

INSPECTION REPORT

BOWBURN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Bowburn, County Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114087

Headteacher: Mrs L E Lyons

Reporting inspector: Mr L Garner
25507

Dates of inspection: 29th April – 3rd May 2002

Inspection number: 196248

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Surtees Avenue Bowburn County Durham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Smithson
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25507	L Garner	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Equal opportunities English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? 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?
9970	J Acaster	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27777	R Greenall	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Physical education Religious education Special educational needs	
20645	R Webber	Team inspector	English Art and design History Music	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

Bowburn Junior School is an average size school with 197 pupils. The national average for primary schools is 226 pupils. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, at 28 per cent, is above the national average. However, because of the number of families entitled to other benefits, the percentage of pupils who would be entitled to free school meals could well be higher. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language, at 0.5 per cent, is lower than in most schools. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, at 16.9 per cent, is below the national average, but the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs, at 4.8 per cent, is well above the national average.

Pupils' attainment on joining the Year 3 classes varies greatly but, overall, is similar to that achieved by most children nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with some outstanding features. Pupils' attainment in the national tests compares well with schools nationally and is generally better than those in similar schools. The school is very well led, with all concerned putting high achievement as their first priority.

Pupils' very good attitude to their work and good behaviour means they benefit well from what the school provides and make progress in their academic work and personal development. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in the national tests in mathematics and science are better than those seen in similar schools.
- The very good leadership in the school means that the aims and values of the school are reflected in all aspects of school life.
- The excellent relationships observed in school mean that pupils have very good attitudes to their work and behave well.
- Pupils' personal development is well catered for because of the school's very good provision for social and moral development.
- The school involves the local community, including parents, very well to widen the education provided for its pupils.

What could be improved

- Standards attained in some aspects of English.
- Development of the recently acquired computer suite to further improve pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

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

The school is aware of the aspects to be improved and has plans in place already to develop these areas.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. There has been very good improvement since then. The provision for pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved considerably. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are much better than they were. There is now very good curricular provision in these subjects. Assessment procedures have improved.

There have been good improvements in the way pupils' personal development has been encouraged, in the school's relationships with parents and in pupil behaviour.

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	B
Mathematics	E	B	A	A*
Science	D	A	B	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table shows that standards achieved by Year 6 in the National Curriculum tests and assessments (SATs) last year were in line with the national average for English, well above average in mathematics and above average in science. When compared with similar schools, those with a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals, the results are even better. Standards are above average for English, well above average for science and for mathematics the results show they are in the top five per cent of similar schools in the country.

This shows a very good improvement in English, where standards were well below the national average in 1999 and 2000. In science and mathematics, standards have been above the national average for the past two years. This year, there are more pupils in Year 6 who find learning difficult and so standards are not as high. In English, standards are slightly below the national expectations but national expectations are met in mathematics and science.

Standards in the other subjects of the National Curriculum generally meet expectations, except in ICT where standards are below those expected. This is because the school has only recently been brought into the national training programme. The school's computer suite has only just been set up and teachers are still being trained. However, it is clear that the suite is already having an impact on standards and pupils are making good progress. The school recognises that the 'control' aspect of this subject needs to be developed to ensure that all aspects of ICT are covered effectively.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and try hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. A small number of pupils find it difficult to match the standards expected by the school but most pupils behave very well in the classroom, around the school and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. All adults in the school relate very well to each other and to pupils and the pupils respond very well to this. All members of the school community are valued.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Similar to the national average.

Relationships within the school are outstanding and this contributes greatly to the way pupils take full advantage of what is offered to them. Their personal development is very good and this is a major factor in the way pupils develop academically.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	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.

Judgements are based on the observation of lessons during the inspection and the scrutiny of pupils' work. The quality of teaching seen from the permanent teachers, in particular, was of a high standard. This is obviously because the permanent teachers know their pupils very well. However, the three temporary teachers employed by the school during the inspection, were coping well and helping the school greatly in difficult circumstances.

The most effective teaching was seen in the Year 6 classes where the standard of teaching was never less than good and often very good. This means that the Year 6 pupils make good progress.

