. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They all teach basic skills very well. Teachers satisfactorily link literacy to other curriculum areas. For example, Year 2 pupils write sensitive poems stimulated by Van Gogh’s paintings and Year 4 pupils write successfully and sensitively about the plight of refugees in a history topic.

86 Teachers use resources very well. They are well prepared for lessons. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and good learning gains are made. Support teachers are well briefed and as a result they give very good support to pupils. Teachers use computers to support learning throughout the school but, currently, opportunities are missed to fully exploit the wide range of opportunities that information and communication technology brings to the subject.

87 English is managed very well. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She monitors standards of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 but as yet does not monitor standards in Key Stage 2. The head teacher very effectively monitors pupils' progress and analyses information from standardised tests.

MATHEMATICS

88 Standards in mathematics are very high throughout the school and pupils achieve very well. In the most recent national tests the Key Stage 1, results were well above the national average, and well above average in comparison with similar schools. The previous report found standards to be in line with those found nationally, both at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4. Standards at the end of Year 4 are also very high, and pupils therefore sustain the very good progress made in Key Stage 1 in Years 3 and 4. The school has therefore made very good progress in raising standards since the last inspection. The reasons for this change are the improvements in teaching methods, the very thorough and successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, and teachers' positive and enthusiastic teaching of the subject.

89 In Year 1 pupils build on the solid foundations already established. The basis of their confidence and enthusiasm is the thorough teaching of basic number operations, which gives pupils confidence and enjoyment which are easily transferred to the other parts of the mathematics curriculum. In a Year 1 lesson on counting forward and back in ten's a very lively pace was maintained. The work was divided into groups so that different abilities were catered for, and the teacher assessed what the pupils knew and understood as the lesson progressed. The time was very well used and the teacher showed very good subject knowledge and made the lesson fun for everyone. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are able to try different approaches when solving problems and, in some cases, to develop their own strategies for problem-solving. In a Year 2 lesson on money problems, pupils decided which strategies to use when solving money problems. There was a very good working atmosphere and pupils were eager to do their best. Pupils were developing their problem-solving skills and were able to explain their methods using correct mathematical vocabulary. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good gains in learning, and achieve very well.

90 By Year 4, pupils continue to make good progress and all abilities achieve very well. These pupils are on track to achieve standards well above the national average by the end of the key stage. By this stage pupils have experienced a broad curriculum and have continued to develop their confidence. They are also able to work independently and show initiative in what they do. In a lesson on digital and analogue time Year 4 pupils showed an advanced knowledge of the language of mathematics and related and explained the use of time applied to everyday situations. Pupils worked very hard throughout the lesson, and showed enthusiastic and positive attitudes.

91 The school provides a curriculum for mathematics where all aspects are given appropriate coverage. Very good use is made of correct mathematical language, and this provides a very good contribution to basic literacy skills. Homework is well used, and provides a useful extension to many mathematics activities.

92 Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers generally have high expectations, manage their pupils well and make good use of time and resources. In a Year 2 lesson on money problems, the

teacher skilfully used a range of very good teaching methods and expected all her pupils to work hard. Good support is provided by the teacher, support assistants and parent-helpers. Interesting and appropriate work ensures that pupils of all abilities are able to make good gains in learning and achieve very well. The work is well planned and the school's use of good assessment techniques ensures that all pupils are given appropriate work in both single year-group and mixed-age classes.

93 Since the last inspection the school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy and this has helped teachers to plan their lessons with greater care and detail. They now explain to pupils what they will learn and, at the end of lessons, discuss with pupils how successful the learning has been. Teachers assess their pupils' work well, and make use of this information to plan next steps in learning. Work has been done to analyse the results of tests and improve termly targets which are set for all pupils.

94 At present not enough use is made of the computer to support learning in mathematics. Teachers often miss opportunities when information and communication technology would make a useful contribution to lessons, and some of the school's hardware and software is no longer appropriate.

95 Leadership in mathematics is good. The co-ordinator has good oversight of the subject and a clear view of how to move forward. The present very high standards are seen as an opportunity to make further progress, rather than a good achievement. The ethos of the school is very well reflected in work in the subject. Apart from computers, the school has good resources for mathematics and they are well organised and readily available.

