

INSPECTION REPORT

CATCHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Catchgate, Stanley

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114023

Headteacher: Mr K Joel

Reporting inspector: Ian Knight
23031

Dates of inspection: 10 – 13 September 2001

Inspection number: 193438

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Blackett Street Catchgate Stanley Co Durham
Postcode:	DH9 8LX
Telephone number:	01207 234252
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr J Thompson
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23031	Ian Knight	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Mathematics.	The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9958	Timothy Page	<i>Lay inspector</i>		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?
27736	Jeremy Collins	<i>Team inspector</i>	Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage, Music, Religious education.	
20832	Mohindar Galowalia	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Information and communication technology; Design and technology;	
27545	Andrew Scott	<i>Team Inspector</i>	English; Art and design; History; Physical education; Equal opportunities; Special educational needs.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Catchgate Primary School serves the village of Catchgate and the surrounding area of County Durham, an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. There are 237 pupils in the main school, with a further 25-place nursery providing places for 50 part-time pupils. Almost all pupils are white. The proportion of pupils identified as having a special need is about average, but the proportion with statements of special need is high. These pupils are not distributed evenly through the school; in some year groups, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is rather higher. Pupils join the school with a range of attainment, but the overall picture is of attainment on entry that is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Catchgate School is a good school. Children enter the school with low standards, especially in the development of language, and receive a flying start in the Foundation Stage. This is consolidated by good teaching in the rest of the school. As a result, pupils learn and achieve well, although standards as compared with national expectations have not yet risen to average levels across the board. The school is soundly led and managed and has made sound progress since its last inspection. However, this good achievement is obtained at a higher than average cost; consequently, the school offers satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils achieve well compared with their attainment on entry.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well.
- Teaching is good throughout the school, and excellent in the Foundation Stage.
- There is excellent provision for the Foundation Stage.
- The school takes good care of its pupils' welfare and health and safety.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are below national expectations
- The school is not rigorous enough in setting its aims or in the strategic planning that seeks to achieve those aims.
- Senior managers and curricular co-ordinators are still not able to function effectively as subject leaders.
- Curricular time is not planned rigorously enough, so that some lessons are too long and lack pace.

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 April 1997. Since then teaching has been improved: the proportion of teaching that is good or better has risen, and unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated. National Curriculum test results show a modest trend of improvement in recent years at the end of Year 6. Some progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses noted at the last inspection. Senior managers and curricular co-ordinators have clear job descriptions, but delegation is not yet effective enough and consequently curricular co-ordinators are unable to act effectively enough as subject leaders and managers. All subjects have schemes of work to guide staff in planning. These improvements taken together indicate that the school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	D	E	D
mathematics	C	D	E	C
science	E	D	D	C

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

National comparisons are not yet available for the tests taken in 2001, but the school's provisional results show that standards have risen modestly in English and mathematics and been maintained in science. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in English rose significantly. The 2000 test results for Year 2 show standards to have been well below average in reading and writing and very low in mathematics. Significant improvements took place in 2001, except in the proportion gaining the higher Level 3 in writing. Recent trends in results show no secure trend of improvement at the end Year 2 until 2000. At the end of Year 6, there is a clear trend of improvement in the results for science, and a steadier trend in English and mathematics. The school has set challenging targets for its future performance and is making good progress towards meeting them. Standards at the end of the Reception Year are below national expectations, having improved from the low baseline on entry. At the end of Year 2, the observed standards are about average in mathematics, art, history, music and religious education, and below average in the remaining subjects except for physical education in which a judgement could not be made. At the end of Year 6, they are about average in art, music and religious education, but below average in the other subjects except for physical education in which a judgement could not be made. Standards in information and communication technology are well below those expected. When these standards are considered in the light of pupils' low attainment on entry, their backgrounds and the levels of challenge in the lessons observed, then pupils are achieving well overall, with very good achievement in the Foundation Stage.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are eager to do well and proud of their work. They are very interested and involved in their activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are well behaved, have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and show good levels of respect for the feelings and beliefs of others.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Whilst the quality of relationships is a strength of the school, pupils have little opportunity to show high levels of initiative or personal responsibility.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Excellent	Good	Good

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

The teaching of English is satisfactory throughout the school. Mathematics is well taught. As a result, the basic skills of numeracy and literacy are taught effectively. The Foundation Stage is very well organised with a clear understanding of how the youngest children learn. In the whole school, the best teaching is clearly planned and gives lessons a brisk pace. Pupils are challenged well. In these lessons, pupils work hard throughout the lesson and make large gains in their knowledge. Less effective teaching, whilst still satisfactory, has a more stately pace, which is exacerbated by the length of some lessons. This means that some pupils work below their potential and can become inattentive and learning is slowed. Information and communication technology is not used effectively enough. The needs of the most able pupils are generally well met; special needs provision is effective in supporting these pupils; however, average and below average attainers are not always challenged to work at their potential.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound overall, though good in the Foundation Stage. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been soundly implemented. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities and for personal, social and health education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Support staff work well with small groups of pupils who make good progress as a result.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Sound provision for the very small number of such pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development. The provision for both moral and social development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good provision for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. Good assessment procedures are well used to guide curricular planning.

The school has good links with the parent body and works soundly in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall, although delegation to senior managers and curricular co-ordinators is not effective enough. There is not enough cohesion between the school's aims, the management plan and subject action plans.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school, but are too reliant on the headteacher and other professionals to act effectively as critical friends. They are not involved early enough in strategic planning
The school's evaluation of its performance	Test results are analysed in detail to set realistic targets for individuals' future performance. This is effective. However, monitoring of planning, teaching and of pupils' work is less effective.
The strategic use of resources	Staff and resources are used appropriately.

The school has sufficient staff and resources to enable it to teach the National Curriculum, but too few classroom support staff. The accommodation is currently adequate, but the school is due to move to a new, purpose built building in November. Although the principles of best value are appropriately applied to purchases, the school does not yet consult widely or compare itself rigorously to other schools in its strategic planning. The school's mission statement, aims, management plan and individual subject action plans do not form a coherent system for raising standards more steeply.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• The teaching is good, teachers expect pupils to work hard and do their best so that their children make good progress.• Behaviour in the school is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small number of parents think there are insufficient extra-curricular activities.• A similarly small number feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents and that they are not kept well informed about their children's progress.• A handful feel that the homework set is not the right amount.

The team agreed with parents' positive views. They judged that the provision for extra-curricular activities was good. However, they felt that there is room for improvement in the school's partnership with parents and in the quality of annual reports. Homework is used satisfactorily.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Although the standards the school attains in National Curriculum tests are low, pupils are achieving well in the school because of good teaching, when pupils' low attainment on entry to the school and the background of disadvantage in the area are taken into account.

2. The latest national figures available for comparison are for the tests taken in 2000. At the end of Year 2, overall standards in both reading and writing were well below the national average, whilst standards in mathematics were very low, that is, in the bottom five percent of schools nationally. This is because more pupils in the school failed to gain at least the expected Level 2 than nationally, and very few pupils gained the higher Level 3. If the school is compared only to those with a similar intake, a similarly depressing picture emerges. There are no tests in the other core subject of science, but teachers' assessments of pupils tell a similar story of attainment that is well below the national average. This year group did, however, include a very high proportion of pupils with a special educational need. The results for 2001 show some improvement. In reading, writing and mathematics the average improvement was such that standards were within the average range for 2000. This came about as the proportion of pupils gaining Level 2 increased across the board, with some spectacular increases in the proportion gaining Level 3 in both reading and mathematics. Over the past few years, there has been no clear trend to results in mathematics, but reading and writing both show an improving trend, albeit with a blip in 2000.

3. There was a mixed picture to the school's results at the end of Year 6 in 2000. Compared with all schools, the school's average performance was well below the national average in English and mathematics, and below average in science. When the comparison is limited to those schools with similar intakes, then the picture painted is a little brighter. Performance in English is below average, but in mathematics and science is about average. An analysis of the distribution of grades shows that the school does a good job by its higher attainers – the proportions gaining the higher Level 5 were quite respectable in mathematics and science. However, too many pupils failed to gain the expected Level 4, which had the effect of depressing the average performance. Again, 2001 saw some improvement, albeit more modest than that observed in the infants. There was a general improvement in English and mathematics, although still not sufficient to bring the school into line with the previous year's national averages; standards in science were maintained. The good proportions of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics and science were maintained but these were joined by a massive improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 in English, moving from a disappointing 10 per cent in 2000 to an altogether more respectable 29 per cent in 2001. There were also more modest improvements in the proportions gaining at least the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics. There has been a modest trend of improvement in the English results in recent years, with good trends in mathematics and science; when all of the core subjects are considered together, the school's trend has mirrored that nationally, whilst remaining somewhat below the national line. The school has set challenging targets for its future performance and is making good progress towards meeting them.

4. Of course, test results only tell a small part of the story. They can only describe the performance of a few pupils in the school, many of whom have now left. Inspection evidence is wider in nature, and allows for judgements to be made concerning standards as compared to those expected nationally in all subjects.

5. Children enter the nursery with attainment that is well below the average nationally. In particular, their speech and language development is poor and they respond to questions with little more than single word answers. These children come from an area of significant disadvantage. During their time in the Foundation Stage, that is, nursery and reception, they receive a flying start due to the excellent teaching here. As they enter the National Curriculum in Year 1, they have improved significantly, but still have attainment that is below average. Nevertheless, when this is weighed against their attainment on entry, it is clear that these children, including those with special educational needs, have achieved very well during their time in the Foundation Stage.

