

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **TOW LAW MILLENNIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114055

Headteacher: Mrs Lisa Jackson

Reporting inspector: Barbara Crane  
21227

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 195934

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wear Street Attlee Estate Tow Law Bishop Auckland Co Durham
Postcode:	DL13 4LF
Telephone number:	01388 730283
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Donaghy
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21227	Barbara Crane	Registered inspector	English, science, Foundation Stage, art and design, history, geography.	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14141	Ernie Marshall	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
29989	Pauline Goodsell	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education, music, religious education, special educational needs, equal opportunities.	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**

This school is smaller than most primary schools and has 96 boys and girls aged between four and eleven years. The school occupies a very exposed site and serves part of the former mining town of Tow Law in which there is a high level of unemployment. All but a very few pupils come from white UK heritage families and all pupils speak English. A fifth of the school's population changes in each school year. In the present Year 6, half of these pupils did not start at the school. Forty-one per cent of pupils, which is above the national average, have special educational needs that involve difficulties with emotional and behavioural or learning difficulties. Half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. When the pupils start at the school their attainment is very low, particularly in language. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year, and most of the teachers have been at the school for only two years. The school experiences considerable difficulty in recruiting staff.

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

The school provides a good quality education for its pupils and enables them to achieve well. This is because of the good teaching and the very effective emphasis that has been placed on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school. Although standards are well below the level seen nationally, the pupils make good progress in their work, from a low starting point. The leadership and management of the school are very good and the staff and governors have worked hard to bring about improvement and ensure that the school provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching is good and teachers plan very well to ensure that pupils use computers as part of their everyday learning.
- The school caters very well for pupils with special educational needs, and teachers and classroom assistants give them good quality support.
- Pupils enjoy school, gain confidence and get on well together because of the school's very good guidance for their behaviour and its planning to support their social development.
- The school is very well led and managed and the staff and governors work very well as a team to ensure that raising standards is at the heart of their work.
- Parents have confidence in the school because it gives them very good information about what it is doing and the staff are approachable.

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

- The teachers' assessments in reading should be better used to set targets for some pupils.
- The pupils' speed in mental mathematics should be better.
- The pupils' scientific vocabulary should be better promoted.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

There has been very good improvement since the school was last inspected in 1997, in spite of considerable barriers. Much of the work has been achieved in the past year, as the school's efforts to improve the pupils' attitudes and behaviour have paid dividends. This is reflected in the parents' increased confidence in the school's ability to deal with challenging behaviour. Teaching is better because of the school's close focus on checking what works well and bringing about improvements where needed. Standards are higher and the school has gained a school achievement award in recognition of this. A good framework now supports the teachers' planning for lessons and this ensures that the pupils cover all the necessary work. The subject managers now have a good overview of their areas and know what needs to be worked on next to further improve the quality of pupils' learning.

## STANDARDS

The table 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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	C	A
Mathematics	E	C	E	D
Science	E	D	E	C

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

These results relate to the pupils who left the school last year. A small number of pupils take the tests each year and so comparison of results between years is unreliable. The trend in the school's performance has been above the national trend and the school meets its suitably challenging targets. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The school has very few pupils whose prior attainment indicates that they are likely to achieve beyond the level expected for their age. On the basis of the work seen now, standards in English, mathematics and science are well below the national picture but the pupils are making good progress from a low starting point. Their skills in language often depress their performance in other subjects, where they struggle to explain what they mean or make connections between ideas that are presented to them. Children in the Reception class make particularly good progress in their social development but their attainment remains well below that expected for their age in literacy and numeracy by the time they start in Year 1. A strength in the pupils' work is that they use computers confidently to support their learning in other subjects. The pupils' progress in writing is very good because the teachers check carefully what pupils need to work on next. While overall progress is good in English, mathematics and science, pupils' progress in reading, mental mathematics and using scientific vocabulary should be better. In religious education and history, while the work of pupils in other year groups meets the expectations for their ages, the Year 6 pupils' attainment falls short of this because the full curriculum for these subjects has only been in place for a year and so they have gaps in their knowledge. In all other subjects, the pupils' work broadly reaches the level expected by the time they leave the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and make the most of what it offers them by enthusiastically joining in activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils behave sensibly in classrooms and around the school. A number of pupils display very challenging behaviour and they are helped to overcome this very well.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils grow in self-esteem and confidence. They get on very well together and use their initiative.
Attendance	Well below average. Although the school makes a very good effort to impress upon parents the importance of good attendance, there is still too much absence. The attendance figures are also affected when pupils leave but parents do not notify the school.

The pupils find the lessons interesting and respond positively to the praise and encouragement of the teachers. There has been a high level of exclusions over the past year, involving a small number of pupils. The school



works very hard to reconcile the problems that some pupils find in conforming to its expectations and parents are closely involved in seeking solutions, and consequently the level of exclusions is falling. Most pupils are keen to please the staff and are polite and sensitive to others' needs.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

One of the reasons that teaching is good is because the pupils' differing needs are taken into account when teachers plan lessons. The pupils' self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning is built very effectively through the teachers' praise and encouragement. The teachers and classroom assistants support pupils with special educational needs very well and so they learn at a good rate. The consistency with which the teachers manage pupils of all ages creates a good working atmosphere in classrooms. The basic skills are well taught and teaching in English and mathematics is good. Teaching for Reception children is good and provides a firm foundation for their learning. Their personal and social development is very well supported. The strengths in teaching far outweigh the weaknesses but there are areas for improvement. The teachers set precise targets for pupils' writing and so they make very good progress but targets are not as sharp in reading. Some introductions to mathematics lessons do not promote sufficient speed in pupils' mental calculation. In some science lessons, teachers do not sufficiently emphasise the correct scientific vocabulary and so pupils cannot always explain their ideas as clearly as they should.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well planned and builds on what pupils already know. The lessons are interesting and relevant because there are good links between subjects and so pupils use what they have learned in one subject well when they meet new work in other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The pupils' needs are quickly identified and well met through very well planned support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The pupils are encouraged to explore their feelings and think about what is important to them. The school gives them a firm framework in which to make decisions over what is right and wrong. Their relationships are good because teachers encourage them to respect each other and act responsibly.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The staff know the pupils very well and give them very good advice and support. The pupils' well-being is given high priority.

Teachers have worked hard to improve the curriculum and fill the gaps in pupils' learning. This has been largely effective, although for the oldest pupils there has been too much to do in the time available since improvements have been in place. There is a good range of activities outside lessons and this supports the pupils' personal development. The pupils use computers well to support their learning because the teachers ensure that they know how to use them and encourage them to try out their ideas. The school has developed good ways to check how well pupils are doing and it is now in a good position to use the information to further improve pupils' progress. The school's partnership with parents is good and parents express confidence in the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has an excellent vision and sense of direction for the school in order to raise standards of pupils' work and behaviour. She is very well supported by all staff, who work diligently to improve teaching and learning in subjects that they manage.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors have a clear understanding of the school's work through visiting the school and through the good information that they receive from the staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school looks closely at how it is doing and which aspects of its work that need to improve. The teachers receive good feedback on what they need to do to further improve the good quality of their teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The governors ensure that they get good value for the money that they spend on improving provision and raising standards.

The headteacher has led the school very efficiently through a challenging period of change. She has succeeded in getting the staff, governors, parents and pupils to work with her in seeking to improve the quality of education provided through establishing a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school. The very good improvement in the planning of the curriculum and adaptations to teaching to ensure better learning by pupils have been brought about by good teamwork. The governors give unstintingly of their time to support the school's work, and help in classrooms or the computer suite. The level of staffing is good and the school is well resourced. However, the outdoor play area for pupils is extremely exposed, with no shelter from the wind. The classroom areas and the hall suffer from poor acoustics that mean that even slight noise travels, and this distracts pupils.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoy school and become more mature and responsible.</li> <li>• They find the staff approachable.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and children are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school works closely with them and they know how their children are doing.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents do not feel that homework is at the right level.</li> </ul>