SCIENCE

96 Standards in science have improved since the last inspection. They were then judged to be in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and a little above at the end of Year 4. Standards now are above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4. Pupils achieve well. These developments are due, in part, to an improvement in the quality of teaching and the introduction of a new scheme of work. Both these factors have not had time to produce even higher standards by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4.

97 By the end of Key Stage 1, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have a good knowledge of all the components of science. For example, they put together a simple electrical circuit using bulbs, wires, switches and batteries and show and explain why the bulb will not light if the circuit is not complete. They investigate many of the plants and animals found in the school grounds and recognise that there are different leaf shapes and sizes. They also know that certain animals and plants prefer different habitats. Pupils' attainment in investigational and experimental science is also good. For example, work seen in their books indicates that they successfully investigated what happens to different materials when they are put in the freezer. They have also looked around the school and identified objects made of metal, plastic, glass, fabric and wood and explain that some of them, for instance, glass and cling film, are transparent.

98 By the end of Year 4, most pupils have a good understanding of life processes and living things, physical processes and materials and their properties. For example, they explain the differences between solids, liquids and gases well and how they react and change in different circumstances. They know that some materials have specific properties, which are useful. For example, in a well conducted experiment, they discovered the varied insulating properties of newspaper, wadding, felt and paper towels. They carry out all investigations well and understand the importance of predicting what might happen and of setting up a fair test. However, the quality of recording the results of their investigations is very variable. This is because, in some lessons, pupils are not given any guidance on presentation.

99 The quality of teaching is mainly good. Teachers have a good knowledge of science and also of how to teach it. For example, pupils are always asked to predict what might happen before proceeding

with an investigation. This was done well in a Year 3 class where pupils were investigating changes to the heart pulse rate before and after exercise. There is also a good focus on developing important vocabulary and clear scientific language. Teachers encourage pupils to use mathematical skills whenever possible to measure or record their work. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well through science. A high proportion of lessons are used to establish assessment tasks and the records kept are good and used in future planning. The teacher's question and answer sessions are usually particularly effective and this consolidates learning at the start of the lesson and indicates at the end just what pupils have learned. Teachers link their science teaching to examples from everyday life and this helps pupils realise the relevance to their own lives. Teachers' planning is sound but some of the short-term lesson planning is not yet closely linked to the good scheme of work that is now being used. The school is aware of this problem and is working hard to correct this. One important weakness is the under-use of computers to record information or carry out the research available through the use of CD-ROMs.

100 Leadership of the subject is effective. The co-ordinator has set out the school's approach to science very well. There is a good policy and scheme of work and the subject is enhanced by a number of valuable out of school visits to places of scientific interest, such as to the Discovery Museum, Druridge Bay for a seashore study and to Bolam Lake for a study of freshwater life. The school grounds are used particularly well for the study of wildlife and plant growth. A number of areas are being developed for ecological studies. These enhance the study of science well and are an excellent resource for learning.

ART AND DESIGN

101 Pupils of all abilities, including those with special education needs, make sound progress in art and design and achievement is satisfactory, matching what is expected at the end of Year 2 in Key Stage 1 and Year 4 in Key Stage 2. This is an improvement since the previous inspection where standards in Key Stage 1 were below average. There are good quality displays around the school that show pupils' skill and ability to work in groups on creative projects. These include work on the Lindisfarne Gospels, collages of Hadrian's Wall and the Longstone Lighthouse.

102 The range and quality of work available for scrutiny indicates that overall the teaching of art and design is sound. Teachers' planning identifies learning objectives and these are made known to pupils and reviewed well at the end of lessons. The quality of teaching and learning in the two lessons observed were good. This was due to the interesting projects planned for pupils. Pupils work with a range of materials and in both two and three dimensions. For example, in Year 4 pupils design and make pots in the style of the Greeks and learn to develop the techniques of using clay. The teaching uses a good link to history and makes effective use of illustrations, inspiring pupils to achieve well. In a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class, skilful teaching ensured that pupils of both age groups were challenged well. When weaving, younger pupils learn the skill of 'over and under' using materials, whereas older pupils design a background and use wool with their small looms.