6. By the end of Year 2, pupils have continued to achieve well following good teaching. However, standards are still below what might be expected nationally in English and this affects standards in other subjects like history and science, which are also below average. Standards in information and communication technology are below national expectations. However, in the other subjects of the curriculum – mathematics, art and design, design and technology, geography, music and religious education, standards are about in line with those expected. It was not possible to make a judgement on standards in physical education. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are effectively supporting their work in other subjects. These pupils, including those with a special need, have achieved well in the infants to demonstrate these standards, although there is still work to do in those areas noted as being below average. The school is well placed to improve standards in information and communication technology following the move into new premises later this term, as there will be more resources that are more readily available to pupils.

7. At the end of Year 6, standards remain below average in English, history and science, and well below average in information and communication technology. In addition, standards are also below average in mathematics. This latter remark would seem to suggest that pupils do not do well enough in mathematics in the juniors and that progress in English and science is modest. However, if the average gains made by pupils during their time in the junior department are analysed, it becomes clear that pupils made better than expected gains in all three subjects. The picture that is painted is one of improving standards throughout the school, but of slower improvement in the juniors as these older pupils overcome a larger deficit in their learning. Standards are about average in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education. There was insufficient evidence to form a view in geography and physical education. Again, when these standards are weighed against the attainment with which these pupils started the juniors and the background to the area of disadvantage, then it is clear that pupils overall, including those with a special need, achieve well throughout Years 3 to 6 and the whole school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils display good attitudes to school, thus maintaining the positive judgement made at the time of the previous inspection. They are punctual to lessons, eager to do well, and take pride in their achievements. Very good attitudes to learning were observed

in those lessons that provided a high but realistic challenge. All pupils take an interest in the life of the school and many of the older ones are involved in clubs and sports teams.

9. Behaviour is good overall and often very good in lessons. Outside the classroom pupils behave well, display an awareness of others, are courteous to adults and visitors, and to each other. There is no evidence of the boisterous behaviour that was noted during the last inspection. Even during wet weather, when pupils are confined to classrooms, they play constructively without any hint of discord, and unruly or oppressive behaviour. One permanent exclusion was reported during the last academic year.

10. Personal development and relationships are satisfactory, overall. Personal development has strong features such as the growing confidence of the very youngest pupils, and the responsible attitudes displayed by the Year 6 'buddies' who help to look after infant children at lunch and in the playground. There is, however, a lack of confidence, (and opportunity), in taking a lead in discussions during circle time and in assemblies, or in taking responsibility for their own work. In these areas, pupils' personal development is below national expectations.

11. Attendance is below the national average for primary schools, and is therefore unsatisfactory. However, the school is convinced that pupils are away for genuine reasons and draws attention to the relatively low rate of unauthorised absence. There was no lateness evident during the inspection, or noted on records kept during the last school year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. Teaching across the school is good, with a particular strength in the Foundation Stage, where all of the observed teaching was excellent. No teaching was observed that was less than satisfactory, and nearly three-quarters were good or even better. Two-fifths of lessons were at least very good, with an unusually large proportion of excellent teaching. The quality of the observed teaching is a significant improvement over the situation at the time of the last inspection when one lesson in five was unsatisfactory or poor. This good standard of teaching leads to good learning and also serves to overcome some of the unsatisfactory elements of the timetable as currently planned. However, these proportions need to be treated with some caution as relatively few lessons could be observed.

13. In the Foundation Stage, lessons are planned meticulously with the Early Learning Goals in mind. Teachers in both the nursery and reception classes have very high expectations of what children will be able to achieve, which inspires the children to do their best. All activities, whether directly supervised or not, have a genuine purpose and contribute to the learning objectives for children. Consequently, these children make rapid progress from their low baseline, try really hard and have a very good knowledge of what it is they are learning.

14. In the rest of the school, this flying start is consolidated with good teaching, maintaining good learning. Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects and of the needs of their classes. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. Teachers generally use good methods that enable pupils to learn appropriately. Their expectations of what pupils can do are generally high and challenging, to which pupils respond. The majority of pupils are challenged at the right level. This was especially noticeable for the higher attaining pupils in each class, and is a major factor in the high proportions of pupils gaining Level 5 in National Tests. In a few lessons, however, challenge for other pupils in the class was not quite right, so that they had work that was either too easy or too hard for them. Some sessions, especially in the morning, are far too

long. This is particularly noticeable for lessons in Years 1 and 2. Guidance in the national strategies suggests an hour for literacy lessons and around forty to fifty minutes for numeracy. A lack of rigour in curricular planning allows these lessons to stretch to fill the time available and such lessons were observed for as long as seventy-five minutes. This means that pupils' learning was slowed and a sense of urgency lost in these sessions. It is indeed fortunate that teachers in Years 1 and 2 have very good skills of pupil management and maintain very good relationships with their class, or pupils could become disaffected during these lengthy sessions. The effects are less apparent in Years 3 to 6 as these pupils are a little older and consequently find concentrating for longer periods easier. Nevertheless, the pace for older pupils can still slacken so that really brisk lessons were not seen often enough. Similarly, some afternoon sessions are timetabled for expediency rather than through a rigorous analysis of the time necessary for the most effective learning. Work is not always marked rigorously as could be hoped, so that pupils do not always know what is expected of them next time. Furthermore, information and communication technology is not used effectively enough to support pupils' learning. In the subjects observed, teaching was judged to be good overall in mathematics, science and religious education, being satisfactory elsewhere, except in information and communication technology, which is unsatisfactory.

15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers usually prepare work which will be challenging and relevant to the individual needs of these pupils. They organise pupils into appropriate groups within lessons and, where possible, ensure that they receive extra guidance from support staff. This was particularly effective in a science lesson, where a support assistant helped pupils spell out the name of a bone phonetically and apply it to the correct part of a skeleton. This is not always the case. Sometimes, support staff do not explain issues like verb tenses sufficiently clearly for pupils to understand easily. In addition, there are not enough support staff to help in all classes during literacy and numeracy. In these classes, pupils do not make as good progress as when they have support. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language, but they are well supported so that they can make the same progress as their peers. There is little formal provision for gifted and talented pupils, but teachers meet their needs informally satisfactorily.

16. The very best teaching is characterised by very clear planning resulting in a clearly structured lesson with high levels of intellectual challenge that makes pupils work hard and learn well. For example, in an excellent nursery lesson, children spent some time thinking about and discussing the colour red. They had poor language skills, often answering in single words, as they had only recently joined the school. Nevertheless, the teacher's friendly manner drew out the language the children did have – when the teacher was showing red objects to the children, she remarked that an apple would make a lovely snack, to which one child responded 'cut into pieces'. There were a wide variety of very well planned activities so that even the most diffident children, with discreet encouragement, took part and achieved the objectives of the lesson well. Despite these children being very new to the school, the teacher had built good relationships and so children behaved very well. In a very good lesson about the creation for infants, a very brisk pace caught pupils' attention and interest. Some pupils were difficult to manage, but the teacher kept them on task very well. Lower-attaining pupils in this class were also kept on task very well through the teaching assistant's persuasive manner. In this lesson, all pupils were challenged and the balance of time between exposition by the teacher and activities was exactly right for the class, ensuring they learned well. In an excellent mathematics lesson in the junior department, the teacher made very good use of her assessment of the previous day's work. She noted problems some pupils had had in

applying mental strategies for multiplication and amended her planning accordingly. As the lesson progressed, her informal assessment as she toured the room led her to change

tasks again. This diligent attention to pupils' work resulted in a lesson in which all were challenged beyond their comfort zone. This was combined with her enthusiasm for the subject that communicated itself to the pupils and led to a very briskly paced lesson, in which the highest-attaining pupils completed some very sophisticated problems.

17. Of course, not all teaching can be this exciting. Where teaching lacked this sparkle, whilst still being satisfactory, the pace was more steady, or groups within the class were not challenged at the right level. For example, a mathematics lesson in the infants was allowed to run for sixty-five minutes. This meant that the pace became somewhat steady and some pupils began to go off the boil in the whole class section of the lesson when all were sitting together on the floor. Following this, some tasks were too short so that pupils finished quickly, but the extension material they were offered was not really valuable in terms of learning. In an English lesson for the juniors, the higher-attaining pupils were well challenged as they read from King Lear, but, despite the teacher's enthusiasm, this was too difficult for many of the class, so that the lower-attaining pupils in particular did not progress enough.

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

18. The school's curriculum is satisfactory. It covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum and teachers plan using national schemes of work for nearly all subjects. Only in physical education is the school continuing to use an effective existing scheme written in part by the subject co-ordinator on behalf of the local authority. The school just provides the nationally accepted minimum amount of time per week, and rightly focuses most time on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The school does not allocate a lot of time to geography, history, art and design, and design and technology. As a result, coverage of these subjects is restricted.

19. The school's provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Teachers ensure that pupils learn the basic skills through structured learning, although they do not plan enough to develop them through the other subjects. There are some good examples of this. For instance, teachers promote the awareness of mathematical shapes through tessellations in art and design. Pupils are using computers more and more in English to word-process their independent writing. However, teachers do not plan well enough to make the most of opportunities for pupils to improve their speech and writing, when evaluating their own actions in a physical education lesson or writing a geographical account. Some lessons are timetabled for convenience rather than based on educational principles, so that they become too long, especially in the infant department.

20. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school identifies problems at an early stage and quickly establishes individual plans for pupils to meet their requirements. These contain challenging but achievable targets and are reviewed termly in order to adjust them as necessary. Support staff work well with pupils, explaining difficult issues and encouraging progress through positive reinforcement. When appropriate, pupils are withdrawn from lessons in order to help develop their particular needs. There are not, however, enough support staff to ensure consistent support for all pupils with special educational needs. In some lessons, therefore, such pupils do not always have the chance to progress well. For example, in one English lesson, the teacher's necessary focus on one group of pupils left two groups of pupils with special educational needs unsupervised. Consequently, these pupils did not concentrate well on their language game and rather frittered their time away.