Inspection evidence supports all of the parents' positive views but not their concern over homework. Homework is well organised and is at a level appropriate to the children's ages.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards are well below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, the pupils do well, against the odds, and most make good progress. Comparisons between one year's results and the next need treating with care because only a small number of pupils take the tests each year. In addition, about a fifth of the school's population changes in each school year. In the present Year 6, half of the pupils did not start at the school and several joined in the later junior years, often with low attainment on entry. The school meets its targets, although as pupils leave and join the school this can affect the targets in the small year groups. The school's trend in results for the Year 6 pupils has been above the national trend, leading to a school achievement award. Just over 40 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs and these pupils make good progress because their needs are carefully identified and well met by the teachers and classroom assistants. There are very few pupils whose attainment on entry to the school suggests that they are likely to exceed the expectations for their age by the time they leave.
2. Children in the Reception class make particularly good progress in their social development because of the good opportunities they have to work together and learn how to adapt to routines and expectations of behaviour. In spite of the good teaching and their consequent good progress, however, their attainment remains well below that expected for their age in literacy and numeracy by the time they start in Year 1.
3. When the pupils start at the school, their attainment is very low and their language is poor. The pupils' limited language has a detrimental effect on their ability to understand new vocabulary and to use it in the correct manner. Many instances were observed of pupils trying to express their ideas, or explain what they meant, but struggling to find the correct words. Pupils often cannot remember words that they have recently been taught, particularly in science. Limited language also affects their comprehension of ideas that are not firmly based on what they can see, touch or hear. They often struggle to infer from information or to draw conclusions from what they already know.
4. The older pupils have considerable gaps in their learning and while the school is working hard to fill these, the task has been too great to achieve in the short time in which the better teaching has been in place. Examples are seen clearly in writing, where pupils in Years 5, for example, do not form letters correctly. Prior to the start of this school year the curriculum was organised around topic themes that did not ensure the teaching covered the basic skills and knowledge that pupils needed to reach the expected levels for their ages in subjects. The older junior pupils were put into ability groups prior to this year, but staffing difficulties meant that there were disruptions to teaching. These factors meant that pupils' progress has been slower than it should have been. While the progress of the pupils in Year 6 was often good in the lessons during the inspection, their progress over the time that they have been in the junior classes has been only satisfactory for most.
5. Pupils with special educational needs make consistently good progress in all year groups because their needs are carefully identified and they receive good quality support from teachers and classroom assistants. Pupils from traveller families also make good progress because of the good support provided for them by both teachers and support staff.

6. The school's good emphasis on improving pupils' vocabulary is paying dividends, particularly with the younger pupils in the infants. The school's work on improving writing over this year has been successful and pupils' progress in writing is often very good because the teachers check carefully what pupils need to work on next. The use of assessments in reading is not as effectively used to set targets for pupils and, although most pupils are making good progress, some of the average pupils should be doing better. In mathematics, pupils have a reasonable grasp of number but are fairly slow in mental calculation. Many of the pupils find it hard to explain how they have arrived at answers.
7. In religious education and history, the Year 6 pupils' attainment falls short of expectations for their age because the full curriculum for these subjects has only been in place for a year and so they have gaps in their knowledge. In science, the pupils' knowledge and understanding of investigating has weaknesses because of lack of previous planning for opportunities to test their ideas. Their scientific knowledge also has gaps. In art and design, music, geography, design and technology and physical education, pupils reach the level expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
8. The pupils' work in information and communication technology (ICT) is at the level expected for their ages at both seven and eleven years. A strength in the pupils' work is that they use computers confidently to support their learning in other subjects. They readily turn to computer programs to find and present information. They use word-processing skills with flair as they draft, develop and present their work and import pictures to illustrate their writing. The older pupils can write programs to control different devices, such as a burglar alarm. They make good use of the digital cameras to record their work and to provide pictures to illustrate articles in the very good newspaper that is produced. The pupils know how to find information from the Internet and how to send and receive emails.

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

9. This is a strength of the school and represents a good improvement since the last inspection. The issue from the previous inspection has been very well resolved. The school now has a strong framework in place for social and moral development, which is used by all adults in the school who work as a team to help the pupils behave well and develop self-control for themselves. The headteacher, with the full support of the governors, is insisting on high standards of behaviour. There has been a high number of exclusions involving a few pupils and one was permanent. These measures are seen as a last resort as there are now very good strategies in place for behaviour management which emphasise the positive benefits of good behaviour. These help pupils understand the impact of their actions on each other and reward good behaviour, participation in learning and concentration on tasks. Over the past year, very good use has been made of a range of outside agencies to develop the expertise of staff and parents in helping pupils in positive ways. All the pupils, including those with behavioural and social problems, are very well provided for and they are consistently given good opportunities to develop self-confidence and self-esteem.
10. The pupils enjoy coming to school and show a greatly improved interest in and enthusiasm for learning; they co-operate and collaborate well in lessons. Overall the pupils listen carefully and try hard to respond to teachers' questions, because they find the lessons interesting and respond positively to the praise and encouragement of the teachers. These features help to ensure that the pupils learn well in lessons and contribute to the improving standards seen in the school. The pupils with special educational needs are encouraged and enabled to take a full part in school activities. They have very good relationships with the adults who support them individually and in class situations. Their classmates include them well when working in small groups and in whole-class activities and are supportive of their efforts.

11. Behaviour in the school is good both within and out of lessons. The policies supporting good behaviour are now fully implemented. The pupils are growing in understanding the importance of good behaviour in enabling effective learning to take place. In the playground the pupils use the range of play equipment provided, taking turns, sharing and co-operating well. For example, they enjoy playing with the giant set of draughts when several pupils will work together to plan strategies. The parents have very positive views about the good standards of behaviour, and that this has a good effect on their children's learning. They are supportive of the way in which the school helps their children to learn the difference between right and wrong and of how the school is insisting on high standards of behaviour.
12. The pupils' personal development is good. They undertake a range of responsibilities that involve them in the organisation of the school's routines. For example, the pupils take the registers to and from the office and help to put out and tidy away equipment. Circle time and lessons in personal, social, citizenship and health education are well used to provide opportunities for the pupils to express a range of feelings and to listen and consider those of others. This helps them to develop mature and confident behaviour. In assemblies the pupils consider how people that they know have succeeded in achieving their aspirations in a wide range of fields. They tell the school about situations that have made them proud to be themselves. Each class has two representatives on the school council and this provides a useful vehicle for the pupils to develop an understanding of the part they can play in the school as a democratic community. They applaud the winners of the secret ballot to become the officers of the council even if they have stood for office themselves. A particularly striking way in which the school has promoted personal development is the way in which the pupils take part in a range of supportive roles to help others. There is a Buddy Rota for the playground; pupils help in the parent and toddler group and each break time pupils take it in turns to fill the water bottles for their class for the next session.
13. The pupils use a range of equipment with self-assurance and confidence, especially that which supports ICT skills. They show an awareness of environmental concerns such as the ownership of water, the production of electricity by the adjoining wind-farm and the burial ground in Tow Law for cattle following the foot and mouth epidemic. They support a variety of charities on a regular basis. The pupils are friendly, helpful and polite to one another, to adults in the school and to visitors. In discussions with inspectors the older pupils displayed growing maturity and self-confidence. The pupils' understanding of the impact of their actions on others is improving and this is helping them to develop the good relationships that are evident between themselves and between pupils and adults who work with them. The school is striving to promote an atmosphere in which both the cultural traditions and values from home and from the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities are recognised and appreciated. This is helping the pupils to grow in understanding and tolerance of differences, and shows them how they can live and work successfully in a wider society.
14. Pupils' attendance is well below the national average. Unauthorised attendance rates are worse than the national average and clearly affect the overall situation. The school has a high incidence of absence through short-term illness and attendance statistics are adversely affected by some parents leaving the area without notifying the school that they have taken their children off the school roll. On the positive side, pupils' punctuality is much improved and the school day and lessons start and finish promptly.

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

15. The teaching is good. The pupils' confidence and enthusiasm for learning are encouraged very effectively through interesting lessons in which the teachers take good account of the pupils' different needs. Teaching for Reception children is good and provides a firm foundation for their learning. The children's personal and social development are very well supported.

16. The consistency with which the teachers manage pupils of all ages is very good and so there is a good working atmosphere in classrooms. Some of the pupils display challenging behaviour and this is handled sensitively and firmly by all of the staff. The success of the training that they have had in dealing with such pupils is evident in the way in which they reward pupils' positive attitudes and effort.
17. The pupils with special educational needs and those from travellers' families are well provided for through the arrangements the school makes for placing them in suitable classes and groups. The teaching of these pupils is of consistently good quality, and this enables them to make good progress in lessons. Teachers plan the individual education plans of pupils together with the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants and plans are reviewed each half-term. The plans identify the steps needed for pupils to make good progress. There is very good liaison between the class teachers and the teaching assistants, and the latter are always aware of the contents of the individual education plans that are used on a regular basis to plan the work of the pupils. The teachers and teaching assistants manage the pupils very well; they maintain consistent standards of behaviour, and effectively use a good range of teaching methods. These features contribute to the good progress the pupils with special educational needs make.
18. Teaching in English and mathematics is good and the basic skills are well taught. The teachers have put in place the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and are clear about what pupils will learn in each lesson. The teachers' planning ensures that new learning builds on what has gone before. In the case of the oldest pupils, the teachers have worked hard to fill gaps in learning and this has been particularly successful in writing, where spelling has improved markedly. This better progress by pupils has been more evident over the past year and so some of the older pupils still lack some basic skills, such as the correct way of forming letters. The teachers are clearer about supporting pupils' progress in writing because of the precise use of assessment to set targets.
19. The pupils use ICT naturally as a tool for learning because of teachers' good encouragement and level of expertise. Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons and because the pupils have been taught the basic skills well, they confidently try out their ideas for presenting work or researching information.
20. The strengths in teaching far outweigh the weaknesses but there are areas for improvement. The teachers set precise targets for pupils' writing and so they make very good progress but this is not as evident in reading. Some introductions to mathematics lessons do not promote sufficient speed in pupils' mental calculation. In some science lessons, teachers do not sufficiently emphasise the correct scientific vocabulary and so pupils cannot always explain their ideas as clearly as they should.