103 Pupils develop their skills through study of a range of techniques. Younger pupils learn to mix colour as they paint from direct observation. They have produced good paintings of flowers for the 'Northumbria in Bloom' competition. They also learn to make tiles with clay. In Key Stage 2, sketchbooks are used effectively to teach pupils how to use shade and tone to create a three-dimensional effect to their work. The work of great impressionist artists is used to influence pupils as they produce still life work, draw and paint sunflowers and create mood through colour, as Monet did in his work. Pupils also sketch characters from well-loved stories such as 'The Iron Man' and 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. Older pupils produce life drawings and respond to music through art. Pupils, with the support of a local artist, have been involved in making a millennium book. Other pupils were involved in making a tapestry for the millennium, which was displayed in Alnwick Castle. Pupils learnt many skills when making the tapestry, including tie-dying, sewing and padding.

104 The co-ordinator is new in post and is keen to raise the profile of art and design in the school.

After an audit, staff development and improvements to resources have been identified for improvement. The subject is now planned using the QCA documentation and schemes of work as guidance and medium-term planning is monitored. Planning in the short-term does not yet match the new schemes of work. Evidence of past work is being collected through photographs. Good links with local galleries are being developed and future plans include the display of pupils' work. There is an art club that meets once a week after school, for pupils in both key stages and has enhanced the subject for those attending.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105 Standards are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady and sometimes good progress across a wide range of planned opportunities.

106 The school has responded very well to the recommendations made in the last inspection report. A new policy and scheme of work have been written. In this they have been well supported by the introduction of new national guidelines. The staff have trained together and now have a shared understanding of the requirements of the curriculum. Teacher confidence and expertise has been effectively raised and this is beginning to have an impact on standards. The picture is one of improvement, and already pupils achieve success at a higher level in those elements of the subject already taught. Standards will not be fully raised until the two-year cycle is completed.

107 The quality of teaching is good and a strength of the subject. Teachers plan work thoroughly and lessons are well structured. Teachers tell pupils what they are going to learn and use the term "success criteria" to allow pupils to measure their own learning. Teachers set a good level of challenge for pupils. For example, in Year 1, the teacher asked pupils to test out two different ways of fixing axles to the chassis of a model car before deciding which method to use. Pupils evaluated well. Basic skills are well taught. Year 2 teachers used different activities to measure and mark materials precisely. One class measured wood with a centimetre ruler before cutting with a saw, whilst pupils in the other class drew around a template before very successfully cutting two layers of felt with sharp scissors. Sewing and weaving skills develop well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and as a result, pupils work productively and with sustained concentration. Pupils behave well in lessons because they are very interested in their work. Pupils in Year 2 were so stimulated they extended their own learning by making puppets at home. Two after school clubs are well supported and enhance the subject well for those attending.

108 Teachers are skilled in linking the subject to other curriculum areas. Pupils in Year 4 design and make torches, effectively extending work in science. Younger children extend learning in religious education when they design and make "Joseph's Dream Coat". The glove puppets made by Year 2 pupils stimulate learning in literacy. Very well planned activities in Year 4 effectively link learning in literacy, to both design and information and communication technology. However, the use of information and communication technology is currently underdeveloped throughout the school. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to use computers to support design plans, or display their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are very well supported. Boys and girls enjoy the same activities, and make similar achievements.

109 The subject is managed well. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She has played a significant role in raising the profile of the subject in the school. She monitors standards from displayed products but has no designated time to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom.

GEOGRAPHY

110 Only one lesson was seen during the inspection. However, sufficient evidence was obtained from analysing pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussion with staff, to enable secure judgements to

be made. Standards of work are broadly that expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. It was a similar picture in the last inspection.

111 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are beginning to appreciate the difference between localities. For example, they can compare their own country with India. This was seen in a lesson where pupils in Year 2 compared foods from India and from Great Britain. They related the food sampling to the different ways that people lived and observed a range of very good photographs. Pupils in Year 2 are also able to compare contrasting environments such as mountains and desert country and explain how the climate varies. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a sound knowledge of other countries such as the Caribbean Island of St Lucia. It was not possible to observe any lessons in Key Stage 2, but an excellent presentation of an assembly about St Lucia demonstrated that the pupils had a satisfactory understanding of the way people lived and what they eat, as well as understanding that they wore different clothes and spoke a different language. Pupils are also aware of the damage that is being done to the equatorial rain forests of St Lucia.