21. The school works hard to enrich the curriculum in some areas. Teachers introduce classical literature such as *Alice in Wonderland* to try to inspire creative thinking and writing. A wealth of interesting artefacts helps to bring history alive. The use of the Internet is beginning to open up a vast amount of research opportunities in many subjects. Yet provision is less stimulating in subjects like music, in which there is no co-ordinator to develop pupils' singing and appreciation of music. There is not much evidence that pupils are moved by the works of famous artists or sculptors to create their mini masterpieces. However, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities which include many sports, cookery, French, recorders and library skills.

22. There is suitable provision to meet the differing needs of pupils. For example, the school sometimes organises classes of mixed year groups on the basis of ability so as to give the pupils more appropriate work. As there are a number of mixed-year classes, teachers plan several subjects, such as geography and art, to cover a two year period so that pupils do not miss out on vital topics. However, in doing so, they do not adapt the curriculum sufficiently to allow for the proper development of skills, such as map-reading or basic research. The school not only caters well for pupils with special educational needs but also for higher attaining pupils. Teachers have high expectations of these pupils and set them more challenging work, such as an introduction to Shakespeare. The school also provides well for pupils who do not have English as their first language.

23. The school supports the personal development of pupils effectively. Teachers ensure that pupils learn well about health matters through the science curriculum. They support this through the involvement of experts from outside. For example, the community policeman visits to discuss the problem of drugs and to make pupils aware of the dangers. The school nurse deals sensitively with sex education with Year 6 pupils.

24. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound. Through assemblies, pupils discover the messages and stories from the Bible, such as Noah's Ark. They are encouraged to understand the importance of prayer, especially at a time of crisis. Pupils are also encouraged to reflect on life, on their actions and on moral or social issues. For example, in one class assembly, pupils spent a short time reflecting on the importance of friendship. This is not always the case, however, and opportunities are sometimes missed in assemblies to contemplate important issues. Moreover, assemblies do not have a strong spiritual feel to them, as the themes tend to concentrate on morality. Pupils are made aware of other religions but do not benefit from enough direct experience of them.

25. Moral provision is good. Pupils are constantly reminded through assemblies about how best to behave and the distinction between right and wrong. They learn about the value of friendship and respect for other people. This was potently reinforced in a discussion with older pupils about the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre. Teachers are very good role models and expect high levels of discipline within classes. They establish simple rules with the pupils and display these clearly. These include not shouting out and always showing respect. Pupils respond well and this allows for a positive atmosphere in classrooms.

26. The school also works hard on the social development of the pupils, which is good. Around the school, pupils are polite and chatty. They play well together at breaks and learn to care to one another. This especially evident in the Buddy system, in which pupils from Year 6 supervise younger pupils in the yard with efficiency and care. The school has recently introduced structured opportunities in the day for pupils to discuss current or personal issues with their teachers. This enables pupils to find solutions to any problems

with the support of the other pupils, and the guidance of the teacher. Pupils in Year 6 gain valuable social skills during their annual residential stay in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

27. The school provides satisfactory cultural development. Teachers introduce pupils to major writers, composers and artists. Pupils from Years 3 and 4, for example, learn a little about the style of *Van Gogh*. However, this is not developed enough throughout the whole curriculum. Time for art is limited on the timetable and there is no music co-ordinator to inspire real enthusiasm for the subject. There is no choir, although there is a recorder club. Pupils occasionally benefit from visits to the theatre at Newcastle. The school does not enable pupils to appreciate the differences in different faiths. There has been a visit to a mosque and attendance at a concert involving African music and dance, and this is good. However, there are too few other opportunities for pupils to acknowledge the diversity of life beyond their own locality.

28. There are sound links with the community at large. There is a particularly close and effective relationship with a nearby old people's home. Older pupils benefit from visiting the home to play carpet bowls or do some cooking, while the residents enjoy visiting the school occasionally to watch the school productions. There is a small amount of sponsorship from a local milk company, and a major car company does sometimes offer second-hand computers. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit strongly from weekly use of the sports hall at the secondary school close by.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. The school takes good care of its pupils' welfare, health, and safety, including child protection, maintaining the positive features that were in place at the time of the last inspection.

30. The school has an effective health and safety policy, which clearly sets out responsibilities. Governors work closely with school staff to maintain a safe environment and the Chair is actively involved in a premises inspection each term. Nevertheless, minor safety concerns that are closely associated with the state and use of the building were drawn to the headteacher's attention. Formal inspections of equipment, an annual risk assessment, and regular fire practices all take place. The school has trained first aiders and the standard of recording accidents, mostly by support staff who supervise lunch breaks, is thorough.

31. Staff are aware of the correct child protection procedures to follow, and the headteacher, who has overall responsibility, has up to date training and works closely with relevant support agencies.

32. The promotion of good attendance is more effective than the bare statistics imply, taking into account the high proportion of pupils who change schools during their primary education, and the high incidence of genuine illness. Nevertheless, there is insufficient rigour given to improving attendance and it is disappointing to note the deterioration that has taken place since the last inspection.

33. Registers are kept well, and are usually called at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions. A weekly analysis is undertaken and parents are contacted when pupils' absence is unexplained. The educational welfare officer pays a weekly visit to the school to provide assistance. However, there is a lack of urgency in contacting parents on

a first day basis, and there is little reinforcement of the promotion of good attendance in written communications with parents.

34. The school employs a range of strategies to promote good behaviour, not least by providing good adult role models. Expectations regarding behaviour are agreed with pupils and supported with praise and a variety of awards, including house points and stickers. Pupils with specific behaviour problems are supported effectively and successfully integrated into school activities. Pupils say that there is little nastiness or bullying and that they can share concerns with teachers. The use of the 'buddy' system whereby older pupils willingly accept a responsibility for caring for the infants, is proving so effective that it has been incorporated into a 'coping with bullying' programme, published by the local education authority.

35. The headteacher's system by which pupils' work is monitored is good and academic assessment records are now very detailed and highly structured. They cover comprehensively all areas of learning. They clearly indicate those parts of the curriculum that need to be developed, thus they can accurately inform future planning. This shows a clear improvement since the previous inspection when the structure did not allow assessments to effectively inform future planning.

36. Termly records are kept for all the pupils and their progress is carefully and regularly monitored. As a result of this monitoring, the school has been able to introduce target setting, albeit slowly. However, targets are not being set regularly enough and the monitoring is not tight enough for the process to move pupils forward quickly.

37. Pupils with special educational needs are given satisfactory support, which enables them to make progress at a similar rate to other pupils.

38. The monitoring of personal development is focused on pupils with problems and has proved effective in keeping pupils in school. However, personal development for the majority is not formally monitored, although the stable staff situation allows teachers to know their pupils well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The school is in tune with most parents' expectations. Inspection confirms much of their positive comment.

40. A small proportion expressed concerns about the range of extra-curricular activities; how closely the school works with parents, the information they are given, and homework expectations. Inspectors do not agree that the school fails to provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons because of the wide range of clubs and visits. There is scope for parents outside the Nursery to be more involved with their children's education through better quality annual reports for pupils that share targets for improvement, and by providing a daily link between school and home. This could be in the form of a homework diary that would raise the status of homework and bring rigour and consistency to expectations.

41. Links with parents are strongest in the Nursery where information on how they can be partners in their children's education is readily available. 'Fun packs' are sent home regularly so that parents are aware of what their children are learning. Parents are also

introduced to 'Families Together', a family literacy project designed to make them better equipped to support their children's learning, and give them access to further education. This has been very successful for a small number of parents who have seized the opportunity.

42. The school arranges termly parents' meetings to discuss their children's progress and targets, and these are very well attended. Meetings have also been arranged to share information about the new school building. Written communications keep parents adequately informed of school news and activities but do not wholly engage them in sharing the responsibility for their children's education. Parents of pupils with special educational needs, who have individual education plans, are properly involved in their reviews. No information is given in the prospectus about national test results; consequently parents are not in a position to judge the school's performance in a national context.

43. All parents have signed the home/school agreement. Parents honour their part of the contract to get their children to school on time, and ready to learn. Parents appear to have a high regard for education and show great respect for the school and its staff but some do not have the skills or confidence to contribute fully to their children's education at home. Many even appear reticent to come into the playground when dropping off or picking up their children. The 'Friends of Catchgate School' raises a large amount of funds for the school, and has recently been responsible for the purchase of three new computers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The school is soundly led by the headteacher and other key staff. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. The school evaluates its own performance soundly, and has a particular strength in the rigorous analysis of data. Specific grants and other resources are used appropriately. Although the principles of best value are applied soundly in terms of financial purchases, the school does not consult widely enough when planning strategically for the future. The school is adequately staffed and resourced. The current building is old, though still adequate for the teaching of the National Curriculum. It is due to be replaced very shortly by a new building on the same site.

45. The headteacher provides sound leadership, as was reported at the time of the last inspection. He has a vision for the school that focuses on the school's mission statement, in which the school seeks to provide a safe and stimulating environment so that its pupils can learn the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and so be able to unlock the door to other curricular areas. The school is a caring one, and the headteacher's pastoral vision is clearly communicated to the school and shared by all staff. However, the mission statement falls short of making an explicit commitment to high standards, and does not mention such areas as educational inclusion or pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, the impetus in the school for improvement is muted and improvement in National Curriculum tests has been modest. The school's management plan is a short term, one-year document. It is not the result of widespread consultation and lacks rigour in the formulation of its priorities in terms of the school's aims. Nevertheless, the priorities identified are appropriate for the school. At the time of the last inspection, a key issue concerned the definition of the roles of senior managers in the school. They now have clear job descriptions but do not have sufficient opportunity to develop a whole-school role. Subject co-ordinators do not have enough opportunities to act as true subject leaders: their monitoring role is minimal, data is analysed by the

headteacher, they have no resources budget to control, they have little influence on the construction of the school management plan, and subject action plans do not mesh closely enough with whole school priorities. As a result of the structures within which they operate, middle and senior managers cannot make a sufficiently meaningful contribution to the school's management.