Teaching in the numeracy lessons was good. This is one reason why standards in mathematics are better than in English. Two aspects of teaching are particularly strong; teachers have high expectations of the standards pupils should achieve and manage their classes very well. Support staff are used well. They are given clear guidance on what they are to do and, because of the excellent relationships, are very effective in the help they give. Work is well matched to pupils' needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curricular provision for English, mathematics and science is very good. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of out-of-school activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Individual targets are well identified and reviewed frequently. Pupils know their targets and use these to guide their own learning. Equally good provision is used to boost the achievement of the more able and talented pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good provision is made for pupils who have English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall and many aspects of social and moral development are outstanding. Cultural and spiritual development is good overall.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. Academic developments are well monitored and the school's ethos means that pupils are given very good guidance for their personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is very clear about the type of school she wants and has the leadership skills to achieve this. She and the deputy headteacher make a strong team, each contributing their different skills to school development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They are well aware of the strengths and areas for development of the school. A number of governors are regular visitors to school, giving good support to staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its own performance well.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its resources very well. The headteacher successfully bids for additional funds and the governing body understand the principles of 'best value' well.

The accommodation in and outside school is good and has been enhanced by good quality furniture in the 'shared' areas between the classrooms and an imaginative project which has provided very attractive playground areas. Staffing levels have been maintained at a good level with the deputy headteacher giving good support to staff by giving them professional time each week to plan and prepare work out of the classroom.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large majority of parents think that their children like coming to school and make good progress in their learning. They think behaviour in school is good and the school helps to make their children more mature. They feel they are kept well informed about how their children are doing and are comfortable about approaching the school with a problem or question. They feel the school is well led and teaching is good. They consider that the school provides a good range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents felt that more, or less, homework should be provided. A very small minority of parents felt that more able pupils were not sufficiently challenged

The inspection team agreed with the positive views of parents. They consider that the homework provided is at the right level and the pupils' 'organiser' makes it clear what work has been given. The school has produced a comprehensive policy to cater for able pupils and observations were made of group teaching which effectively catered for these pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The year 2001 National Curriculum tests and assessments (SATs) are the latest to have been reported and these are the ones the inspection team refers to. The eleven-year-olds achieved results which were in line with the national average in English, above average in science and well above average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, that is schools with a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals, the results were better. Results in English were above average, in science well above average and in mathematics they were in the top five percent of similar schools in the country.
2. However, year groups vary in the proportion of more or less able pupils and so standards may change from year to year. The present Year 6 group contains more pupils who find learning difficult than last year. They are all achieving good standards compared with previous achievement. They are achieving the national expectations in mathematics and science but are slightly below expectations in English.
3. The national strategies to teach literacy and numeracy have been well implemented and this has had a significant effect on pupils' progress, particularly in numeracy. Standards in ICT are below those expected. The aspect of 'control' in particular needs to be developed. A major reason for this is that the school was in one of the last groups to receive training and additional funding for training and equipment, so the subject is at an early stage of development. However, now that the computer suite has been established and staff are completing training, it is clear that pupils are making good progress. The suite means that all pupils in a class can have 'hands on' experience during ICT lessons gaining much from each session.
4. Standards in religious education meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. In the other subjects of the curriculum, such as history, geography and art and design, standards are generally in line with those expected and pupils are making satisfactory progress. As in many schools, the time spent on literacy and numeracy has meant that the time spent on other subjects is limited.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in their learning. Their progress is particularly good when, as in English, mathematics and science, they are given specific support within classes that are arranged on the basis of ability, or are taught as a separate group by the teacher who specialises in special educational needs. Where specific support is not available and learning depends on skills in literacy or numeracy, progress is satisfactory. The school identifies more able and talented pupils and provides them with suitably challenging work to raise the rate and quality of their progress. In each year group, these pupils meet as 'challenge groups' for very intensive sessions of additional work and homework in English and mathematics. They make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and personal targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. Pupils' attitudes to school and their personal development are very good. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Behaviour overall is good. The

standard of attendance is broadly satisfactory. Since the previous inspection these aspects have shown good improvement.