112 In the one lesson seen, the quality of teaching was sound. The teacher's knowledge was satisfactory and a range of visual aids was used well. Question and answer sessions were effective and the teacher's enthusiasm and preparation ensured that pupils concentrated throughout the lesson.

113 The subject is led effectively and the co-ordinator links the work in geography with history. For example, work in pupils' history books about Romans and Anglo-Saxons used a range of well-drawn maps. The subject is enhanced by a number of educational visits, such as to Seahouses to study a contrasting environment. The local area is used for mapping features and amenities. The school grounds are used for weather studies.

HISTORY

114 Standards of work in history are above that expected for pupils' ages at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school at age nine. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well. This is a good improvement in the standards indicated in the last inspection. These improvements are due in part to improved quality of teaching and the introduction of a new scheme of work.

115 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good knowledge of chronology. For example, they know that the time that Elizabeth the first lived was much further back in the past than Victorian England. They also understand that the start of space exploration, although in the past, was actually in the living memory of people alive today. By the age of seven, pupils have a good knowledge of the lives of famous people who have lived in the past. For example, they know about Louis Braille, Samuel Pepy's and Neil Armstrong and what they did that was important. By the time pupils are nine, they have a wider and deeper understanding of history from the 1930's to the present day. They are good at describing characteristic features of past societies and periods. For example, pupils in Year 4 are studying life in Ancient Greece and know how schools and theatres were different to those of today. From their investigations into books and documents, they were able to list a number of ancient Greek activities and words, which we use today; they are aware that the Olympic Games are with us today and that we have inherited democratic government from Ancient Greece.

116 Although only two lessons were seen, these, and the work analysed in pupils books, indicate that the quality of teaching is at least good and often, very good. In the two lessons seen, it was excellent. Teachers emphasise the importance of realising that the past is studied by collecting and analysing evidence. This was seen to very good effect in a lesson on the 1969 moon landing. Pupils had been asked to do homework research by asking their parents and grandparents what they remembered of the moment when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. This proved very effective. The teacher also produced extra documentary evidence and finally she explained there was her own recollection of events. All this was

very effective in emphasising to the pupils the different ways the stories of history come down to us. Teachers make history exciting and relevant to pupils' lives and this ensures they are motivated and involved. They are encouraged to carry out individual research into books, documents and specially prepared work sheets. However, the use of CD-ROMs for research work is underused at present, often, due to a lack of resources and regular access to computers.

117 The quality of leadership in the subject is effective. The subject policy and scheme of work is good and provides good guidance to teachers. The co-ordinator is also the geography co-ordinator and often links the teaching of history and geography in the curriculum. The subject is enhanced by many visits out of school to places of historical interest, such as to Alnwick Castle, the Hancock Museum and Hadrian's Wall. During the famous Alnwick Fair, the pupils participate fully by dressing up in period costume.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

118 At the time of the previous inspection standards in information and communication technology were judged to be unsatisfactory. There has been a marked improvement since then and standards are now just reaching the levels they should be at the end of Key Stage 1, and in Year 4. An important factor identified in the last inspection was the lack of confidence of some teachers in this subject, and a programme of training has been put in place to update skills and remedy shortcomings. However, this programme of in-service training is not yet complete so teacher confidence is still underdeveloped.

119 All areas of the information and communication technology curriculum are given adequate treatment, although some aspects, such as exchanging and sharing information, and the use of computer reference sources, need to be covered in greater depth. A more systematic approach to the development of information and communication technology skills is also needed, so that skills learned can then be practised before progressing to the next stage.

120 Timetabled information and communication technology lessons are currently provided and these do much to give a range of basic experiences to all pupils. Pupils in Key Stage 1 use the mouse and keyboard with confidence for a range of purposes, such as changing font and colour when writing stories or making pictures. By the end of Year 4, pupils build on these skills and produce some appropriate word-processed work. A number of pupils are competent at logging-on to the Internet and using it appropriately. A computer resource centre is being established in the library, with connection to the Internet, and up-to-date multi-media PCs, but basic provision of computers around the school is still unsatisfactory. Many of the available computers are old and no longer adequate for today's curriculum. Pupils in the mobile classroom do not have access to a computer without going to the main building. Plans are in hand to acquire laptop computers which will remedy some of these shortcomings, but a full programme of updating is required in order to improve both hardware and software.