46. The governing body is a supportive group. They have worked tirelessly alongside the headteacher in the drive to replace the old school buildings with new – which is about to come to fruition. However, they tend to rely too much on the headteacher and other professionals and do not act rigorously enough as a critical friend to the school. For example, they have little say in the priorities in the school management plan, and recent minutes of meetings do not include discussion of the progress made towards meeting the targets in it. Nevertheless, governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gleaned from the headteacher's reports and visits to the school. With the exception of a few minor omissions from the prospectus and Governors' Annual Report to Parents, the governing body fulfils its statutory obligations.

47. Considerable movement has taken place since the last inspection in the area of the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The results of a battery of external and internal tests are closely analysed by the headteacher, the results of which allow him to set targets for individual pupils for the coming year, which are shared with staff. One outcome of this is the increase in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in the tests at the end of Year 6. In particular, the results in English at Level 5 were disappointing in 2000, but improved markedly in 2001. However, the routine monitoring of teachers' planning, pupils' work and classroom teaching is less well developed. The headteacher does monitor teaching, and the implementation of the performance management policy means that teachers are observed more regularly than previously. However, co-ordinators of subjects have little opportunity to monitor the work of their own subject in a formal manner and so they are not always fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's work in their subject.

48. Leadership of most subjects is satisfactory within the constraints placed upon co-ordinators by the school's systems. History and religious education are led well, but the co-ordination of art is unsatisfactory because the subject is not developed enough throughout the school. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that pupils receive suitable and relevant teaching and supervises their progress. The school has now computerised these records and this makes monitoring easier. However, the co-ordinator has a full-time teaching commitment and has very little time to see how colleagues work with pupils with special educational needs and how the pupils respond. Nor does she have the time or opportunity to work with the pupils themselves and so become more familiar with their requirements, in order to improve standards.

49. The school has appropriate policies in place for the induction of teachers new to the school and for taking its part in the training of new teachers. The school is adequately staffed for the national curriculum in terms of teaching staff, but there are insufficient classroom support assistants for all pupils to progress at their maximum. The school's financial planning is sound and supports the priorities within the school management plan, which is carefully costed. New technology is used effectively in the administration of the school, especially in the areas of data analysis and financial control. This also serves to ensure that grants are used appropriately for their intended purpose. However, the school does not consult widely enough on its decisions and so the principles of best value are not applied as well as they should.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. In order to increase the pace of improvement in the school and to enable the improvement of standards in the core subjects, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Improve rigour in school strategic planning by:
(*Paragraph: 45*)
 - * considering a review of the school's aims to include an explicit commitment to high standards across the whole curriculum and educational inclusion;
 - * using the school's aims as the basis for widespread consultation on the priorities for development;
 - * ensuring that the targets for development are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time limited and have clear success criteria;
 - * including the governing body and other stakeholders in the monitoring and review of progress using the success criteria identified.

- Improve the role of curricular co-ordinators by:
(*Paragraphs: 45, 47, 73, 78, 85, 89, 94, 101, 107, 112, 120*)
 - * ensuring that co-ordinators have regular opportunities to monitor rigorously the work in their subject with a view to sharing good practice and eliminating poor practice;
 - * ensuring that co-ordinators' subject or area action plans include the whole school priorities alongside subject priorities and that they, too, include targets for development that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time limited and have clear success criteria;
 - * consider a system in which co-ordinators bid for, and subsequently control, funds based on the identified needs in the school development plan and the subject action plan.

- Reconsider the length of sessions, especially in the morning and in Key Stage 1, with a view to reducing their length and improving the use of curricular time.
(*Paragraphs: 14, 19, 77, 99*)

51. In addition, the school should consider including the following, more minor points in its action plan:

- Improve the standard of marking.
(*Paragraphs: 14, 73, 77, 84*)

- Improve the procedures for encouraging good attendance.
(*Paragraph: 32*)

- Seek to increase the involvement of parents in the school's work and increase the provision of curricular information for them.
(*Paragraphs: 42, 43*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	16	17	15	0	0	0
Percentage	13	29	31	27	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	237
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	77

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	66

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	21	17	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	14	17	14
	Girls	10	10	12
	Total	24	27	26
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	63 (81)	71 (81)	68 (86)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	15	14	16
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	25	25	27
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	66 (81)	66 (88)	71 (72)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	17	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	17
	Girls	12	12	14
	Total	25	25	31
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	61 (62)	61 (67)	76 (72)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	15
	Girls	12	10	9
	Total	24	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	59 (52)	56 (67)	59 (60)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	85 (78)

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	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	221
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4
Average class size	23.7

Education support staff:

YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	168

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	35
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	581433.00
Total expenditure	586759.00
Expenditure per pupil	1937.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	23278.00
Balance carried forward to next year	17932.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

287
82

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	38	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	32	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	49	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	52	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	60	37	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	31	15	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	33	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	33	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	36	12	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	57	38	4	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	36	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	41	11	2	5

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

52. Provision in the nursery and reception classes builds a very good basis for the children's future learning. The findings of the previous inspection indicate that provision was good at the time and further improvement has been made since then. The children enter the school in the nursery in a phased manner at the beginning of the school year. All children in the reception class start in September, initially on a part-time basis, but this changes to full-time within the first month. On entry to the school the children show some social skills but in most other areas, particularly in language, they begin their school career from a low starting point. Some of the children come from playgroups. This, together with the very warm and friendly atmosphere of the nursery class, helps them quickly to settle, begin to enjoy activities and demonstrate what they can do.

53. The teachers and the classroom assistants in the Foundation Stage work very well together as a team and plan a very wide variety of interesting activities and experiences that support children's development toward the Early Learning Goals recommended for children of this age. The teaching, both in the nursery and the reception class, is excellent. This quality is seen especially in the organisation of the activities, which vary during the day. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is very carefully planned and alternates each year so that in many areas fresh knowledge is taught and learned in both nursery and reception. This is a great strength of the planning.

54. The team leader and staff have a very detailed system of assessment and identify the children's individual needs very well. From their findings the staff are able to set individual targets for the children. The parents are kept well informed and this helps the staff build up a very good relationship between home and school. The high quality teaching throughout all areas of learning, combined with the assessment and the close links with parents, means that children make good progress. Nevertheless, they attain standards below those expected nationally before starting the National Curriculum. The staff takes particular care of children who have special educational needs so that they are able to make good progress in their Reception Year in school. Levels of work are carefully gauged to challenge all children whatever attainment they have achieved. Expectations of what the children can do are high in terms of directing themselves in class. The staff takes evident pleasure in every achievement made. This quickly reflects on the children, who come to school looking eagerly to see what is on offer today.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. The staff provides consistent, positive and encouraging role models and treat children courteously and respectfully. As a result, the children quickly learn to have confidence in the staff, behave very well in lessons, and get along together exceptionally well. This was seen for example when one child voluntarily helped others put away their materials. In the nursery it was very marked that even after only one day the children's confidence had improved so significantly that during the morning welcoming session the children excitedly asked questions about the international news. Staff regularly praise the children for their work and this builds up their self-esteem and influences the children to give praise to others. They are always ready to applaud other children's efforts, particularly when gathered together on the carpet. In going to and from the hall, the reception children's self-control is exemplary. During the activities the children work very well alongside each another and co-operate well in the home corner. This was evident

when children in the nursery helped each other in 'cooking' in the home corner and in reception in the 'cosy cave', where the children discussed what they were going to do. When supporting the children in their work, the staff is excellent at ensuring that the children are aware of their success and thus grow in self-esteem. The staff is on the look out for small improvements and reward children immediately. Independence is a keynote of the teaching and the children move very purposefully from one activity to the next. The children are confident in their secure environment and, especially in reception, demonstrate and talk happily about their work to visitors. The children's social experiences include being part of the larger community, as they share playtimes with some of the older pupils.

Communication, language and literacy

56. The teaching in this area of learning is of the highest quality. It gives continual emphasis to language throughout the day and in all activities. Children rapidly develop an interest in, and listen well to, stories and instructions. They share books with their friends. They like to retell the stories from the books they know well. There are some excellent story bags, with artefacts, of many of their stories and nursery rhymes with which the children are able to retell or create a story either individually or in pairs. When reading the 'big books' the teachers strongly emphasise the expressive presentation, which keeps the children interested and also increases their enjoyment when reading their own books. The teaching here is very lively and the children respond, finding the learning of words and sounds very exciting. They read simple words well such as 'bear', 'brave' and 'the'. In the nursery they listen very well to stories and the children in reception are able to build up stories and predict what will happen. The older children also point to the title and know that writing goes from left to right. The children's speaking, however, is very simply structured and many answers to questions are mostly of one word. This is tackled very well because the teachers are highly effective in building up the children's speaking skills. An example of this was when the teacher asked a child about the picture he had drawn and the answer came back: 'honey'. After a brief discussion the child spoke about his story and how 'Baby bear went to get the honey'.

57. At this early stage in the year the children are learning to form their letters satisfactorily and the scrutiny of work for the previous year indicates that a number of children used full stops and capital letters. They also wrote in sentences: 'I went to the park with my mum and dad.' During the year the children are given many opportunities to express their ideas through poetry, creative writing and reporting.