7. Pupils are very proud of their school. They like almost everything within it. They find it a very friendly and happy place. A questionnaire previously issued by the school to pupils in Year 5 resulted in many favourable comments. Pupils praise their school environment, finding both their classrooms and play areas stimulating. They enjoy the school's values: 'We have good rules'; 'Being a friend isn't difficult because we all help each other'. They like their activities: 'There's lots I can do'. The few adverse points made relate to rather cramped conditions in the cloakrooms and the lack of doors between classrooms.
8. Pupils' attitudes to work are generally very good. They are interested in what is being taught and most concentrate conscientiously on their tasks, trying to 'do their best work'. Pupils enjoy co-operating together in pairs or groups. They generally listen well and are keen to respond. They show much interest in school life and are usually well aware of their own learning and progress, completing their personal organiser in a committed way.
9. Behaviour is good overall. It is usually very good around the school. Lunchtimes, for instance, are characterised by very friendly and mature behaviour in the dining hall, and by happy and sensible play outside. Assemblies are very quiet and orderly. Pupils line up readily and obey instructions promptly. They behave very well and with restraint in occasionally cramped conditions. Behaviour in lessons is sometimes marred by some short attention spans and an aptness to become distracted by each other rather than to focus on what is being taught. Many pupils also tend to become tired in the afternoon, a condition which the school has tried to counter by making a practice of offering water as a refreshment. No unkind or oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection week, but much politeness and concern for others. There have been no exclusions during the past year.
10. There is a very high quality of respect and affection evident within the school resulting in excellent relationships at all levels. This provides a very firm foundation for the promotion of academic attainment and personal development. Pupils know that their teachers can readily be approached for help and encouragement. They receive many reminders about right and wrong, and they are reflective. They not only experience the benefits of kindly assistance and orderly administration, but are also facilitated and encouraged to offer it to others. They do this very well, with pupils themselves, for instance, managing and recording the issue and return of play equipment. They monitor, without officiousness, disobedient or unkind behaviour. Many pupils in all year groups enjoy exercising initiative. Two younger pupils were seen, for example, answering the office telephone very politely and sensibly before school. Year 6 pupils have many opportunities to help the corporate life of the school and younger pupils are encouraged to take their lead from them. The school council, well supported by a teacher, meets weekly and discusses topical matters, including ideas posted in the suggestion box. While its members are formally those chosen from Year 6, representatives of all year groups attend and listen to the discussion as how, socially and practically, such matters should be handled. Resulting from all these provisions, pupils learn and exercise very good strides in awareness and personal development.

11. Attendance is a fraction below the national average, although unauthorised absence is much less. Punctuality is very good. The local community suffers from some degree of deprivation which may account, to some extent, for the levels of sickness and increasing prevalence of holidays taken during term time.
12. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to school because of the quality of the care it gives them and the success they enjoy in activities that are planned to match their needs. They involve themselves with increasing confidence because all staff take care to include them in all possible activities. The good support of other pupils helps them to develop socially and personally. Pupils who have emotional and behavioural needs feel valued and increasingly secure in their relationships with classmates and adults.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching seen was good overall. Fifty-six lessons were seen during the inspection. All the quality of teaching in all lessons was satisfactory or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Almost 59 per cent of lessons seen had good or better teaching. The quality of teaching was very good in almost one-fifth of lessons seen.
14. The strength of the quality of teaching and the capacity of the school to continue to improve is shown when the work of the permanent members of the teaching staff is analysed. This is an important factor in the progress that pupils make. Many have to overcome difficulties and need good and very good teaching to achieve as well as they do.
15. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good overall, the National Numeracy Strategy being implemented more effectively and therefore producing more good and very good teaching. The national documents provided for these strategies give teachers a clear structure in which to plan their lessons and pupils benefit from this.
16. The overall ethos of the school in which relationships are so good is a major factor in the quality of teaching. Teachers have high expectations of the standards they expect from their pupils and pupils respond well to this. Teachers manage their classes very well, lessons usually have a relaxed atmosphere but all are quite clear about what is expected. Teachers have generally good knowledge of their subjects and present lessons in an interesting way so pupils pay attention to what is going on. The most effective teaching was seen in the Year 6 classes. These teachers work very well together and, in many ways both are teaching the full year group. The 'setting' arrangements in English, mathematics and science mean that pupils spend a great deal of time in both classrooms and with both teachers. They benefit from the different skills and approaches they experience. This way of working is also developed in other subjects. For example, in an art and design and design and technology lesson pupils are given the opportunity to work with different techniques when producing their 'SATs monsters'. Some choose to paint, others to use pastels and work in the room which has these materials out. This helps in the development of their independent learning and personal development.
17. In the small number of lessons, where some parts of lessons were less than satisfactory, some common faults were identified. Some introductions to lessons went on for too long and pupils became restless and gained little from the experience. In other lessons good quality handwriting and presentation was not demonstrated well

by the teacher's own work and pupils are not given good examples to follow so their presentation of work and handwriting suffer.