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

21. The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils and now teaches all of the subjects that it should. At the time of the last inspection it was found that the curriculum was lacking in progression and continuity with particular shortcomings in planning for English, ICT skills and design and technology. This has now been well addressed and in particular the pupils are using their ICT skills well as a natural part of their daily work. Prior to 2001 the school continued to use a topic approach in all subjects except English and mathematics. This meant that, in practice, it was left to individual teachers to sort out the curriculum and there was repetition of work. In addition the locally agreed syllabus for religious education was not delivered systematically and the time given to religious education was very variable. During the past year there has been a very good improvement in planning the curriculum. Comprehensive and long-term planning now supports it. However, because most of the work undertaken by pupils needs to carefully build on

previous learning, in some areas, such as religious education and history, the older pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to the short time they have had to experience the full curriculum. The improvement is helping to ensure that all pupils receive a relevant, lively and interesting curriculum, which is improving the pupils' awareness of and involvement in their own learning.

22. The curriculum places good emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been implemented successfully and consistently overall, and are contributing to the picture of improving standards in English and mathematics over time. The school has received a school achievement award in recognition of the advances made in raising standards. The pupils are being given some good opportunities to develop their ability to speak clearly and confidently and to listen attentively, and this contributes to their personal development as well as their learning. However, in science, subject vocabulary could be better reinforced in order to help pupils explain their thinking. Skills in ICT skills are especially developed well in literacy.
23. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is a strength of the school and enables them to make the good progress seen. The organisation of the provision for the pupils with special educational needs has been improved by the newly appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs. The register of the pupils is up to date and the new Code of Practice is securely in place. The teaching assistants' work is of a high standard. They are well trained and informed and have clearly developed strategies for working with the pupils who are often challenging in their behaviour and wide-ranging needs. There is very good support for the few pupils from travellers' families. Teachers and support staff provide carefully for the pupils' particular needs and ensure that work is available for them during periods away from the school.
24. The school offers a good range of clubs, activities and visits and visitors to the school. After-school clubs include football, performing arts and music, computer and the newspaper. There is a residential visit planned for the Year 5 pupils to Earls Orchard. Good use is made of the local environment such as the wind farm and the village church, and there are educational visits to Beamish outdoor museum. When the pupils were studying Sikhism in religious education, a visitor from the Sikh community came to the school. This made a positive impression on the pupils and, when they began to learn about Hinduism, pupils suggested that they could invite a similar visitor to give them answers to questions they were formulating. Visits to the theatre and from visiting theatre companies and music groups further enrich the curriculum.
25. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good and it is very good for pupils' social and moral development. The teachers constantly give praise and encouragement to enhance pupils' self-esteem. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to reflect on how they feel. They are encouraged to take pride in themselves and what they achieve. This was well demonstrated in an assembly where pupils thought of what gave them a sense of pride in their school, community and themselves. Some pupils volunteered that their improved behaviour was a source of pride to them. The pupils are given good opportunities to become independent and responsible and to use their initiative. In all the classes pupils have specific tasks to perform, which they carry out conscientiously. In lessons, assemblies and circle times the pupils are given good opportunities to consider issues such as qualities of friendship, likes and dislikes and distinguishing between right and wrong in different situations. 'The Right to be Safe' is given a high priority in the younger classes and covers areas such as people that we can trust, and personal physical safety such as playing in certain areas, road crossing and water safety. The school has taken a very firm stance on improving behaviour and all of the pupils spoken to felt that this had created a better place in which to learn without distractions. Pupils know the rules and most stick to them. Pupils accept that the staff deal fairly with any unacceptable behaviour. The older pupils learn about the global community and Britain's place in the world through belonging to the Commonwealth, the European Union and the United Nations. Teachers' planning includes learning about citizenship

and health education and these areas are actively and consistently promoted as part of a carefully structured programme, which is now embedded in the life of the school. All the pupils learn about the importance of maintaining a healthy life style through exercise, healthy diet and the benefits of medical drugs and dangers of drugs such as tobacco. Provision for sex education is planned appropriately.

26. The community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning through the school's links with organisations, institutions and individuals. The school has recently forged much stronger links with the local community through the Tow Law Community Partnership and with the local church. The pupils learn about life in their own village through the production of the 'Newspaper'. Work on this is co-ordinated by two of the governors. The pupils armed with tape recorders and digital cameras and pre-prepared lists of questions visit interesting and relevant people and events. For example, in past issues the questions surrounding the use of Tow Law as a burial ground for cattle following the foot and mouth epidemic have been explored, as with the establishment of the wind farm.

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

27. The school is a very caring community and provides a good level of support for all its pupils. The staff and the governing body place a high priority on pupils' welfare and safety and procedures are effective. Regular joint inspections of the premises are made and risk assessments carried out. Fire drills are regular and are evaluated for effectiveness. All equipment testing is up to date. First aid arrangements are good and child protection procedures properly administered. Induction into the Reception class is well planned to ensure new children are settled in and made to feel secure. Year 6 leavers are provided with a full week of activities in the receiving secondary school to enable their smooth transfer to take place.
28. The school has recently carried out a pupil survey to identify any areas of concern pupils may have. The headteacher has made arrangements to address any issues arising.
29. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are good. A great deal of hard work has been undertaken in setting up systems during the past year. The teacher with responsibility for assessment has a firm grasp of what needs to be worked on next to further improve the way in which the information gained can be used to set targets. The use of assessment information is currently sound and improving as more targets are being set. These are becoming increasingly relevant and helpful in supporting pupils' individual needs. Support for pupils' academic progress is becoming better focused as a result. The school uses a baseline assessment shortly after children join and then measures their progress. Pupils have individual targets in writing and mathematics and all pupils' progress is tracked. The procedures have recently been extended to cover all subjects of the National Curriculum. The target setting for reading is not as precise and this leads to some slower progress.
30. The pupils with special educational needs receive very good support from staff within the school. All the teachers, the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants are highly committed to helping the pupils to progress. All statutory requirements with regard to special educational needs are being very well carried out. As part of the annual reviews and individual education plan reviews, the pupils have good opportunities to express their own feelings about their progress and what they need to do to improve further. The school makes highly effective use of support from external agencies. For example, the Educational Psychology Service is working in partnership with parents and the school to devise and implement strategies for pupils with behavioural and social difficulties. This is making a significant contribution to the personal development of the pupils, enabling them to take a more positive part in their own learning and to make good progress. There is good quality additional support provided for pupils with health or



hearing problems. The very good procedures for monitoring and supporting all of the pupils' personal development are also in place and used very effectively for the pupils with special educational needs. Pupils from travellers' families are given good support from both the teachers and support staff who ensure that pupils have work to do when they are away from school and check their progress when pupils return.

31. Pupils' personal development is monitored well. Staff discuss pupils' personal progress at half-termly meetings and targets for behaviour are formulated if particular problems are identified. The use of specialist support for personal development is very effectively organised to benefit those children most in need and teaching staff ensure all pupils are encouraged to develop responsible attitudes and respect for each other.
32. In order to improve pupils' attendance, the school works closely with parents and involves the educational welfare officer in home visits. Parents are made aware of the need to ensure children's regular attendance and are discouraged from taking holidays in term time. Class teachers quickly report any unexplained absence and parents are contacted by telephone to give reasons, or standard letters are issued if telephone contact cannot be made. Every pupil has weekly attendance recorded and scrutinised by the clerical staff for any evidence of absence or lateness patterns and the headteacher is informed so that appropriate action is then taken.
33. In recognition of a significant problem, the school has made promotion of good behaviour a priority issue and has invested time and resources into the preparation of a new behaviour code. Parents have been issued with written details of the school's expectations and a special meeting has been held for joint school/parent discussion and agreement on the standards to be kept and the rewards and sanctions that now apply. Staff have received appropriate training and local authority specialists have been engaged to meet with staff and pupils to facilitate and implement behaviour strategies. Fixed term exclusions for specified offending behaviour have been consistently and fairly applied. Parental support has been personally sought by the headteacher with the result that the initial high incidence of exclusion is rapidly falling away.
34. Pupils are encouraged to behave well through anti-bullying counselling and training for membership of the 'Buddy' system where older children care for the younger ones. Circle time provides the opportunity for pupils to discuss behavioural issues and find solutions to problems. Every class has the rules displayed and all teachers consistently apply the now well-known sanctions and rewards. Awards of certificates and presents for good behaviour, effort or achievement are made at assemblies that are well attended by parents. Parents indicate that they appreciate the better standards of behaviour that are now seen.