121 Although only two information and communication technology lessons were seen during the inspection, these were taught satisfactorily. Other work seen in displays and pupils' books suggests that the teaching of information and communication technology is satisfactory overall, although some teachers have limited skills. Pupils are given a lively interest in computers and good use is made of correct language. The area in which teaching opportunities are missed, however, is in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. In many lessons seen computers were either switched off or left unused, and examples of the use of the computer to support learning in other subjects were rare. It is used to good effect occasionally. For example, in a Year 1/2 mathematics lesson, a student-helper was used to supervise pairs of pupils at the computer, working on simple counting activities. The software used was appropriate, and the activity was a useful support to the learning objectives of the lesson.

122 Pupils generally have positive attitudes towards information and communication technology. They enjoy using the computer and many have computers at home. When given the chance they are able

to work independently and share and co-operate well, even when the teacher is not close by. The school's computer club also makes a useful contribution and pupils are at present working on a new web site for the school.

123 The subject co-ordinator has established a drop-in help service for teachers and this has begun to have an effect. Although inexperienced, she has worked hard to update the subject documentation and has a clear view of priorities for development. New schemes of work based on government guidelines are about to be brought in. The new guidelines for other subjects also include suggestions for the use of information and communication technology.

MUSIC

124 In music, most pupils, in both key stages, including some with special educational needs, achieve standards which are expected for their age. This judgement is supported by lesson observations, assemblies and discussions with teachers. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when achievement was below average in Key Stage 2.

125 The majority of pupils enjoy music and achieve well in their listening and appraising skills and music is just beginning to have more emphasis in weekly lessons. Pupils are given good opportunities to listen to music from different times and places. Music is used effectively in assemblies where pupils listen to extracts as they enter the hall. All pupils sing tunefully and songs and hymns support the moral messages being conveyed.

126 Pupils in Key Stage 1 are learning to sing and are beginning to show some control of pitch, dynamics and rhythm. They clap to rhythm by copying the teacher and can recognise music that is slow, quiet and smooth. Teachers make sure that pupils become aware of music by local musicians and find out about local instruments such as the Northumbrian pipes. They learn to listen very carefully to music from around the world. Teachers invite musicians to play different extracts and they teach pupils extensive musical vocabulary. Pupils then learn to reflect on what they hear, express mood and discuss the impact music has on them.

127 Pupils in junior-age classes continue to make steady progress and detect the differences within decades in twentieth century music. For example, they recognise the extensive use of the electric guitar in music of the 1960's compared with trombones, which were used in the 1940's. Teachers discuss important events during these decades, including the war and the 'birth of the teenager' and explain the impact these events had on writers of music. Pupils also discuss differences between classical music and pop and between opera and modern songs.

128 The quality of teaching is sound overall. Teachers place music lessons well in context by discussing previous learning with them. They make effective use of taped music to demonstrate for pupils. Teachers' knowledge of the subject varies and this is reflected in the overall quality of learning. Where the teaching is good, pupils make good gains in their understanding and lessons are challenging; where the teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently. Overall, teachers create an effective learning environment and manage pupils very well. Although they make good use of the resources, the range of instruments is only adequate.

129 The co-ordinator is new in post and is keen to develop the profile of music in the school. She has recently undertaken an audit of the subject and has improved resources. Long-term plans have been reviewed, but medium-term plans have not yet been updated in light of new curriculum initiatives. Assessment pro-forma is in draft form. The co-ordinator leads a small school choir, which sometimes sings at local venues. She also takes two recorder groups, for interested pupils. A few pupils benefit from flute lessons taken by a local musician. Pupils have also visited the City Hall in Newcastle to sing with other schools. During the school Christmas performance of Pinocchio, pupils performed well, using

percussion instruments and the quality of the singing was good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

130 Physical education was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, and the present inspection also found standards to be in line with those expected nationally, both at the end of Key Stage 1, and in Year 4. The school has therefore maintained satisfactory standards in the subject.