18. A strong feature of the teaching is the good provision made for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers use assessment information well to ensure that individual learning plans identify precise and achievable targets in relation to literacy, numeracy and social behaviour. Class teachers and support staff work closely together to ensure that these pupils receive the help they individually need to reach their personal targets. Staff share their observations in order to monitor individual progress closely and plan further action. The good work of the full-time learning support assistants promotes learning well in all year groups. The relatively large number of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 require more intensive teaching in literacy and numeracy as a discrete group. This is given by the very effective part-time specialist learning support teacher. Pupils identified as more able and talented benefit from additional lessons in numeracy and literacy. These pupils form 'Challenge Groups' for numeracy in Years 3 and 4, and for extended writing in Year 5. Teaching in these contexts is good overall. It is characterised by clear targets, well-matched activities and methods, good resources and firm but sensitive and buoyant relationships.
19. A strength of teaching throughout the school is the contributions made by the additional adults helping in classrooms. These might be other teachers, trained special needs assistants, governors or parents. All are fully committed to the school, know pupils well and have clear roles identified by the class teachers.

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

20. The school offers its pupils a rich curriculum and the quality and range of learning opportunities the school offers its pupils are good. In addition to the statutory curriculum, which is in place, the school provides a wide range of well-planned activities to interest pupils and this contributes significantly to their learning in many subjects. For example, visits and visitors are invited into the school to work alongside pupils. Artists, authors, theatre groups and musicians have greatly enhanced the learning of pupils in many subjects across the curriculum such as design and technology, art and design, English and music. The school has established strong links with several European and non-European countries, such as Finland and China, in order to provide pupils with a world-wide perspective to their learning and broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of other places and countries other than their own. The school effectively follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good and is a strength within the school's curricular provision. For example, the school funds special teaching support from an outside agency in order to raise the confidence and self-esteem of pupils and this contributes very effectively to their personal development. Appropriate attention is also given to sex education and drugs misuse.
21. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The school is a very inclusive community and through effective planning and organisation all pupils are given the same opportunities in all areas of learning and aspects of school life.
22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Procedures have been changed to comply with the new national Code of Practice, and the writing of individual education plans reflects this. The targets on these plans are manageable in number and specific to the individual. They precisely spell out the small steps each pupil needs to take, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in order to improve their

work. Pupils know their targets and are encouraged to use them to guide their efforts and achievement. All relevant staff contribute to the process of writing and reviewing individual education plans. They reset targets each half term, and use them to plan suitable adjustments to learning activities, resources and approaches. The effectiveness of this planning is significantly increased by the quality of the learning support staff, and also by the practice of arranging classes in every year group on the basis of prior attainment in English, mathematics and science. Where the number and severity of special educational needs are greater than usual, as is currently the case in Year 6, the learning support teacher takes this group on their own through modified programmes in literacy and numeracy. This enables these pupils to advance through the same curriculum towards their own targets at their own rate. Teachers maintain careful records which clearly show that the targets promote good progress.