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

35. The overall effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good and is developing as the headteacher and governors work in tandem to give more parents the confidence to make a regular commitment of time to help educate their children. The confidence and support of many parents waned in the time following the previous inspection. The headteacher has worked hard to re-establish the good level of support now given. Parents regard the school as very friendly and the staff as very approachable. They feel well informed about their children's progress and of the routines of the school. The quality of information given to parents is very good. The combined prospectus and governors' annual report is comprehensive and 'reader friendly'. Newsletters in similar style are issued monthly and the pupils, with help from the governors, produce a thrice-yearly newspaper that is of a high standard and contains both school and local community news.
36. Parent meetings are held twice each year, and extra, special, meetings to discuss issues such as behaviour, the home/school agreement, parental help with reading, and the aims of the annual

residential visit have been arranged. Pupils' annual reports cover all requirements and are well supplemented by half-termly progress reports. The headteacher and staff are present in the playground at the beginning and end of the school day to meet parents and answer any concerns parents may wish to raise.

37. The school works very well in partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and the parents know who are their main points of contact in the school. They are invited to contribute to and attend the annual reviews of the progress their children are making. In addition the parents of pupils on the lower stages of the special educational needs register discuss the targets set for their children in their individual education plans at the regular parent meetings. Suggestions are given to parents about support that can be given at home to extend the work being done in school and this makes a good contribution to the progress of the pupils.
38. Although there is no longer a formal parent teacher association, the role of that body is ably conducted by the kitchen staff. These two members have extremely good knowledge of the community and use it to generate a high level of support for the school's programme of fund-raising and social events. Governors and staff take active part in the organisational work and events are well supported by the community. Children's musical productions such as 'Grease' attract capacity audiences and are well received. The numbers of regular parent helpers in school is small but is bolstered by a number of governors who dedicate a great deal of time and energy in working with staff to improve the range and quality of educational and social opportunities the school provides. The outcome of this involvement results in a good positive contribution to learning.
39. Parents help with home reading and spelling work and record appropriate comments in their children's reading diaries. Some help with mathematics and topic work involves parents of the older children. The after-school football club is run by parents. The school has established a small joint working party of staff and parents to begin working on the development of story sacks. The newly established parent and toddler group meets weekly in the school hall and provides another opportunity for parents to come into the school and make use of its facilities.

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

40. The leadership and management of the school are very good and have effectively supported improvements in pupils' work and behaviour. The headteacher provides an excellent direction for the school and has ensured that there is a sense of teamwork and purpose that underpins the school's work.
41. The headteacher and subject managers have looked at teaching and learning to see where improvements are needed. The subject managers for English, mathematics, science and ICT provide very good support for these areas through checking the quality of provision through the teachers' planning and what is happening in classrooms. They have a good knowledge of what needs to be done next and have planned thoroughly to bring about improvements. Their findings have been used very effectively to give feedback to colleagues and to inform the priorities of the school's planning for development. A very good climate of self-evaluation has been established and everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities in helping the school move forward. The right priorities have been identified and the school's capacity to carry them out is very good.
42. Given the short time that the staff team have been together, they have achieved a great deal in improving the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. These two initiatives have had a very positive impact on pupils' rate of learning. The school analyses its performance carefully and knows what it needs to do to next. Planning to bring about improvement is very good. Over this year, for example, there has been very good improvement in writing and boys' reading because of closely

focused work to improve these areas. The initiative in improving pupils' behaviour has been very successful and the school now operates as a calm and orderly place where effective learning can take place. In-service training in behaviour management and ICT has been well planned and effectively brought about better learning by pupils. The school promotes the professional development of staff very well and sets targets for improvement that reflect both the school's needs and those of the individual. The school uses technology very well to support its work, for example, by using a computer program in tracking pupils' progress from year to year.

43. The governors give very good support to the school and fulfil all of their responsibilities. They are fully involved in the school's planning for development and have a firm understanding of the school's priorities. They visit frequently and a number give very generously of their time to support pupils' learning in classrooms or the computer suite. Governors ensure that resources to support pupils' learning are being used well, for example in providing extra staffing to support pupils with special educational needs or pupils whose rate of progress needs boosting. The governors check effectively that they are getting the best value for their spending by looking at how well the school is working towards its targets for improvement.
44. The co-ordinator for special educational needs works as a full-time class teacher in the school and as such has limited release time in which to carry out her role. She is very well organised and advises and supports colleagues so that there is good provision for the pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator works with the teachers to write the individual education plans for the pupils with special educational needs. The governing body is very supportive of, and has a very clear over view of the way the school works with, the pupils who have special educational needs. The governors have provided extra resources of teaching and support time, that have effectively contributed to the good overall progress made by the pupils with special educational needs.
45. The school's staffing is good and support staff are very well used to help pupils overcome difficulties with work and behaviour. The accommodation is satisfactory but there are problems with sound travelling from the open areas outside the teaching spaces because of the poor acoustics. The acoustics in the hall are poor and very distracting as the slightest sounds echo around the room. This makes teaching in music and physical education lessons very difficult as the pupils struggle to hear themselves or the teacher. The outside play area for Reception children is very exposed and lacks shelter. This restricts opportunities for the children to play outdoors, even in the summer.

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

**In order to further raise standards, the school now needs to:**

- improve pupils' progress in reading by ensuring that teachers use their assessments to set more precise targets for pupils to work on to improve;  
(Paragraphs 6, 20, 29, 57)
- improve pupils' progress by ensuring that the mental mathematics parts of lessons have a good pace so that pupils remain alert and calculate more quickly;  
(Paragraphs 6, 20, 63)
- improve pupils' use of scientific vocabulary by ensuring that teachers write the terms so that pupils can learn them more effectively.  
(Paragraphs 3, 20, 22, 69)

In addition to the above, the school should consider the following points when drawing up its action plan:

- seek ways of improving the acoustics in the hall so that pupils can hear each other and the teachers;  
(Paragraphs 45, 102, 105)
- providing some shelter for the Reception children's outdoor play area;  
(Paragraphs 45, 51)
- continue its efforts to improve pupils' attendance.  
(Paragraph 17)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	4	21	8	1	0	0
Percentage	0	12	62	23	3	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 almost three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	96
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	43
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	2	8	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (78)	50 (78)	90 (94)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	*	*	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (78)	90 (89)	90 (89)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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
	2001	9	11	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	14	11	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (64)	55 (71)	85 (93)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	12	14	*
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (64)	70 (64)	50 (86)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

\* Because fewer than ten boys and fewer than ten girls took the tests in 2001 the numbers at each level are omitted from the tables in line with the governors' reporting arrangements to parents.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	83
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	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	22	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	19

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	274643
Total expenditure	251486
Expenditure per pupil	2246
Balance brought forward from previous year	4137
Balance carried forward to next year	27294

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	96
Number of questionnaires returned	25

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	24	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	28	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	40	4	4	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	38	12	4	0
The teaching is good.	76	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	80	20	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	96	4	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	88	12	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	72	28	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	84	16	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	32	0	0	0



## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

46. Children start in the Reception class in the September of the school year in which they are five. When they start at the school, the assessment of their attainment indicates that their attainment is very low, particularly in their language and personal and social development. The children who are currently in the Reception class have had a different teacher in each term of this year, due to staffing problems. The school has worked hard to ensure that the children have been well supported through this difficult period of change. During the inspection the class was taught by an experienced temporary teacher. There has been good improvement in planning for Reception children since the last inspection.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

47. Although most of the children are unlikely to reach the goals for their age in this area of learning by the time they leave the class, they make good progress because of the good teaching. Good routines are established and the children learn to develop greater independence through the teacher's careful guidance. Many of the children find it hard to concentrate for a sustained length of time. They are easily distracted and sometimes struggle to sit still and listen to the teacher or to each other. The teacher uses a good range of strategies to gain their attention and has established firm routines that they respond to well. For example, the children know that they need to sit in the 'listening position' when they gather on the carpet. The teacher's clear explanations ensure that children know what to do when they move to tables to start work. The teacher insists that children do not shout out and rewards good behaviour. They want to please her because of the warm and supportive relationships that are evident in the classroom. They are helped to see that what they do affects others and that kindness and consideration are important in creating a happy atmosphere.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

48. The children's progress is good, from a very low starting point, but most are unlikely to reach the goals for their age by the time they start Year 1. The good teaching encourages them to talk about what they see and feel and the teacher's good use of a rich vocabulary extends their understanding and use of language. Although a few of the children talk in full sentences, most use short phrases or single words in reply; some are very reticent to speak and require considerable coaxing. Most children join in enthusiastically with familiar lines from stories, when they read a big book together with the teacher for example, but most struggle to retell what has happened or to go beyond what they see in the pictures or think what might happen next. The children enjoy looking at books and turn the pages of story books, when they sit in the reading area, but they often quickly lose interest unless an adult is at hand to encourage them to persevere to understand what is happening. A few of the children recognise some familiar words and the most able can use the sounds of letters to work out simple three-letter words. Most know the sounds of the first letter of words, but not all are secure in this. The children understand that writing has meaning and they 'write' lists and letters in the vet's surgery. A more able child attempted to independently write the story of Hansel and Gretel, after hearing it read by the teacher and made a very good attempt at using the sounds that he knew to spell the words.