131 As they move through the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are given a range of worthwhile experiences in all areas of the physical education curriculum. The school is fortunate in being close to the local swimming pool and so little time is wasted in going to and from lessons. Swimming lessons are well taught by the local pool staff, with teachers and support staff in attendance. A majority of pupils can swim by the time they leave the school.

132 By the time they reach Year 4 pupils experience all aspects of the curriculum. In a Year 4 games lesson, for example, pupils developed their throwing and catching and cricket skills. The lesson was part of a series, and pupils had already worked on bowling and batting skills. Team games of Kwik Cricket then gave all pupils opportunities to apply their skills in a competitive game, and they participated well in a spirit of friendly rivalry. Catching skills were satisfactory in both the games lessons seen.

133 The teaching of physical education is satisfactory overall. The school's ethos of care and understanding for the feelings of others is well reflected in the work of the subject. In a Year 3/4 swimming lesson pupils applauded and encouraged others as they attempted their tests. Good attention is paid to developing the skills needed, for instance in games and swimming.

134 For the most part, pupils show positive attitudes towards physical education. They enjoy the activities and most try their best. The school does well in promoting the friendly rivalry which is necessary in competitive games, and pupils generally are good at observing the rules of fair play.

135 The school has satisfactory resources for the teaching of physical education. There is a good sized hall with a range of large and small apparatus, and a playground with a good level surface. There is also a large field but, at present, this is too uneven to be suitable for football and other team games. Plans are in hand to level part of the field and financial support for this scheme appears to have been secured.

136 The subject is effectively co-ordinated. Resources are well organised and readily accessible. Good attention is paid to the safety aspects of all activities and it was particularly noticeable that, when going swimming, good attention was paid to all aspects of safety.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

137 In both key stages, standards of attainment in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus. It was a similar picture in the previous inspection.

138 At Key Stage 1 pupils explore issues of care and responsibility well. They understand that their actions affect the feelings of others and that everyone has a need to respect beliefs other than their own. They compare their actions to the actions of people in the parables told by Jesus. By the age of nine pupils have an understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity. They know about some of the major religions of the world and the festivals and rituals associated with, Christianity and Judaism. They know that people try to live better lives by following their faith. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 know some facts from the Old Testament. All pupils are familiar with the major Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas. The Nativity is performed by a different group of pupils each year.

139 Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in both

key stages. In lesson observations and in their books, pupils demonstrate a growing awareness of spiritual values. Pupils in Key Stage 1 become aware of rituals within the Jewish faith, for example and through well-planned lessons, have opportunities to see and handle artefacts first hand. They learn about the significance of the Shabbat meal. They re-enact the ceremony respectfully and sing the hymn with enthusiasm. Assemblies help children to consider the way they take care of each other at playtime. They listen to well-known stories such as 'The Ugly Duckling' and discuss how the main character feels at different points in the story. Pupils articulate their ideas well and relate the feelings of the duckling with feelings they have experienced themselves.

140 In Key Stage 2, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are aware that they live in a multi-faith society and learn about some major faiths. They find out about main differences in major religions. They learn to compare, for example, the differences between the Christian Sunday and the Jewish Sabbath. They know that Jewish children have to get home early on Fridays to get ready for the Shabbat meal and that orthodox Jews do not do any type of work at all on the Sabbath. Pupils learn to discuss positive and negative qualities in people and they discuss the concept of behaviour in relation to Christian values.

141 The quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is sound. Teachers make effective use of the new resources to support their teaching and because of this, pupils learn well through first-hand experiences. For example, in Year 2, pupils were very enthusiastic when designing a Challah cover because they had seen one during the lesson. The school invites special visitors to share their religious life experiences with the children. This ensures that pupils understand well, become respectful and value the faith of others. Lessons are well planned, with learning objectives made clear to the pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils can link religious understanding to some curricular subjects. For example, in design and technology, pupils make models of 'Joseph's Coat'. There is a good balance of teaching, discussion and activity which encourages pupils to discuss ideas in relation to their own life experiences. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and manage pupils very well.

142 The co-ordinator is new in post. She is enthusiastic in her approach. She has recently undertaken an audit of the subject and has improved resources. Medium-term plans are monitored. Visitors from the different local churches are invited into the school on a rotational basis to take assemblies. These have a high profile in the school and support religious education well. Planning covers the locally Agreed Syllabus.