23. Equally good provisions are beginning to boost the achievement of the more able and talented pupils. In English, mathematics and science, these pupils benefit greatly from the more demanding pace and levels of work provided in the higher attaining classes. In addition, these pupils meet as 'challenge groups' for extra weekly lessons and homework in numeracy and literacy. In Years 3 and 4, the focus is on numeracy; in Year 5 it falls on extended writing. At the same time, the school offers special programmes in literacy and numeracy to help pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6 to achieve the standards expected for their age. The National Numeracy and Literacy strategies have been effectively put into place.
24. There are good policies and curricular guidance in place for all the core subjects and for religious education and ICT. The other foundation subjects, such as history and art and design, have satisfactory provision which the school recognises needs to be updated. Long term planning is satisfactory. It ensures that all aspects of learning are suitably covered in all subjects. However, the way in which some subjects are timetabled in blocks of time throughout the year means that in some, such as geography, history and design and technology, there is too long a gap before the subject is taught again. As a result the rate of progress pupils make in these subjects is restricted. The school has recognised this as an area for development and has appropriate plans in place to review its long-term curriculum planning in order to address this weakness. Sometimes the learning objectives for certain elements of the literacy hour, such as guided reading and writing, are not specific enough for different ability groups. A good feature of teachers' curriculum planning is the very good cross-curricular links teachers make with other subjects.
25. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. The school offers a good range of after-school clubs that supports well pupils' learning in art and design, music, physical education, ICT and science. In addition to these, a first-aid club contributes well to pupils' personal development. After-school literacy and numeracy sessions, involving both staff from the school and the local secondary school, support well Year 6 pupil learning in English and mathematics and a French club provides pupils with a good opportunity to learn another language.
26. The school has established very good links with its local community in order to support pupils' learning. For example, links with a major construction company in the area enables Year 5 pupils to develop further their design and technology skills. They visited the construction site of a local supermarket and used this as a starting point for developing their own architectural designs for a supermarket. Pupils' health education is well supported by visits from local dentists and nurses, and links with the county cricket club and Sunderland Football Club effectively enhance pupils' learning

in physical education. Visits to local churches and Durham Cathedral and visits by local artists support pupils' learning in religious education and art and design.

27. Links with partner schools are good. Teachers from the local secondary school visit to talk to Year 6 pupils, parents and teachers. Secondary teachers teach Year 6 pupils in mathematics and ICT. A well-planned induction day for pupils in Year 6 effectively supports the pupils' transition to the next stage of their education. Good pastoral links exist with the school's partner infant school. Teachers from Year 3 visit and liaise well with Year 2 teachers in order to ensure a smooth transition for those Year 2 pupils entering the school.
28. Very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of this caring school community. Its effectiveness ensures that the school's aims and values are reflected in all aspects of its daily life. As a result, the school provides a secure and optimistic environment that fosters self-awareness and self-discipline, and raises children's respect for themselves and others by valuing their individuality.
29. The key focus for good spiritual development is the assembly. These daily gatherings are often uplifting occasions to which all staff contribute actively by developing themes and stories that link directly with pupils' lives. Teachers promote an understanding of emotion by expressing their personal feelings for particular stories, experiences, hymns or pieces of music. During the inspection, assemblies on themes, such as 'hands' or 'footsteps', made a strong impact on pupils' understanding of the quality of the example they could both set and follow. Stories are carefully chosen to prompt pupils to reflect more deeply on inner values in ways that make them feel good about themselves.
30. Provisions for moral and social development are very good. Staff lead in both areas by consistently living up to school values. They set very clear guidelines for pupils' behaviour and have high expectations for the way they should treat each other. The boundary between right and wrong is firmly set. Teachers are committed to encouraging pupils to reflect on the values implicit in their own behaviour. Circle time provides a good forum in which pupils can exchange and resolve their moral and social concerns. Assemblies strongly reinforce positive values. For example, one upper school assembly powerfully developed the theme of the futility of cheating by drawing pupils into the issues of a story that directly related to their real concerns about national tests.
31. The strong sense of community fostered by the school underpins its very good provisions for social development and relationships. Pupils are encouraged to respect differences and help each other in many contexts. The system of 'playground friends' effectively promotes practical caring skills and a sense of responsibility for others. Similarly, the school council provides good opportunities for pupils to develop social awareness and initiative. Pupils have many opportunities, in group activities, circle time, dance productions, team games, educational visits and charitable work, to develop the skills of co-operation and teamwork. These opportunities contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school in many ways, for example by running the office at lunchtime, taking care of equipment, ringing the bell to begin and end sessions and acting as classroom monitors. At the same time, older pupils have relatively few opportunities to carry out independent research tasks and projects.
32. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have very good opportunities to study the Durham area, its history and geography and learn about its rich artistic, industrial and religious heritage. The school is strongly committed to