#### **Mathematical development**

49. The teaching is good and the children make good progress in this area but most are not likely to reach the goals for their age by the end of the Reception year. Most children recognise the

symbols for numbers up to ten and the more able children can count up to 20. Not all of the children can count reliably without touching the objects that they are counting. They recognise shapes such as a circle, square and triangle, and can sort shapes into sets by size or colour but have more difficulty sorting for more than one property. The teacher makes good use of counting rhymes and songs that the children join in enthusiastically. The teacher stresses mathematical language very effectively so that children learn the basic terms for comparison, such as more than or less than, lighter or heavier. They can take away one from a given number under ten and add one on. A few children can take two or three away from a number under ten.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

50. The teaching is good and the children make good progress in this area but most are not likely to reach the goals for their age by the time they start Year 1. The work on animals has been well planned to make good use of the children's experience of pets and farm animals. The children create a farm scene using small world animals and people but some find it hard to sustain their interest for long without moving to another activity. They have made animals out of junk material. The children have a particular difficulty in remembering terms that they have been taught such as 'magnet'; for example, one child referred to a magnet as a 'sticky sticker' although the proper word had very recently been introduced. One group of children working with magnets realised that certain materials stuck to the magnets while other materials did not but, in spite of considerable prompting by an adult, could not remember the word 'metal'. There is plenty in the classroom to stimulate children's interest and for them to touch, see and hear.

### **Physical development**

51. The children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning and the teaching is sound, although most children are unlikely to reach the goals for their age by the end of the year. They use tools such as scissors and paintbrushes with reasonable dexterity, although they struggle with finer movements and when cutting out pictures, for example, they tend to rush and so cut inaccurately. Most hold pencils correctly when they write. The very exposed site occupied by the play area limits the occasions when outdoor play is possible. There is no shelter from the wind and children often huddle together to keep warm, even in June. This means that, while good activities are planned, it is often too windy and cold for the children to benefit from using the wheeled toys and other play equipment.

### **Creative development**

52. The children make good progress in this area of learning because of the good teaching. They enjoy painting and making models. A group of children were obviously pleased with the caterpillars they had made out of egg boxes that had been decorated in bright colours. They sing a number of songs from memory and, in one lesson, performed a musical accompaniment to the story of the Billy Goats Gruff. The teacher used her voice and facial expressions very effectively as she brought the children in at the right place and they kept to their parts very well. The teacher praised them for their efforts and how well they had worked together and the children glowed with pride at their achievement.

### **ENGLISH**

53. Standards are well below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is partly due to the high level of pupils with special educational needs and the very small number of pupils whose prior attainment indicates that they are likely to exceed the expected level for their age. Results between years have varied due to the small numbers of pupils who take the tests each year. On the basis of work seen now, overall, pupils have made good progress from a low starting point.

However, those in Years 1 to 4 have made better progress than the older pupils because those in Years 5 and 6 have considerable gaps in basic skills. These include the formation of letters and correct use of punctuation that teachers are having to deal with at a late stage in the pupils' school life. There have been considerable barriers to improvement, including a previous lack of assessment information to help teachers to pitch the work at the right level, the high number of pupils with specific learning difficulties associated with language, and the pupils' previously poor behaviour. Most of these barriers have been overcome very effectively. The pupils start at the school with very low skills in language and make good progress up to the end of Year 2. It is evident, through looking at their work and the teachers' assessments, that pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made good progress in the main over this year, but pupils in Year 6 have only made overall satisfactory progress. Some pupils have joined in Year 6 with low attainment and the disruptions to the pupils because of staffing difficulties and problems with behaviour have resulted in some slower learning. Nevertheless, much has been done over this school year to improve pupils' writing and there has often been very good progress by pupils in this area.

54. The strengths in the subject are:

- the good teaching of basic skills in reading and writing;
- good planning to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs;
- a close analysis of pupils' performance in writing and the increasing use of the information gained to guide improvements in teaching and learning;
- the very good management of the subject.

55. The points for improvement are:

- better use of the assessments made in reading to set specific targets for pupils;
- more consistent expectations of pupils' handwriting.

56. The pupils' vocabulary is very limited in Year 1 and Year 2. When they answer questions, they often use short phrases or single words and need considerable prompting to extend their replies. Although the pupils' vocabulary improves in Years 3 to 6, it remains limited for most, and technical terms or complex words are often forgotten. On many occasions, pupils know what they want to say but lack the vocabulary with which to express what they mean. Most listen carefully to the teachers but do not always listen as attentively to each other. This means that they sometimes repeat answers or questions that have just been proffered by others. The pupils in Year 2 read simple texts reasonably accurately and work out unknown words using the sounds of letters. They find it harder to use the context of what they have read to work out words because they have often forgotten what the previous sentences related to. They understand how to use the second and third letters of words in placing words in alphabetical order. They know how to use the contents page and the index to find what they need. By the time they leave the school most of the pupils read fairly competently to gather information. They have more difficulty in identifying themes in stories or finding points in the text to back up their opinions. The interpretation of complex sentences poses a problem for about half of the pupils in Year 6, and they tend to lose the overall sense of the sentence in attempting to interpret the different clauses. This was also seen in a lesson with Year 5 pupils who could read a passage that set out the arguments for and against walking to school but then had difficulty in finding the points that supported each case. The pupils found it hard to explain the reasons why they held particular opinions.

57. The teaching is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and use a good range of teaching methods and resources to capture pupils' interest and promote the learning of basic skills. Pupils know what they are going to learn in lessons and how this relates to what has gone before because of teachers' clear explanations. Pupils are encouraged to word process their work and do this competently. Pupils with special educational needs are very well

supported by both the teachers and classroom assistants. These pupils often make very good progress in both reading and writing because of the closely focused work that links to their particular needs. The school's focus on improving writing this year has been very successful and has led to better spelling and handwriting as well as pupils' increased confidence in using different forms of writing for different purposes. In a Year 6 geography lesson, for example, the pupils knew that they needed to write an explanatory text in presenting their work on rivers. The pupils are often encouraged to use computers to word process their work. Teachers often give pupils good guidance, through their marking, of what needs to improve in writing. In Year 3, for example, the teacher pointed out to a pupil how he needed to improve the ending of his story. This good, specific support for improvement is not as well developed for the average and few more able pupils in reading, where teachers do not always use their assessments to point out what needs to improve and so some pupils' progress is not as rapid as it might be. There are also a few occasions when teachers' expectations of handwriting are not consistently high and some untidy work is accepted. The teachers ensure that pupils use their skills in literacy well in most other subjects, such as geography and history.

58. The subject is well managed and this has had a very positive impact on raising standards, particularly in writing. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator has a firm understanding of what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning through her careful monitoring of pupils' performance. The relatively low performance of boys in reading has been targeted over this year and the improved resources and extra support have led to a narrowing of the gap. The co-ordinator has worked hard to introduce effective target setting in writing and has identified that this now needs to be extended to reading.

## **MATHEMATICS**

59. Standards in mathematics are well below national expectations by the end of Year 2 and when the pupils leave the school. This is partly due to a number of barriers to better progress. These include a high level of pupils with special educational needs and the fact that only half of the pupils now in Year 6 started at the school. In addition, the curriculum for mathematics has been reorganised but this improved arrangement came too late to enable it to have a full, positive impact on the standards achieved by the oldest pupils. The pupils begin from a very low base of prior attainment; they make good progress by the time that they are seven but progress by the age of eleven has been slower. In the present Year 6, progress over time has been only satisfactory in mathematics. The school recognises that standards could be higher, especially for the middle and higher attaining pupils in Year 6. However, standards are improving and in the lessons and work seen most pupils are making good progress because:

- the teaching is good, the basic skills of numeracy are well taught and there is good coverage of all areas of the mathematical curriculum;
- most planning is thorough, focused and followed, enabling teachers to build carefully on prior learning;
- the pupils are very well managed; there are high expectations that the pupils will work hard, concentrate well and try hard;
- all pupils' contributions are valued, which helps to improve their levels of confidence and motivation;
- the skills of the support staff are well used to help pupils with special educational needs make good progress;
- assessment procedures to check how well the pupils have achieved are good, and useful analyses of the information are being made.