58. As the children love rhyming words, the staff use these very well to assist in spelling and extending the children's spelling. In the reception class the children are far from achieving the early learning goals, though, with the determined and most caring teaching, it is likely that they will be close to reaching them by the end of the school year.

Mathematical development

59. The teaching of mathematics is very good. Members of staff place a strong emphasis on using the language of number, size and shape throughout daily routines. In the nursery, counting begins at the start of the day as the teacher and children count who is present. When making miniature play dough birthday cakes the nursery nurse led the children in counting the number of candles and some very good learning took place.

60. The older children count to seven very well. The teacher had high expectations and challenged the children to estimate the number of teddies in a net bag. They gave various estimates, all of which were very close to the correct number. The children also show a good knowledge of addition skills both in the group session and individually, adding dominos. They also recognise money and know that 'it's used for shopping'. In the nursery and the reception class there are shops to give the children further good experience in the use of money. There are large and colourful displays of the basic mathematical shapes. The excellent provision for learning mathematics includes slightly demanding jigsaws with which the children explore shape, rotation and spatial awareness. One girl was observed sorting out sizes of bears to put into cut out shapes; she showed considerable skills in working out the spatial relationships by eye. The comparison of size was very well developed from the story of Goldilocks, for example bigger than, smaller than and smallest. The children work very well in practical areas such as with water, experimenting with volume and in threading beads and teddies in counting. The many activities provided ensure that children make good progress towards expected levels of attainment.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

61. Children start school with a very limited understanding of the world around them. However, the school ensures that, by a very full programme throughout the Foundation Stage, the children gain a much wider knowledge. Within the classroom they have constant provision of information technology. This is used appropriately in other subjects, particularly in literacy. The children are able at this early age to use the mouse accurately in dressing Teddy, and these skills increase in reception. There is a wide selection of construction toys, which the teachers vary from day to day. The children are particularly good at using these. During the inspection the children made very complex trains, putting wheels on with the supplied tools making very symmetrical working models. They make good use of the post box, sending get-well cards to Little Bear's mother. The children, after only a few days, already know where equipment belongs in their classrooms and clear away rapidly and neatly. The teachers are excellently organised and place a heavy emphasis on encouraging children's independence. In the nursery, the children get a very good start in this direction, as silhouettes of the equipment are painted on the shelves, so that it is easy to replace correctly. The staff uses many topics, such as the life cycle of the butterfly followed with visits to a butterfly park, where the children can observe butterflies emerging from their chrysalises. Visits are also made to a wildfowl centre. The children gain a great deal of first hand knowledge from this provision. Overall the very good provision and gains made by the children, the level of language and curiosity means that most children's achievements are good and by the end of the year they will be working well towards the early learning goals for this area.

Physical development

62. By the end of the reception year the children reach the level of co-ordination and physical skill expected for their age. Their fine motor skills are well developed and they show a good facility in using pencils and colours. The children use scissors well for their age. Provision for outside play is adequate at the moment but rather old. This will be remedied when the school moves to the new premises. The children in the nursery have a large secure area and are able to extend their physical development well by using tricycles and other mobile equipment. During the inspection there were no specific lessons as the children were only attending part-time. However the reception class children showed very good awareness of their own space and that of others during an excellent drama lesson as they skipped and ran around a 'dark forest'. The curriculum indicates that the children are

given plenty of opportunity for movement in physical education and they show good skills in fine motor control using pencils and colours.

Creative development

63. Children have many and varied opportunities to be creative. Reception staff work hard to provide good opportunities for children to extend their understanding of the world through their imaginations. The children in the nursery have already produced very colourful paintings and they work very purposefully using play dough. In reception the children have also been very busy with their paints and there is a very good display of paintings, showing good detail of animals and good use of colour. The children also show good skills in cutting and sticking when sticking fur onto a teddy template. Planning shows that the children will have many experiences in drama and role-play situations such as the baby clinic or the dentist and hospital. There are further opportunities for collage. By the time the children move on to the National Curriculum they have attained all that is expected of them.

ENGLISH

64. The standards of English are below what is expected of pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. This represents a similar picture to the levels of attainment at the time of the last inspection. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in listening and reading, but do not do so in speaking and writing. The trend of improvement over recent years has been disappointing until this year. The results of the national tests for 2001 showed a clear rise in standards; this was mainly because there were fewer lower-attaining pupils. Standards are very similar in Years 3 to 6, but reading is also below expectations. Improvement was also significant in 2001, after a period when standards remained well below the national average. The improvement was mainly due to successful teaching of the good number of higher attaining pupils in the class. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as a second language make good progress.

65. By the end of Year 2, pupils' speaking and listening skills are below what is expected of pupils of their age. The good relationships that teachers build with their pupils and their efficient lesson organisation means that pupils have good levels of concentration. This in turn produces satisfactory, often good, listening. Effective understanding, however, is tempered by the pupils' limited vocabulary. Pupils do not speak with confidence and clarity. Teachers do not prepare enough structured opportunities for speaking or ask enough open-ended questions. This does not encourage pupils to speak readily and effectively. When teachers do involve pupils more in fruitful discussion and ask suitably demanding questions, many pupils are reticent, particularly those with special educational needs. When they do speak, they tend to speak in words or short phrases and rarely describe things well. For example, when asked to describe the picture of a man banging a nail in to a wall, less than half of the pupils in Years 2 could do so clearly. Only higher-attaining pupils speak with confidence and competence.

66. By the end of Year 6, pupils listen satisfactorily but still do not speak with the expected confidence and accuracy. It is again a question of vocabulary and lack of speaking opportunities. Teachers have not succeeded enough in broadening the learning experiences of pupils through language. For example, in one lesson, pupils simply copied out the work expected of them from the board, without any prior discussion. Sometimes, teachers' expectations are inappropriate. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher tried to inspire pupils' expression through the reading of Shakespeare. This motivated many pupils but equally many, especially those with special educational needs, found this hard because they did not understand such words as 'hound' and 'hog', not to mention 'cataracts'. Many

pupils find it hard to express their opinions and often remain silent in lessons. Teachers do not involve them enough in discussion and this restricts pupils' progress. When discussing the impact of a storm, many pupils tended to describe how they might feel using safe words like 'sad' and 'unhappy'. Higher-attaining pupils are, however, expansive and imaginative. For example, one pupil described fallen trees as 'carpeting the ground'.

67. Pupils have satisfactory reading skills by the end of Year 2. They can read sentences with some fluency, though not much confidence. They are comfortable with familiar texts and use pictures to guide them at times. They know how to sound out the initial letters of words when tackling new words but only higher-attaining pupils are able to sound out words accurately, albeit gingerly. They can, for example, read the word 'confidence' although they do not understand what it means. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, have difficulty reading. They rely on recognising whole words but this can be unreliable. One pupil regarded 'saw' and 'said' as the same word. Teachers do not ensure that pupils are heard to read often enough on their own. As a result, there is not a sufficient focus on pupils' individual needs.

68. Pupils have not developed their reading skills enough by the end of Year 6. Their overall standard of reading is below expectations for pupils of their age. Teachers do not ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of stimulating and interesting reading material. Most pupils in Year 6, for example, still read books from guided reading schemes and this does little to motivate them to improve apace. In addition, as in Years 1 and 2, pupils tend only to be heard reading in groups. Most pupils are competent readers, have some fluency and can read increasingly complex words such as 'malpractice'. They are not very confident, though, and they do not read with much expression. Pupils with special educational needs have real difficulty in reading. They do not enjoy reading, often struggle over simple words and have little expression or understanding. By contrast, higher-attaining pupils are expressive, smooth and efficient. Pupils' range of reading is narrow. Few pupils read anything other than story books.

69. By the end of Year 2, pupils' writing skills are unsatisfactory. They are beginning to write in short sentences and spell simple words correctly. Some pupils can extend sentences, such as 'when I got off the plane, I was excited', but this is not the norm. They are also beginning to sequence sentences, although thinking can be muddled at times. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are quite brief in writing and struggle with their spelling of such common words as 'come' and 'go'. Their handwriting is also inconsistent. Pupils understand the need for simple punctuation, such as full stops and capital letters, but do not always remember to use it. Higher-attaining pupils write with quite mature expression. They construct simple stories skilfully and use suitably adept expressions – 'we both put our thumbs up at each other and winked'.

70. Writing remains unsatisfactory by the end of Year 6. Teachers do not always promote writing in English lessons and in other subjects. They concentrate on grammatical practice and provide many worksheets and do not encourage the pupils' independent writing skills enough. As a result, pupils structure their writing quite well, but expression is mostly humdrum, lacking real imagination and ideas. Pupils do use more complex sentences but not confidently enough. Spelling can be suspect and handwriting is not always joined up and neat. Lower-attaining pupils can also write at some length, but often lack clarity and precision. For example, many were unable to write about the advantages and disadvantages of walking to school convincingly. Higher-attaining pupils are quite accomplished. They show good imagination, for example, describing lightning as 'fierce, yellow streaks striking quicker than you blink'. They develop their writing thoughtfully, even breaking it up into good paragraphs.

71. The quality of teaching is sound. There is also clear evidence of good teaching, but this is not consistent enough to drive up standards significantly. Teachers generate a good working atmosphere in their classrooms. They build good relationships with the pupils, so that behaviour and attitudes are positive and respectful. They value pupils' contributions and praise their efforts. As a result, pupils take a pride in their work and are keen to share their achievements. Teachers plan lessons satisfactorily and usually set work suitable for the different abilities of pupils. However, there are times when their normally good expectations are too erratic and this causes difficulty for different groups of pupils. For example, in a Year 5 class, most pupils were given a very long passage from Alice in Wonderland, when pinpointing direct speech. The work was suitably challenging for higher attaining pupils, but average pupils floundered. A simpler task had been given to the lower attaining pupils. On other occasions, teachers are too ambitious. To expect pupils with reading problems to understand Shakespeare is over optimistic and, in fact reinforces pupils' disinterest.