developing pupils' international understanding. It has forged very good links with schools in various countries in Europe and beyond. As a result, pupils have good opportunities to learn about other cultures by corresponding with pen friends in, for example, China, Bosnia, France and the United States. The school has hosted groups of visiting teachers from abroad and worked with pupils from other European countries to produce an impressive friendship quilt. The resulting understandings are further extended by themed weeks, during which all activities relate to European themes and pupils enjoy breakfasts and lunches from different countries. At the same time, a multi-faith element in religious education develops pupils' understanding of the similarities and differences between Christianity and other world faiths such as Hinduism and Sikhism. The school could do more, however, to develop pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity of modern British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school cares effectively for all its pupils. Its arrangements for ensuring their welfare and health and safety are very good. Good behaviour is very well promoted. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance is effective. Educational and personal support and guidance contributes well to raising achievement. The school is particularly successful in promoting pupils' self-confidence and initiative. Its overall care arrangements have improved well since the previous inspection.
34. The school provides a very secure and stimulating environment in which every pupil feels valued. There is a powerful sense of corporate identity. Visible expression to this is given through an overall theme of the school's colours of red and blue, extending to the new seats and trelliswork in the playground. Many useful and imaginative improvements have been made to the infrastructure and grounds of the school. Under the enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher the school projects a shared commitment to high standards and a strong sense of self-worth. Consequently pupils express delight in the school, praising its features (including the toilets) and wearing its uniform with pride.
35. Staff set a friendly tone. They provide very good role models of care and support while maintaining high expectations of all pupils. Pupils in Year 6 are entrusted with a wide range of responsibilities in the daily running of the school, keeping good order and caring for any who might be distressed. Like adult staff, the teams are expected to maintain a written record. This very effectively enhances pupils' sense of purpose and conscientiousness, encourages leadership qualities, and results in a very high level of vigilance, self-discipline and good example.
36. General welfare arrangements are very effective. A high standard of tidiness and cleanliness is maintained. Premises and equipment are regularly checked for safety. Poorly pupils are appropriately supervised. Care provided by staff extends on occasion to providing some warming nourishment. Good child protection awareness and organisation has been established.
37. The school is very effective in promoting good behaviour. Pupils are well aware of the school rules and standards they are expected to uphold. Teachers are consistent in their approach, generally managing and monitoring behaviour very well. Success is underpinned by excellent relationships and much use of praise and reward. When needed, light sanctions are effectively applied as, for instance, registering the possibility of a note in a pupil's personal organiser. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Safeguards are provided by the

school's ethos, openness and vigilance, coupled with the firmness taken in such matters. As a pupil observed about bullying, 'Everyone knows it's, like, bad'.

38. Arrangements for recording, monitoring and promoting attendance are good. Registration is prompt and efficient. The school office telephones immediately in cases of unexplained absence. Reasons for absence are chased up. The education welfare officer monitors and follows up poor attendance each half term. The school keeps parents aware of the importance of punctuality and of avoiding holidays in term time.
39. The school provides a good standard of care for pupils who have special educational needs. It has effective systems to assess such needs and to provide suitable extra help. It has revised these systems well in response to the demands of the new national Code of Practice. The school maintains good links with the infant and secondary schools to ensure that pupils' learning or behavioural difficulties are clearly understood by their new teachers. External experts are used well, for example to give training and advice to help the school provide for specific needs such as dyspraxia. Teachers monitor and record the progress of pupils with special educational needs in good detail. This informs the resetting of targets and the regular reviewing and revising, together with pupils and parents, of individual education plans. Formal annual reviews take place for pupils with more severe learning difficulties. All this enables pupils who have special educational needs to play an increasingly full, confident and successful part in all aspects of school life.
40. The arrangements the school has in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. In English and mathematics, statutory, non-statutory and standardised tests are carefully analysed to identify any weaknesses in pupils' learning and to also track the progress made by individual pupils from one year to the next. Teachers use these assessments well to inform target setting for different cohorts of pupils and for individual pupils. These assessments are also used effectively to inform how pupils are grouped by ability (setting) when taught in these two subjects. This enables teachers to plan work more precisely to match the needs of all pupils and enables those pupils, with special educational needs particularly, to make good progress in these subjects. A particularly good feature of the school's assessment policy is the introduction at the beginning of this academic year of setting individual pupils specific learning targets in writing. This has had a very positive impact on making pupils aware of their own learning and what it is they need to achieve in order to improve their attainment. The day-to-day ongoing assessment of pupils is good and teachers effectively monitor pupils' attainment and learning in lessons in order to inform what they might do next to support pupils' learning. The use of pupils' organisers contributes effectively towards monitoring pupils' progress, particularly in reading. Other helpful procedures in English to assess pupils' progress include spelling, reading and writing tests. Pupils' attainment is effectively assessed against National Curriculum levels at the end of every term. There are no formal assessment procedures at present in other subjects. The school is aware of this and plans to extend its assessment policy to include other subjects in the future.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Parents as a whole have very positive and favourable views about the school, and significant improvement has taken place as regards liaison since the previous