60. However, occasionally pupils' learning is not as good because:

- the introduction to the numeracy sessions lacks pace and does not help the pupils to develop their capacity for mental mathematics;
- the pupils have difficulty in saying how they arrived at answers because they cannot remember the mathematical terms to explain their thinking.

61. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well in their development of understanding of number, shape, space and measures, and in their ability to handle data. They are given opportunities to count, sequence, add, subtract, and read and write numbers. By the end of Year 2, many pupils understand the place value of digits, sequence numbers to 100, and can add and subtract 10 confidently and use this knowledge to do the same with 9 and 11. They estimate and measure with increasing accuracy, such as the length of objects more or less than one metre, and read weights on scales using standard measures. They start to use reflective symmetry and to understand right angle turns. They can tell the time using quarter to and past on both analogue and digital clocks. They communicate findings of collected information in tables and block graphs, and start to interpret the represented data.

62. By the time they leave the school the pupils can multiply and divide by tens and hundreds and the more able pupils can use larger numbers. They can work with numbers to two decimal places, especially when solving money problems. They order and convert fractions to their simplest form. The lower attaining pupils work with lower numbers but cover mainly the same topics as the more able pupils. Although a lot of work is done on multiplication, some pupils have problems remembering their tables and this hinders them when they are doing calculations mentally. The pupils learn how to use the 24-hour clock and tackle problems to do with time and distance. The pupils complete frequency tables, use a tally chart and complete a graph to show the results of throwing dice. The most able pupils can plot points using all four quadrants. They use and understand negative numbers in the context of temperature. Throughout the school the pupils are learning to use ICT skills to support their learning in mathematics; for example, they use calculators confidently and use computer programs to display data in a variety of forms.

63. The teaching is good and the basic skills are taught well. This is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection where the quality of the teaching was more erratic. The consistent application of the agreed strategies for behaviour management is having a very positive effect on the way pupils learn. The teachers use good strategies to check the pupils' understanding and give clear explanations to develop positive understanding of new knowledge. The confidence of the pupils to identify number patterns and sequences is growing. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced since the last inspection and this is having a beneficial effect in raising standards. A good choice and use of resources ensures that learning, especially in the main part of the lesson, is effective and that all pupils are involved. However, on occasions the introductory parts of lessons, when pupils practise mental calculation, are less brisk than they could be and so the pupils are not always alert and eager to answer. In one very good lesson, high levels of enthusiasm from the teacher, very good relationships and a brisk pace helped to keep pupils motivated and involved. While most marking celebrates pupils' efforts, it does not always help them to further develop their understanding. Throughout the school insufficient use is made of squared paper to keep figures in columns. This occasionally leads to confusion in calculating and untidy presentation. However, strengths far outweigh weaknesses, and pupils are responding well to mathematics lessons and are enjoying applying effort to working out problems.

64. The subject is well led and there are clear plans for its further development, such as through the development of the use of a commercial scheme of work to support the National Numeracy Strategy planning. The school's assessment arrangements in mathematics are good. Data from national tests is carefully analysed to help identify weaknesses, and these are then targeted for

development. There are consistent approaches to help teachers find out what pupils know and understand so that they can keep track of pupils' progress. The subject leader and the headteacher have monitored teaching and learning to help gain an overview of the subject, and to put improvements in place.

## SCIENCE

65. Standards are well below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is due, in part, to the very few pupils who reach beyond the expected level for their age and the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In addition, the oldest pupils have not had the benefit of the better curriculum, planned over the past year, to fill the gaps in their learning. Prior to the current year, science was taught through a topic approach that did not ensure full coverage of the curriculum. There has been good improvement in provision for the subject since the last inspection.
66. Pupils of all abilities are now making good progress because:
- the curriculum is now well planned to cover all the required elements and there is a good emphasis on investigative work;
  - the teaching is good and pupils are enthusiastic;
  - the subject is well managed, and teaching and learning have benefited from the co-ordinator's checking on what needed to be done to raise standards.
67. A point for improvement is:
- more consistent recording of scientific terms so that pupils can learn the vocabulary and use it when they talk and write.
68. In a lesson with Years 1 and 2 pupils, the teacher successfully harnessed their enthusiasm by organising a series of investigations in which pupils had to identify pushes and pulls that made things slow down, speed up or change direction. Very good resources included a pulley and model windmill. The pupils used what they had learned the previous week very well to decide whether the force was a push or pull. A group working with a pendulum worked out that the higher they raised the weight, the further the pendulum would swing. The pupils used their literacy skills well to help each other read the instructions for each activity. Although pupils showed a good level of interest in the lesson, most had difficulty in explaining why things happened or were affected by changes in forces, for example, when friction was applied to the axle of the windmill and this slowed the movement of the sails. The pupils could explain, however, that the wind pumps close to the school "make electricity by turning and the wind is pushing them." Years 3 and 4 pupils know that in order to keep a test fair, only one variable should be altered. In a good lesson, pupils tested what happened when an elastic band was attached to a weight and predicted how far it needed to stretch before the weight moved. One pupil predicted, after careful questioning by the teacher, that the thickness of the elastic band was important, as well as the size of the weight. The pupils struggled to express an overriding principle from their conclusions and most resorted to describing what they had done rather than drawing conclusions. In Year 6 lesson, the pupils learned that micro-organisms are responsible for causing mould on food and used a range of lenses to observe these closely and draw what they saw. Several of the pupils initially found it difficult to find the correct distance at which the lens could be most effectively used, but timely intervention by the teacher meant that a rapid rate of learning ensued and all were ultimately successful. The pupils know the properties of solids, liquids and gases, and have conducted investigations into what happens when materials are burned, frozen or heated. They struggle with terms such as 'evaporation' and 'condensation' to explain what is happening.

69. Teaching is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and there is a good emphasis on learning through practical experience. Lessons are well organised and teachers' control is firm. Pupils are encouraged to work together and share ideas. There are good opportunities planned for pupils to use ICT in presenting results and researching on the Internet. In the very good lesson in Year 6, pupils were encouraged to observe mould on a range of food and the emphasis on safety was well established. Very well prepared resources and the teacher's good support enthused the pupils and built their confidence in trying out their ideas. By the end of the lesson pupils had drawn on their observations and had formulated questions that they were later going to investigate, such as "Do all yellow fruits have the same colour mould?" The teachers provide very good support for pupils who have special educational needs and provide frameworks for recording their results so that pupils learn how to move on to independent recording. There are some occasions when teachers do not write the new vocabulary for the work on the classroom whiteboard or on worksheets and so pupils cannot always remember terms when they come to explain their findings or write conclusions.
70. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has worked hard to improve planning for the subject and ensure that there is a rolling programme that covers all the necessary work. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' rate of learning. The co-ordinator has identified the right areas to work on in the subject, such as improving pupils' scientific vocabulary and understanding of how to devise a fair test.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

71. No lessons were seen but the scrutiny of displays and pupils' previous work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils indicate that the pupils' work reaches the level expected for their ages at seven and eleven years. There has been good improvement since the last inspection as pupils now benefit from a carefully planned curriculum. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.
72. The strength in the subject is:
- that the pupils are given good opportunities to try out their ideas and use ICT to support their learning.
73. A point for improvement is:
- that the quality of the sketchbooks used does not allow pupils to try out painting techniques or colour mixing and so record their efforts for future reference.
74. The Year 2 pupils have drawn pictures of Buddha, in connection with their work in religious education and have captured the rounded shapes of the seated figure well. Higher attaining Year 1 pupils use shading to good effect in their self-portraits. Year 5 pupils depict the story of Jason and the Argonauts in collage and although they choose colour and texture carefully in this work, the cutting of shapes is often imprecise and the compositions lack some detail to enliven the overall effect. Year 6 pupils have used the digital camera to take photographs of figures moving and have then sketched the movements. The older pupils research artists' lives and work on the Internet and have favourite websites to find the most relevant information and better images.
75. The teachers' planning is good and shows that pupils' skills are built systematically. The subject is well managed and although it has not been the focus for development, among the school's many other priorities, the co-ordinator has ensured that it has improved in terms of resources and long-term planning.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