72. Teachers structure their lessons well. They move smoothly from activity to activity, generally explain new issues well and outline work required clearly enough. Sometimes, the pace of lessons is swift. In a Year 2 lesson, a spelling game kept pupils very focused and interested. However, there are times when the pace falters a little, especially when pupils are completing tasks. Teachers do monitor how pupils are progressing but do not insist on a rapid pace of work, and so pupils have little sense of urgency to complete work. Teachers do not use other subjects to expand the use of English. Some pupils word-process their work and they write about visits to museums, but teachers do not exploit opportunities across the curriculum. As a result, teachers do not broaden pupils' vocabulary enough or develop fully their speaking and writing skills. In addition, information and communication technology is not used to its full advantage to support learning.

73. The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory but lacks rigour. The school has recognised the pupils' weaknesses in speaking and writing and now has an efficient action plan. However, the school has been aware of these shortcomings for a number of years and it has not acted fast enough to improve matters. Although there is a thorough analysis of pupils' test results on a regular basis, there is little detailed analysis of the problems of attainment, so that they can be addressed. For example, there is no clear guidance about how to improve the reading of boys. Teachers do not assess the progress of pupils systematically in speaking, listening and especially reading. They do set individual targets to try to help pupils improve, but these are often too vague to have any impact. Their marking does not give enough guidance to show pupils how to improve. The co-ordinator has no time out of class to monitor teaching and pupils' progress effectively on a regular basis. This is a weakness. The school has been slow to act on proper resourcing, especially in Years 3 to 6. The range of fiction and non-fiction is limited and not good enough to inspire pupils to enjoy a wide range of reading.

MATHEMATICS

74. Although standards at the end of Year 6 are below national expectations overall, this represents good achievement by these pupils, when considered in the light of their attainment on entry, and the background in the area of social disadvantage. In Year 2 standards are about average. This good achievement comes about through good teaching based on the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, standards could be rising faster if time were used more rigorously in the infant department.

75. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests (which are the latest for which national comparisons can be made), the overall standards at the end of Year 2 were very low compared both with all schools and with schools with a similar intake – that is, the school was in the bottom five percent nationally. The 2001 provisional results show a significant improvement over this situation, both at the expected Level 2 and the higher Level 3. Until 2001, there had not been a secure trend of improvement. Inspection evidence, which includes an analysis of completed work, observations in lessons and discussions with pupils and staff, shows that the current pupils in Year 2 are attaining at about the expected level. These pupils entered the National Curriculum with standards that were below average and have achieved well during Years 1 and 2. The principal focus of the numeracy strategy is towards a greater facility with number, and pupils in Year 2 were working within Level 1 of the National Curriculum, which is broadly as might be expected at this early stage in the year. Pupils could write two-digit numbers and then write one more than, or one less than, a given number. They could also read and write the numbers in words. They can order numbers and know the main addition facts up to at least ten.

76. The test results for 2000 at Year 6 were also disappointing. The school's results were well below average compared to all schools, and below average when compared only to those with a similar intake. This was because there were too many pupils who failed to attain the expected Level 4, although the proportion gaining the higher Level 5 was quite respectable. This year group included a rather higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Again, the provisional results for 2001 show some improvement. There was a modest improvement in the proportion gaining at least the expected Level 4, and the proportion at Level 5 was maintained. There has been a steady trend of improvement to these standards over recent years, and these pupils have also achieved well over their time in Years 3 to 6. A combination of average standards in Year 2 compared with below average standards in Year 6 could suggest that pupils in the juniors do not make enough progress. However, this comparison is misleading, as the impetus for improvement from the National Numeracy Strategy becomes apparent first in the infants as these pupils do not have the learning deficit to overcome that their older peers have. The highest attainers in Year 6 are achieving about average standards as they work on mental strategies for multiplication. They can select, sometimes with help, the appropriate method, using doubling, or the use of known facts, for example to calculate 80 multiplied by 6 given that they already knew eight times six. The highest attainers could explain the use of more advanced strategies, for example, doing thirty-six times twenty minus thirty-six to accurately calculate thirty-six times nineteen. Their lower attaining peers were working on subtraction by splitting the number – for example, calculating 17-9 as 17-7-2, and using the easier subtraction of 17-7 as a first step. These pupils found this process difficult to understand, but after diligent explanation from the teacher they were able to use the method successfully. Pupils are given opportunities to use their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum, for example, graphing the outcomes of experiments in science.

77. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. In almost all of the lessons observed, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be at least good. They tend to be attentive and respond well to teachers' questions. However, some lessons, especially in the infant department, were overlong. In these, pupils sometimes lost concentration during lengthy whole class sections. It is a credit to teachers' management skills that pupils' behaviour did not degenerate in these lessons. The effect of this length of lesson was that the pace suffered and pupils did not work with a sense of urgency. Nevertheless, learning was always at least satisfactory. This is because teaching is good overall. Of the eleven lessons observed, teaching was judged to be good or better in eight, with six being very

good or better and two excellent. When these observations were placed in context through the analysis of completed work, then it is clear that teaching overall is good, and this leads to pupils making good progress and learning well. When teaching is very good or excellent, the brisk pace is maintained and pupils are challenged at just the right level. They are inspired and work hard. This happened in a lesson about subtraction with a low-attaining junior class. The teacher's explanation was very good with an excellent focus on the vocabulary of subtraction. The use of alternative words made for variety and also reinforced pupils' literacy skills. The teacher's excellent rapport with the class enabled a rapid pace and built pupils' confidence considerably, leading to excellent learning. In a very good infant lesson, pupils were well challenged as they practised reading and writing numbers in both words and figures. The teacher used questions well and listened actively to pupils' responses, making good use of them. During the group tasks, her movement around the room served to keep pupils on task, with seamless extension work available and readily to hand. When teaching, whilst still satisfactory, is less effective, the pace is adversely affected by the lesson's length. In some lessons, the balance between whole class discussion and individual work was not sharp enough, as pupils were kept together for too long and began to lose interest. The analysis of pupils' completed work showed that the school's policy for marking is not followed consistently. Too much consists of just ticks with celebratory comments, and the process of short-term target setting and review is notable by its absence. Information and communication technology is not used effectively enough to support learning in mathematics.

78. The use of setting by prior attainment in the junior department has served to improve the match of tasks to pupils' needs, but this can still be inconsistent at times. The co-ordinator is not able to act as a true subject leader as she is unable to undertake regular monitoring of planning, teaching and pupils' work, and the analysis of test results is completed by the headteacher and later shared with her. She has little input into the school management plan and does not control a subject budget. These criticisms stem from the systems in place in the school under which all co-ordinators work.

SCIENCE

79. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and learning. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress. This results from good teaching and learning. They do not, however, reach the average national standards because they start from a low base and there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

80. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2000 was well below the national average. Provisional results for 2001 indicate some improvement. These results however, cannot be compared with the national average, as this data is not yet available. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2000 was similarly below the national average. However, their results are similar to those of pupils in similar schools. Provisional results indicate that pupils' performance in 2001 is similar to that of 2000. The performance of girls has improved significantly since 1998 and is now close to their national average. The performance of boys has not improved by the same margin. The girls improved performance has had a positive effect on the overall trend of pupils' results since 1998. Inspection evidence of the work of junior age pupils confirms an improvement in standards, but these remain below the national average. Fewer pupils than nationally reach the expected Level 4 or above. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection is satisfactory.

81. Fewer seven-year-olds than nationally attain the expected standards and few pupils attain the higher Level 3. They observe and describe minibeasts such as woodlice and insects. They know that water and ice are interchangeable. However, their knowledge and understanding of physical processes is weak.

82. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have above average skills in aspects of scientific investigations such as separating various mixtures consisting of sand, sawdust and salt. Their knowledge and understanding of materials and their properties and of physical properties are satisfactory. For example, they understand the effect of heat on materials such as chocolate and egg and can identify circuits that do or do not work. Their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things are below average, for example, in the area of animal adaptations for different habitats. Higher attaining pupils have better knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the subject, for example, in the use of keys to identify animals and their adaptations.

83. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 know what affects the brightness of a bulb. They show sound awareness of fair testing, for example, one pupil described this as, 'same amount of batteries, same amount of bulbs'. Pupils have some understanding of the properties that distinguish solids, liquids and gas. The average pupil has difficulty in explaining scientific phenomena, for example, how containers of different shapes and sizes affect the rate of evaporation of water in them. They have some understanding of the relationships between scientific ideas, for example, solid, liquid, gas, heat, evaporation, and condensation. Higher attaining pupils have a better understanding of these. For example, they describe sand as 'a solid formed from broken pieces of shell and rock'. Most pupils have weaker knowledge and understanding of physical processes. For example, they are unsure how to change the pitch of a stringed or wind instrument.

84. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory because of the satisfactory quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good because teaching and learning are better. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in science lessons are also good. These help pupils to achieve well. In the junior department, teachers have strengths in several aspects of their teaching. They have secure knowledge of science which helps them to provide challenging work to all pupils according to their needs. They apply effective methods and use resources well. Management of pupils is invariably good and this helps in maintaining a good and productive atmosphere during learning. There are weaknesses in marking, which mainly consists of ticks. These do not help pupils to correct their work and try harder. Excellent learning in one lesson was achieved by a very well planned, resourced and organised teaching done at a very good pace. The work was varied to match the needs of pupils of different abilities and a 'fill in the gaps' exercise provided useful assessment information on pupils' learning of the circulatory system. Pupils used electronic pulse meters to take their pulse five times and work out their average pulse rate. They learnt that the pulse rate of the same and different pupils can differ widely and that averaging gives a more accurate picture.