inspection. The school's links with parents are generally effective and, overall, parents make a good impact on the work of the school. The personal organiser devised by the school enables parents to be very well guided, particularly in supporting their children's reading. It also facilitates a habit of written dialogue between parents, teachers and occasionally children. This is very well used to promote positive partnership between school and home as regards learning and the prompt communication of difficulties. On the other hand, the quality of annual written reports is not as good as in most primary schools.

42. Almost all parents responding to the parental questionnaire indicate very strong levels of satisfaction concerning the school's friendliness and approachability. They similarly strongly approve of what the school does to help their children to become more mature. They overwhelmingly think their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. Generally, more than nine out of ten parents replying had favourable views to all the questions raised, except in the matter of homework. On this subject about a quarter were not happy. Opinions were sharply divided between those who wished for less, and those who thought that children should receive more by way of challenge.
43. The inspection team broadly shares the favourable opinions of parents about the school. Homework provided is generally good, though it is not always set regularly enough.
44. Partnership with parents is good overall. Appropriate information is given in a user-friendly way in the school's prospectus and the report of the governing body. Regular newsletters keep parents updated. They are informed of topics to be covered each term. Parents are welcome in school and are invited to various events. Staff are caring and helpful. Parents of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are consulted regularly and kept well informed regarding reviews and targets. This good liaison substantially assists the good progress they make.
45. Written academic reports at the end of the year barely meet requirements. The layout is such that too little space is given over to reporting on subjects studied. This results in only a few sentences being possible for the main subjects of English, mathematics, science, and ICT. The remaining subjects are characterised by a standard sentence in each year group describing what has been covered with, at most, one sentence relating to the performance of the pupil. National Curriculum attainment levels are not generally indicated. Curricular targets, ways of improvement, are usually, but not invariably, suggested.
46. Parents give good support to the school. They are giving very good backing to the school's expectations of uniform, behaviour, and attendance. Some have attended workshops and other meetings provided by the school to explain and enhance learning. In particular, many parents take advantage of the handy opportunity provided by the school's excellent personal organiser booklets to enter into frequent comment and dialogue with their children's teachers. This is a rare and very positive feature in promoting educational partnership and communication.
47. The school wisely believes that involving all interested parties leads to more effective working. Individual education plans for pupils who have special educational needs are written in everyday language so that they are easy for parents to work with. Parents receive a copy of each set of revised targets for their child, together with examples of activities and resources they can use to support those learning targets at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The very good leadership of the headteacher is one of the keys to the effectiveness of the school. She has a clear vision of the type of school she wants and has led the school through a period of very good improvement. She has created an 'inclusive' environment in which all staff are valued and feel they have an important part to play in the life of the school. She shares management responsibilities with the deputy headteacher and they work as a very effective team. Each brings very different strengths to the management of the school and many of the ongoing initiatives are managed very thoroughly, and in great detail, by the deputy headteacher.
49. Curriculum managers are often 'new to the job' because of recent re-allocations of responsibilities. However, they are settling in well and, particularly with the core subjects, are beginning to make an impact on their subject. The curriculum co-ordinator monitors all teachers' planning well and ensures that all aspects of the curriculum are covered. Subject co-ordinators also monitor planning but few, as yet, have had the opportunity to monitor teaching or look at a range of pupils' work across all four year groups. However, teachers have been monitored well by the headteacher and officers from the local education authority and regard the feedback they get as useful.
50. The governing body supports the school very well. It has developed considerably since the last inspection. It is well informed about the school, identifying strengths and areas for improvement readily. The chair of governors is closely involved in school life and supports the headteacher well when difficult decisions have to be made. A particular strength of the governing body is the number who work in school, have children in school or are regular visitors to school. This means that they know many of the pupils by name and the children know, and greet them when they are in school. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 science lesson where one brave governor was with the group experimenting to find out the noise that drums made when beaten hard! An effective committee system has been put in place by the governing body.
51. The leadership uses the principles of best value very well. One governor is directly responsible for links with local business. Comparisons are always made when decisions on spending have to be made. Because of the falling roll, governors are looking at staffing very carefully for the future. The relatively large budget 'carry forward' has been deliberately planned to safeguard staffing levels in the short term. Considering the standards pupils achieve when they leave school and the high quality of care provided, the school gives good value for money.
52. The management of support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and makes a strong contribution to the work of the school. The co-ordinator is thorough, efficient and totally committed. She ensures that provisions fully satisfy all legal requirements and comply with the recently published national guidelines. Her good systems also ensure that records are carefully maintained and that working links with parents have been strengthened. She works very closely with the two trained and effective learning support assistants, and also with the very accomplished part-time specialist teacher, with whom she also co-ordinates arrangements for child protection. Over time the co-ordinator has built very effective systems of teamwork and training involving all teaching and support staff. She uses these to improve the use of resources, including ICT, for supporting the full range of needs, to establish and monitor revised procedures consistent with the new guidelines and to ensure the most effective use of support staff. This deployment works best in numeracy and literacy, but inevitably it spreads thinly in other subjects. The governor with