76. Standards in design and technology are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and when the pupils leave the school. The pupils make satisfactory progress in gaining design and technology skills, knowledge and understanding. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be below national levels and progress was unsatisfactory.
77. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because:
- the problems identified in the last inspection have been well addressed – the planning ensures that work carefully builds on previous learning and indicates a good range of projects through which pupils develop important skills;
  - the status of design and technology within the school's curriculum has been raised and all areas of the subject are given suitable emphasis;
  - the teachers have the required subject knowledge and confidence to ensure pupils learn and the subject is well led by a competent and knowledgeable co-ordinator;
  - the school makes good use of community links such as the wind farm to help the pupils see the relevance of learning design and technology skills.
78. A point for improvement is:
- to encourage pupils to develop design and technology vocabulary and use the correct terms in their explanations.
79. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils construct a variety of vehicles using cotton reels, rigid materials and clothes pegs. They enjoy explaining how they have made them and how they have tested their designs. By the end of Year 6, the pupils have made good progress in learning to measure, mark, cut and fix wood and card to form a rigid chassis which will be made into a moving vehicle. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils work in pairs to design and make model gardens using recyclable materials. They create model monsters using balloons and syringes to make them move. They use a 'storyboard' to evaluate the finished model and can say what they like about their design and what they would change. They construct books with pop-up centres and write the story to go with the actions. In Year 5, the pupils complete an analysis of biscuits. They test them for texture, taste and appearance. They suggest improvements to shop-bought biscuits and make up their own recipe for flapjack. They learn how to make paper and decorate the finished product with their own design to enhance its appearance.
80. Throughout the school good links are made with ICT when the older pupils use control technology programs to model their work. They can write programs to control different devices on the clown, making him wink and lighting up his nose in a chosen sequence. Good use is made by the pupils of the digital cameras to record their work.
81. Overall, teaching is satisfactory in design and technology. Good features of teaching include secure subject knowledge, a good emphasis on developing important skills, and encouragement and praise given to pupils. These positive features help to increase pupils' confidence and enthusiasm. Throughout the school the pupils work with a range of tools, equipment, materials and components to make products of good quality, and evaluate their finished products, suggesting ways of improvement. In conversations with pupils it is clear that they enjoy the lessons; they are enthusiastic to show their models but some find it difficult to explain how they arrived at the finished product using the correct vocabulary or to explain the order in which they have done things.



82. The subject is well co-ordinated, resources are good and the subject is included in the monitoring evaluation cycle of the school improvement plan. The teachers assess the pupils against the specific learning objectives identified in the guidelines for the subject at the end of each topic. The school makes good use of links with industry to support work in design and technology. For example, there are models, photographs and written accounts of the pupils' visit to the wind farm in Tow Law.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

83. Pupils' work broadly meets the expectations for their ages at seven and eleven. There has been good improvement in the subject since the previous inspection and the work is now planned to build upon pupils' prior learning effectively.

84. The pupils make good progress in geography because:

- the local area and ICT are well used to promote pupils' learning;
- the teaching is good and pupils with special educational needs are well supported.

85. A point for improvement is:

- making better use of places in the news to widen the pupils' understanding of place.

86. The school makes good use of local geographical features, often through aerial photographs, to promote pupils' understanding. The pupils use computers to help them research into places, climate and settlements. The Year 2 pupils can plot a route on a simple map of their area and interpret the symbols on a key. They have conducted a survey to find the most popular seaside holiday place in the north-east and can explain what facilities are found at the seaside that attract visitors. By the time they leave the school, the pupils have a fair grasp of place and how human activity affects the environment, such as the erection of wind-powered generators in their locality and how climate affects human activity, such as in mountainous regions. They can interpret maps of different scales and use atlases, globes and books to find information. The teaching is good and the pupils know what they are going to learn in lessons because of the teachers' clear explanations. In a good lesson in Year 6, the pupils were investigating a chosen river and working in groups to frame questions to which they would then find answers. One group used a laptop computer and CD-ROM to find information about the River Nile. These pupils made notes of the important points as they sifted through the information. They found and enlarged images, and printed tables and pictures that would later be used in presenting their findings to others. As the lesson progressed, the pupils' facility to ask questions of a geographical nature increased through the teacher's well-focused support. This enabled several pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in finding relevant information about rivers. Whereas the younger pupils learn about different places by pinpointing the travels of a teddy bear, the older pupils do not often find out enough about places that are featured in the news.

87. The subject is well managed by a knowledgeable co-ordinator who checks teachers' planning. Through monitoring the subject she has identified areas for improvement, such as the weakness above. The pupils' attainment is checked at the end of each unit of work and the planning for future work takes account of any gaps that are apparent in pupils' understanding.

## **HISTORY**

88. No lessons were seen but it is evident from talking to pupils and looking at their work that it reaches the level expected for their age at seven but falls below the expected level by the time they are eleven. This is because the full curriculum for history has been in place for too short a

time for the oldest pupils. Pupils of all abilities are making at least satisfactory progress but the oldest find it hard to look at evidence from the past and suggest what it tells them about how people lived or what things were used for because they have had too little experience of this. The work of pupils in Years 3 to 5 is much closer to that expected for their ages because of the school's good planning to resolve weaker areas of knowledge and skills.

- The strength in the subject is the good use of the local area to promote pupils' understanding of how places change over time.
- An area for improvement is that the school has a limited range of artefacts to stimulate pupils' interest.

89. By the end of Year 2, the pupils understand that some events took place before anyone who is now living can remember them. They know that we can learn about the past from objects or people's writing about what happened. Through well-planned lessons in which they look at sources of evidence, the Year 2 pupils know that Samuel Pepys wrote a diary and that is how we know about the Great Fire of London. Pupils in Year 3 can explain, after looking at a variety of information, that many more people were able to go on holiday to the seaside after travel by train was possible. Year 4 pupils recognise Egyptian gods from pictures but find it hard to explain the Ancient Egyptians' beliefs about life after death and the processes that were used to help the journey to the afterworld. The pupils use computers well in history. Years 5 and 6 pupils, for example, have researched the 1960s on the Internet and found information about significant people from that era, such as John Lennon. Year 6 pupils have researched Edward Jenner's life on the Internet but they have difficulty in explaining his contribution to scientific discovery and how this affected people's lives. The pupils' knowledge of how their local area has changed is often good. The pupils' use of chronology is not always accurate. Many older pupils struggle to give ideas about what things were used for in the past, or interpret sources of information because they have not been effectively taught how to do this over time. These skills are much stronger in Years 1 and 2 and are developing in the older years, but the pupils still have considerable gaps in their learning because the improvements to the curriculum are recent.
90. The teachers' planning is good. Teachers are conscious of the need to fill gaps in pupils' learning and they are doing this effectively. They make good use of photographs from the past and present so that pupils can think about reasons for changes in their locality. The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator knows what to do next to ensure that teaching and learning of this subject improves further. She has ensured that there has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection by ensuring that the curriculum now builds securely on what pupils have learned previously and that historical enquiry skills are being suitably emphasised. The co-ordinator has identified the lack of artefacts for pupils to learn from, and plans to address this are in hand.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

91. Standards in ICT are in line with national levels by the end of Year 2 and when the pupils leave the school, and all the pupils achieve well. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when standards and progress were found to be unsatisfactory. The way in which ICT is used as a natural part of the pupils' daily work is impressive. The computer suite is the hub of the school and the laptops in classrooms are also used to good effect. Evidence from the inspection indicates that standards are continuing to rise.
92. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because:
- they have regular access to computers in the computer suite, which has increased their levels of skill, confidence and enthusiasm;

- the teaching is consistently good. The teachers have improved their own skills, enabling them to teach all components of the curriculum effectively;
- there have been significant recent improvements to the quality and range of software, enabling teachers to support pupils more effectively both within ICT and in most other subjects;
- good leadership is provided, and there are enthusiastic plans for the subject's sustained growth;
- the subject is secure within the school's range of learning experiences provided for its pupils;
- resources, such as the digital camera, which is used extensively, are helping to raise pupils' awareness of the increasing use of ICT in the wider world;
- the subject is enjoyed by all of the pupils and it is being used as a positive feature to boost the self-esteem of pupils who have behavioural and social problems by helping them to concentrate and achieve well.

93. An area for improvement is:

- extend software to further to enhance opportunities to use ICT skills throughout the curriculum.

94. The youngest pupils make good gains in learning in their ability to use ICT for different purposes. For example, they can control a mouse well, point, click and drag. They know how to select and load programs. They use a range of software to link with other curriculum areas such as geography when they place features on an island and write a description. When word-processing, they can change the font and colour and can print out their work successfully. Using paint programs, they can produce pictures and patterns. The pupils learn to follow instructions and input them into a programmable toy so that it will follow a set route that they have designed for it.

95. As the pupils move through Key Stage 2, they increase their confidence in using a range of software applications. In a good link with mathematics, pupils display information relating to hair colour in a graph and interrogate and interpret their findings. They use word-processing skills with flair as they draft, develop and present poems and stories in a finished form. They learn to import pictures to illustrate their writing. Year 5 pupils can write programs to control different devices on a clown making him wink and lighting up his nose in a chosen sequence. By the time they are eleven the pupils can write procedures to include inputs and outputs to design and model control systems, for example for burglar alarms. They make good use of the digital cameras to record their work and to provide pictures to illustrate articles in the very good newspaper that is produced. The pupils know how to find information from the Internet and how to send and receive emails.

96. The good features of teaching observed during the inspection include secure subject knowledge, clear explanations to help develop understanding, the good use of resources to enable pupils to often use computers and other ICT equipment, and a good emphasis on developing important skills. These strengths help to ensure that all pupils are given regular opportunities to succeed, and show positive attitudes to the subject.