85. The overall leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. However, a lack of rigorous monitoring of teaching restricts the sharing of good practice in the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The two-yearly curriculum cycle is sound. However, some aspects of planning are not as good as expected. For example, the design of one work sheet for infants does not treat insects as animals and there is some confusion between animals and mammals. The use of information and communication technology is limited to very few areas. For example, using sensors to measure changes in temperature of water. The overall provision that the subject makes to pupils' learning is good.

ART AND DESIGN

86. During the inspection, only a limited range of artwork was on display and there were no lessons on the school timetable. There was also little evidence from previous years. On the basis of the limited artwork seen, pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 is in line with national expectations. This is a similar picture to findings in the last inspection.

87. By the end of Year 2, pupils have satisfactory skills in drawing, painting, cutting and pasting. They can paint clear pictures of themselves and other pupils, and garnish the heads with bits of wool or crinkled paper effectively to represent hair. They can draw outlines of heads on black paper and cut them out neatly to make striking silhouettes. By the end of Year 6, pupils are able to work with different materials and with more impact. Pupils in Year 4, for example, produced some fine examples of painted butterflies on silk, following careful tracing and precise colouring. However, some chairs made out of drinking straws and paper were much cruder and not sufficiently inspired by van Gogh's 'Bedroom at Arles'. Older pupils know how to portray people in action through the use of paper shapes strategically placed. They also appreciate the contrast of silhouettes and are able to use the more complex outline of trees. Some pupils develop skills in pencil shading and the use of charcoal. The timbers of a Tudor house were well brought out with charcoal, although pupils were only working on a photocopied outline.

88. Teachers follow a national scheme of work which should give pupils a broad experience of art. It is not clear how much variety pupils encounter, especially as there is only a limited amount of time that is devoted to art on the timetable. The school does not have many resources other than basic materials, paper and paints, and so work in three dimensions is problematic. There are not many examples of the work of major artists to guide and inspire pupils to learn styles and techniques. Teachers do not use art and design productively in other subjects. For example, in history, teachers often expect pupils simply to colour in worksheets rather than produce their own designs or illustrations. When pupils do produce their own versions, there is little evidence that teachers give advice about technique and care enough about precision. Teachers do encourage pupils to use sketchbooks, however, and this helps pupils to reflect on their initial ideas. Teachers enrich the curriculum occasionally through the use of visiting artists who help pupils produce such creations as a mural for the junior playground and Millennium tiles for the new school building.

89. There is little development of the subject throughout the school. There is no analysis of pupils' standards or needs, and no plans for the future. Although the staff has suitable skills, there has been no recent training to develop their skills further. The co-ordinator has little time beyond her teaching responsibilities to monitor anything other than pupils' progress from the displays around the school. The displays themselves, however, are not very imaginative.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress in design and technology because of satisfactory teaching and learning based on the comparatively recently introduced national model scheme of work. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour in design and technology lessons also make a significant contribution to their satisfactory achievement in the subject. Because of the organisation of the curriculum on a two-yearly cycle, it will take some time to cover, review and revise the scheme of work to meet the diverse needs of the pupils in the school and improve pupils' progress to a good standard or better. All pupils, irrespective of gender, ability and background, receive a similar curriculum. As a result, they all make similar progress. The school has made satisfactory progress in the subject since the last inspection.

91. Year 2 pupils attain average standards. For example, they develop ideas for finger puppets, make sketch plans of them, make paper templates, cut fabric, stitch the pieces and finish these by using a sound range of decorating materials.

92. The average standards of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are reflected in their work on designing, making and evaluating paper chairs, photo frames, packaging and a torch. The design brief for the torch involved designing an appropriate circuit using a switch and a bulb and finally housing these in a paper cylinder and decorating these to make them look attractive. Additionally, the present curriculum provides opportunities for design and technology work on storybooks, moving toys and sandwiches. Upper juniors develop sound skills, knowledge and understanding by designing and making wheeled vehicles, traffic lights, and biscuits. Work is also planned for further learning in design and technology involving musical instruments, slippers and bread.

93. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons throughout the school were good. However, an analysis of pupils' work over the whole year shows that the teachers do not teach enough of the subject. This means that the overall quality of teaching and learning in the subject is satisfactory. In a very good lesson, a thorough discussion on varieties of biscuits at the beginning increased pupils' knowledge and understanding of biscuits and the associated vocabulary, for example, 'sweet', 'savoury', 'plain', 'flavoured' and 'sandwiched'. These helped pupils in evaluating a good variety of biscuits, which further enhanced the pupils' level of understanding. The teacher's explanations were clear and pupils were kept interested and engaged in the set task. As a consequence their learning progressed at a good pace. Pupils enjoyed the lesson very much, learnt a lot about the ingredients of various biscuits and developed good teamwork. They were very well prepared for subsequent task of designing and making biscuits.

94. The overall leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory but there are some weaknesses. For example, there is no opportunity for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the school. There are also weaknesses in the assessment of pupils' standards of attainment and progress in the subject. However, the recent introduction of the national model scheme of work is addressing the curricular weaknesses that had developed during the recent years due to the emphases on national initiatives such as literacy and numeracy.

GEOGRAPHY

95. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress. The school however does not spend enough time on the subject. This prevents pupils from making good progress. The recent introduction of the national model scheme of work has started to have a positive impact. Because the curriculum is planned on a two-yearly cycle, it will take that long to review and tailor the scheme more accurately for the needs of the pupils in the school. All pupils, irrespective of gender, ability and background receive similar curricular opportunities. As a result, they all make similar progress. The school has made satisfactory progress in the subject since the last inspection.

96. Year 2 pupils attain average standards. They understand what constitute geographical features and their importance when it comes to describing various places. They have sound understanding of distant places such as Dorset, Weymouth and Blackpool. They know the countries that make up the United Kingdom. They also know the location of capital cities of these countries, for example, Cardiff in Wales. They are beginning to understand patterns and correlations such as the temperature of a place and the clothes that the inhabitants of these places wear.

97. Average standards of Year 4 pupils are reflected in their work. They use keys and symbols to describe features such as water, trees, a bridge and a path and have sound map skills. They know some of the main rivers of the British Isles, for example, the Thames and the Severn. They are beginning to use four figure grid references to locate and describe the location of important geographical features. They have good knowledge of some of the geographical features of India, for example, Eastern and Western Ghats, the Deccan Plateau, Thar Desert, and some of the crops grown in the south of the country. Higher-attaining pupils have greater knowledge of India, for example the location of several main cities.

98. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 attain average standards. They know several mountains and their peaks in different continents, for example, the Andes, Alps and Himalayas, as well as the location of the Cambrian Mountains, the Grampians and the Pennines. They use appropriate vocabulary to describe familiar landscapes.

99. Teaching was observed only in Years 1 and 2 because of the construction of the timetable. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory and these contribute to pupils' average achievement. Pupils demonstrate good levels of interest in the subject and their behaviour is good. Some show good initiative in tidying up the classroom at the end of the lessons. However, they tend to lose concentration in some lessons because they are too long. These also slow the rate of learning and reduce productivity.

100. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers often make good links with literacy. They read relevant books with the class. This increases pupils' understanding of the geography of an imaginary island. Teachers' make effective use of questioning to stimulate interest, promote learning and check understanding. They give clear explanations but do not always check if pupils have understood these. This delays learning, especially of pupils working independently. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to explain important words.

101. The recent introduction of national model scheme of work is having a positive impact on learning. Effective monitoring of coverage ensures all pupils receive similar learning opportunities. However, there is no monitoring of teaching. As a result the school

does not make full use of teachers' strengths or improve upon aspects that need improvement, for example, a consistent focus on key vocabulary.

HISTORY

102. Pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, however, pupils do not do as well as expected for pupils of their age. Although pupils have a reasonable knowledge of historical facts, they do not have the language skills to present them effectively enough and they lack experience in carrying out simple research of information. This means that standards have deteriorated slightly since the last inspection

103. By the end of Year 2, pupils have learned about the life of an important person, such as Grace Darling. They can write simple accounts of her life and her rescue of sailors, and support this with pictures of a lighthouse. They are beginning to understand that it is important to ask questions to ascertain why things happened the way did, but pupils have little opportunity to find answers to their own questions. Pupils can see, using comparisons of housing, how life has changed over the years. They understand that roofing material has changed from straw to tiles and that oil lamps have been superseded by electric lights. The uncertain writing skills of most pupils limit their effectiveness in presenting facts. Only higher attaining pupils write accurately, as well as label the pictures clearly.

104. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge of history. In their study of Ancient Greeks, for example, they understand how communities developed in different ways. They can compare the culture of Athens with the bleak rigour of Sparta and deduce why there was friction between them. They appreciate the impact of history through, for example, language. They know that words such as 'photography' and 'hydrogen' have their origins in Greek. Pupils also know how children were taught in schools in ancient Greece and had to use a stylus on wax tablets when writing, for example. They can embellish facts through pictures. They carefully decorate pictures of Greek pots but they seldom have the opportunity to produce their own pictures, diagrams or designs. Even when drawing a Tudor house, pupils had to copy a given outline. Similarly with writing, pupils do not have enough opportunity or skills to write down factual accounts in detail. Nor do they have effective research skills to help find vital facts for themselves. Increasingly, pupils are able to access the Internet to locate interesting data, but at present these enquiries are heavily guided by teachers.

105. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching is good when the teachers show a strong knowledge of the subject, have a clear enthusiasm and use rich resources. This clearly motivates pupils and promotes good learning. In lessons on the Victorians, teachers conveyed the style of a Victorian classroom by wearing mortarboards, using high chairs and brandishing a whippy cane. Pupils readily responded, listened intently and were eager to look at other artefacts to see how life has moved forward. In lessons like these, the pace of work moves quickly and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening through focused discussion. In the better lessons, too, the rapport between the teachers and pupils is strong. This encourages pupils to relax and enjoy the subject, and do their best for the teachers.

106. However, teaching is not always stimulating enough. Teachers still tend to rely on using worksheets too much. This restricts pupils' interest and creativity, and reduces the chances to improve factual writing skills. Teachers do not enable pupils to use a wide range of resources to investigate history for themselves. When pupils are expected to locate facts in books, teachers provide very specific prompts which give pupils little leeway. Teachers plan their lessons satisfactorily but do not allow for different ages and abilities

enough. For example, the least able pupils in Year 5 and the most able pupils in Year 6 are given the same work. This presents problems of language, which is either too hard for one or too easy for the other. It also constrains the proper development of research and presentation skills which are important in demonstrating knowledge.

107. The co-ordinator has wisely adapted a new national scheme of work to fit in with the best parts of the school's existing scheme. The curriculum is enriched by visits to local museums and the proximity of the open-air museum at Beamish is especially beneficial. Pupils will shortly, for example, act out a day as Victorian schoolchildren to allow them to appreciate just what it must have been like. However, the school does not devote a lot of time to the subject and this inevitably limits the range of topics and the depth in which pupils can study. Teachers do not plan systematically to improve pupils' opportunities for speaking, and are only just beginning to harness the powers of information and communication technology to maximise research options. Resources are good, because several teachers spend time acquiring artefacts. What they cannot find, they borrow from the local authority. The co-ordinator has worked hard to evaluate and develop the subject but has little time available to do this. Her current priority for development is the improvement of historical enquiry. This is very appropriate but requires a whole school approach for it to succeed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

108. No direct teaching of information and communication technology could be observed. Few pupils were seen using the computer. Other evidence was gathered through the analysis of pupils' work, examining schemes of work and holding discussions with teachers in order to make secure judgements.

109. The proportion of pupils that attain nationally expected standards falls well short of what is expected at the ends of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils do not make sufficient progress either. The main causes are insufficient time spent on teaching the subject and shortage of computers and software. There are also weaknesses in the curriculum and assessment procedures and in the leadership and management of the subject. The school has not made sufficient progress in the subject since the last inspection.

110. A few pupils who worked in pairs demonstrate that in Year 6 they use the Internet to gather information, for example, about Victorian schools. They also have sound word processing skills.

111. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils across the school do not achieve sufficiently high standards. Nevertheless, some seven-year-olds can plan and give instructions to make a floor robot move. They can enter, save and retrieve their work, for example, when entering data and using the computer to draw pictograms of their favourite animals. Nine-year-olds have used heat sensors to compare rate of heat loss from two cups, one covered in bubble wrap and the other kept uncovered. Eleven-year-olds compose poetry and add appropriate borders and clipart to improve their presentations. They write simple instructions using a given program to control traffic lights. Pupils make limited use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

112. The current quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory. There is no monitoring of teaching. However, all the teachers in the school have completed the specified training for teaching the subject

competently. The school is moving into a new building shortly and plans are well advanced for a computer suite with the required number of computers to improve standard of attainment and rate of progress. The school is also moving towards introducing the national model scheme of work.

MUSIC

113. Provision for music is satisfactory, though somewhat unusual, as there is no co-ordinator or scheme of work. Most of the music in the school is taught through singing. The standard varies from class to class but is in general satisfactory and the school has maintained the standards found in the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

114. All the pupils seen in lessons show a great joy of singing, keep very good time and are usually melodious. Seven year old pupils make very good progress and during one of the lessons seen they learned to sing a complete song and also learned that refrain meant chorus and that the verse was part of the poetic theme running through the song. The teacher in this lesson was particularly gifted musically and had very high expectations of her class. She was well rewarded. In Year 1 supported again by good teaching pupils made good progress in singing a Swahili song. Their enjoyment of the pupils in both lessons was tangible and they shared the few musical instruments available willingly.

115. The good teaching in Year 4 again had high expectations of the pupils, who had to identify different musical instrument from a tape and then successfully clapped out a complex musical rhythm. Lower attaining pupils found the tempo of rhythm fast and had difficulty following it. They were more successful once they started singing after clear and confident instructions. The pupils enjoyed the jive hand movements and the lesson went 'swinging' along. With such talented teaching in the school, it is surprising that no one feels confident enough to take on the role of co-ordinator. Year 6 pupils were observed singing with gusto in some of the assemblies.

116. Though lacking a co-ordinator the school makes sure that the children are able to participate in outside events and Year 5 pupils took part in the schools' musical festival in Gateshead. A visiting teacher gave weekly workshops on the 'steel pans' and the pupils learned Asian, African and Caribbean English songs, giving the pupils a good multicultural musical background. A number of children learn individual instruments under the guidance of a regular visiting teacher and there is a recorder group.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

117. It is not possible to make a judgement on pupils' attainment. During the inspection only three lessons were seen and swimming records were inconclusive. This does not represent enough breadth of the curriculum on which to base balanced judgements. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2.

118. By the time they leave school, pupils have satisfactory skills in dance. Pupils know the importance of warming up before exercise. Pupils listen well to music in order to interpret it through movement. For example, most pupils in one lesson were able to creep as furtively as a jewel thief to the tune of 'The Pink Panther'. A few pupils were too self-conscious to enter into the spirit of the role and move fluently. In rugby, pupils are developing sound skills. Many pupils show good awareness of space when on the move,

although a few pupils lack self-discipline when running and run into other pupils. They know how to pass the ball but not yet how to hold the ball with two hands when attacking at pace. Pupils are not aware enough of their own strengths and weaknesses. Teachers do not give them the chance to reflect on what they have done and evaluate the level of their success.

119. Teaching seen was satisfactory overall. Where it was good, teachers had already developed good relationships with their pupils, which prompted a healthy respect and courteous behaviour. Teachers emphasise the importance of warming up and cooling off before and after exercise. They also demonstrate good techniques for the pupils to follow. This was very evident when Year 4 pupils were shown how to develop more sophisticated dance movements. Not all teachers retain firm control over the pupils. For example, some frivolous running around in rugby was not dealt with and, therefore, the pupils did not learn to improve. In addition, teachers do not always give clear enough guidelines or demonstrations so that pupils can acquire new skills. This was seen in a rugby lesson when pupils were told to run with the ball under one arm rather than held in two hands. Teachers do not help pupils develop fully by talking through what they have done in lessons, in order to praise achievement and spotlight weaknesses. Such activity would also give pupils more practice and confidence in speaking.

120. The subject benefits from a wide range of resources and from a swimming pool on site. However, the use of the swimming pool is restricted to pupils of Years 3 and 4. The present hall is barely adequate for indoor games, especially for older pupils. The new hall will be better, not larger, but without the encumbrances of equipment stored around the sides. Pupils will also shortly benefit from a good all-weather court and access again to their field, which they currently lack. The school runs a number of good extra-curricular sports activities, including football, athletics and cross-country. The subject is well led, although the co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to monitor the work of the subject closely.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

121. Provision for religious education is good. Four lessons were observed during the inspection and scrutiny of the teachers' planning and the pupils' work indicates that the achievement of pupils aged seven and eleven is good and standards are certainly in line with the local authority's syllabus. Thus standards have been maintained since the previous report. Pupil with special educational needs also make good progress.

122. Pupils up to the age of seven are learning well about the creation story in the Bible. They take a lively interest and produce lively drawings to depict the seven days and coped well with the challenge of drawing a picture of the creation of light. The pupils understand the meaning of creation, '...making things...', 'they say. They also have the opportunity to visit various churches.

123. In Year 3 pupils were learning about Guru Nanak's life and were very interested in the extraordinary events. Consequently, their follow up work was of very good quality and the fact that he was said to talk from birth was a cause for wonder. Some Year 6 pupils struggled a little in learning about the revival of Christianity in the north of England, but this was learning based solely on facts with many names to learn. But the topic is most appropriate for the history the church in Northumberland.

124. The younger pupils learn about Buddhism, and the contemplative way of life. They make their own Jewish Mezuzah, a house prayer and container pinned to the front doorways of the houses. The school presents these pupils with an extensive curriculum, which is lively and is for the most part Christian in content. This is also true for the older pupils, but they also learn about Guru Nanak and Sikhism and the Hindu religion and the their great pilgrimages. There are also some important elements of human interest such as the life of Helen Keller and the founding of the Red Cross. Despite the wide curriculum the spiritual aspects of religion are not strongly reflected in the school.

125. Much of the teaching is good or very good but there is not a call for a great deal of reflection on the part of the pupils. The very good teaching involved the pupils throughout the lessons giving them many opportunities to contribute to the body of knowledge being taught. In lessons that were satisfactory the teacher supplied all information, giving the pupils little chance to participate actively. Differentiation, presenting work that suits different achievement levels, is good in this subject area. Pupils show their great interest by presenting good consistent work.

126. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The policy is very clear and specifically notes the need to include pupils with special needs and English as an additional language. There is regular monitoring of work at the end of each topic and planning is discussed with the teachers. Assessment is built into the local authority syllabus. The co-ordinator's professional development is good and she attends many courses and conferences and relays appropriate information back to the staff. Resources are adequate, with a sufficient supply of artefacts to rouse interest in the different religions.