97. The subject is well led by a competent co-ordinator who has a clear view of how to continue to raise standards, through the continuing monitoring of teaching and learning. The school has good links with the school to which most of the pupils transfer at the age of eleven. These include working on a joint module of control technology and the shared use of a technician who visits the school weekly. The teachers and teaching assistants have made good use of the national opportunities funding to improve their own ICT skills. The subject makes a positive contribution to the personal and social development of pupils because pupils often together on projects and provide effective support for each other.

## **MUSIC**

98. The standards of attainment by the time the pupils are seven and when they leave the school are in line with those expected nationally and overall the pupils make satisfactory progress. This is a similar picture to that found at the last inspection. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development because pupils are encouraged to work together and express how music makes them feel.
99. The features that most strongly support the pupils' learning are:
- the pupils all have access to a range of musical activities that are relevant to their ages and interest;
  - the school is effectively using a commercial scheme of work, to plan what should be taught in each year group and to make sure that the pupils build on what they have learned before;
  - the co-ordinator is a competent musician and enthusiastically promotes the pupils' musical learning throughout the school.
100. The pupils can sing in tune and when encouraged improve their performance using more expression and paying attention to phrasing. They are eager to become involved in the singing and instrumental activities as when, for example, the learning opportunities for pupils are well extended in the 'hymn practice assembly'. The pupils' response to music is good. They handle instruments well and treat them with care and respect. Throughout the school, the pupils have opportunities to play a good range of percussion instruments. They listen to a variety of pieces of music and can identify different instruments within these. The pupils use ICT competently to support their learning. The Year 6 pupils have six weeks of tuition using the school's keyboards and this makes a significant impact on their ability to compose. They know, understand and correctly use a good range of musical vocabulary, including the names of notes, for example. They can find the correct notes on the keyboards and play simple tunes correctly.
101. The lessons seen during the inspection were of good quality. The teachers explain the objectives of the lessons clearly and teach the basic skills of music well. They manage the pupils effectively and expect the pupils to participate fully in the learning opportunities. The teachers are well supported by the clear guidelines of what they are to teach and a good range of resources. These features enabled the pupils to make good progress in the lessons seen in music.
102. The subject is well co-ordinated, resources are good and the subject is included in the monitoring evaluation cycle of the school improvement plan. The school has identified the need to increase teachers' confidence in teaching music and the co-ordinator is giving support to the teachers by providing training in the different aspects of the music curriculum. The pupils listen to music in assembly and have occasional opportunities to hear professional musicians from a range of musical traditions and cultures. The after-school music club provides good opportunities for the pupils to extend the range of songs that they know. They enjoy the sessions and enter enthusiastically into learning new songs. A very popular feature in the school and the community is the 'Stars in their Eyes' talent concert organised by the music co-ordinator. The Year 6 pupils perform for parents and friends of the school and enthusiastically present shows such as 'Grease'. These events enhance the opportunities for the pupils' personal, social and cultural development. The acoustics in the hall make teaching very difficult as it is hard for pupils to listen to each other and the teacher.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

103. The standards in physical education activities are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and when the pupils leave the school. Progress is at least satisfactory as pupils move

through the school. In the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils made good progress in learning. The good picture of physical education found at the last inspection has been maintained and the subject provides good opportunities for the development of the pupils' personal, social, citizenship and health education.

104. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory, and sometimes good progress because:

- in lessons the teachers manage the pupils very well and the planning ensures that teachers build on previous learning;
- all parts of the physical education curriculum are given appropriate emphasis, including swimming;
- the subject is well led, and there are plans for its continued development;
- the pupils are enthusiastic towards physical education and generally show positive attitudes in lessons.

105. Areas for improvement are:

- the pupils could be given opportunities to learn from others through the use of demonstrations and evaluations in lessons;
- the content of some lessons could be strengthened to extend the development of the pupils in creative movement sessions;
- the acoustics of the school hall make it very difficult to maintain a positive atmosphere especially in dance sessions.

106. By the time they are seven, pupils can produce a good variety of shapes and movements using their whole bodies. Their partners can successfully mirror the shapes and in pairs the pupils can link movements together and present their sequence to others. Some pupils can say what they like or dislike about a demonstration but often lack the vocabulary to make an evaluative comment. In a good introduction to a lesson seen, the warm-up consisted of a 'follow my leader' game which enabled the pupils to reproduce simple actions, such as marching, stretching and skipping, showing developing co-ordination. The warm-down provided pupils with opportunities to relax and stretch their muscles to quiet, calm music. They understand the need to be correctly dressed for physical education.

107. As the pupils move through Key Stage 2, they continue to develop appropriate physical skills. For example, they show improving hand-eye co-ordination as they learn to play short tennis. Their ball skills, such as patting and bouncing a ball, and hitting from a throw, improve during a lesson, showing developing control. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have made satisfactory progress in extending the ways they make shapes and employ movement in an imaginative way. They successfully build up sequences to mirror each other remembering a good variety of movements; however, many find it difficult to do the opposite to their partner. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils have the opportunity to attend swimming lessons. If they have not learnt to swim by the end of these sessions they continue to go until they reach the approved basic standard of being able to swim 25 metres. All of the present Year 6 pupils can swim.

108. The teaching is satisfactory overall, and some good teaching was seen during the inspection. In the best lesson seen, the teacher was secure in her subject knowledge and placed good emphasis on the development of skills to ensure that pupils made good gains in learning. All the teachers use positive strategies to manage the pupils very well. A small minority of the older pupils finds the opportunity to take a sensible part in physical education lessons challenges their self-control and their behaviour is not as good as in other situations. These occasions are dealt with well by the teachers although their efforts to create a positive atmosphere, especially in

dance sessions, are hampered by the very poor acoustics of the school hall. Other good features of the teaching seen include a good emphasis on safety requirements, encouragement given, and effective use of resources, which helps the pupils to learn. However, teachers do not always enable pupils to view examples of good practice in a way that encourages them to discuss and evaluate the performances of others to ensure that they always make the best possible progress.

109. The leadership of the subject is good and, although it is not a priority for this year, it is planned within the school's cycle to include the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in physical education. There is a good range of resources for use indoors and outside to ensure that all components of the curriculum are fully implemented. The school makes very good use of support from the community to enhance and extend the opportunities for the pupils' physical education. For example, a parent runs the after-school football club and there have been links developed with Sunderland Football Club. The school benefits from the local education authority's 'School Sport Co-ordinators' Programme' which extends the sporting opportunities, especially for the older pupils. Coaching and joint events are provided for table tennis, netball, basketball, dance and gymnastics. Next term it is hoped to begin a rugby club, the interest in this is being fostered by the fact that a pupil plays for the county team.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

110. The pupils' work reaches the level indicated in the locally agreed syllabus by the time they are seven, but falls below the expected level when they are eleven. This is because religious education has not had a firm place in the curriculum in the past and has lacked planning to ensure that the curriculum is covered. The school has worked hard over the past year to improve planning and ensure that the subject is now taught effectively. The pupils of all abilities are making good progress in the subject but the teachers have not had time to fill the gaps in the learning of the older pupils. The work of pupils in Years 3 to 5 is close to the expectations for their ages.

111. The strengths in the subject are:

- the curriculum is now well planned to cover the locally agreed syllabus and there is an appropriate emphasis on learning about different religions;
- the teaching is good and the pupils are interested in the subject;
- the subject is well managed.

112. A point for improvement is:

- there is too little recording of work by the oldest pupils and this restricts their ability to remember new vocabulary and use it in their discussions.

113. The pupils enjoy the subject and learn at a good rate because the teaching is good and lessons are interesting and challenging. Teaching is good and difficult issues are explored through carefully led discussions that allow pupils to explore their ideas. In a good lesson with Years 5 and 6 pupils, for example, on interpreting religious metaphors, the pupils became engrossed in a discussion about God after considering the metaphor 'God is my rock'. Although they struggled to express their ideas, they wrestled with the concept of God being a lasting influence on people's lives and a constant factor in a changing world. The good quality questioning by the teacher helped pupils of all abilities to gain from the discussion and this was reflected in their later work on representing what they had discussed through visual symbols. In another good lesson with Years 1 and 2 pupils, the teacher led a discussion on how things are important to people in guiding the way that they live, that arose from the pupils' learning about the daily life of a Buddhist monk. The pupils' contributions indicated that they had remembered what had been covered in the previous

lesson well and had grasped the concept of what was important to them in guiding their lives. The pupils in Years 1 to 4 record their work frequently but the oldest pupils have little that is recorded. This means that they cannot refer to the vocabulary that they have learned when they discuss particular topics.

114. The co-ordinator has ensured that there has been very good improvement in this subject. There is now sufficient time given to lessons and the local guidelines are fully implemented. Good use is made of the local churches, and visitors to school successfully promote pupils' understanding of different religions.