responsibility for special educational needs is very well informed, maintains an active and very supportive interest in provision and reports regularly to the governing body.

53. The headteacher co-ordinates special provisions for pupils in each year group who are identified as more able and talented. These provisions are effective because they make consistently creative and rigorous use of small opportunities to challenge these pupils to raise their achievement in English and mathematics. They are also raising the awareness of all teachers of the particular needs and potential of the most able pupils.
54. The match of teachers and support staff to the pupils' learning needs is good, enabling pupils with special educational needs to be given the attention they need. However, some pupils have suffered a lack of stability in their education because of staff illness which has resulted in a number of temporary teachers being in school. Teachers are appropriately qualified and take part in much in-service training to further develop their skills. The role of the deputy headteacher, who does not have responsibility for a class, has been to provide teachers with professional release time during the week in which they have time to plan, assess and monitor individual pupils. This role is much appreciated by the staff who feel it benefits the school. Support staff, governors and parent volunteers are well prepared and deployed and make a good contribution to pupils' progress. Newly qualified teachers have been very well supported in their first year of teaching.
55. The school's accommodation is good overall. Many practical and aesthetic improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The site is securely fenced. The hard play and grassed areas are very good, being large, attractive, well furnished and in good condition. Ample modern seating and some shade has been provided. The school has a large hall. Classrooms and other internal facilities are of satisfactory size and well lit. An open-plan layout provides useful shared areas. Noise, however, is also apt to intrude. Access in some cases entails passing through one paired classroom to get to the other.
56. Both internally and externally the facilities are very stimulating. The artistic new millennium garden, for instance, provides a delightful external classroom. Having helped, under supervision, in the chiselling, pupils excitedly identify with its furniture. The interior of the school is very well furnished and decorated, is clean and supports many attractive displays of pupils' work. Pupils are very proud of their congenial and special environment.
57. The quality of learning resources the school provides for most subjects is good and the overall range of resources to support pupils' learning is satisfactory. Learning resources are particularly good in history, geography and physical education. A particular strength in the school's resource provision is the very good use the school makes of visits and visitors to the school in order to enhance pupils' learning in many subjects across the curriculum

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 1 Continue to improve standards in English, particularly in writing by:
 - i. giving more guidance to pupils when they produce written work;
 - ii. improving the teaching of spelling and punctuation;

iii. improving handwriting and the presentation of work.

2 Continue to develop skills in ICT by:

- i. ensuring that all aspects of the subject are taught in each year group;
- ii. continuing to give pupils well-planned opportunities to use the newly installed computer suite.

The school is aware of both these areas for development and has already begun to address some of them.

While not major issues, governors might consider the following points for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve the quality of reports to parents;
- enable all curriculum co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in their subjects.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	23	23	0	0	0
Percentage	0	18	41	41	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	200
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	80

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	39

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	19	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	19	24
	Girls	14	17	19
	Total	33	36	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (69)	88 (85)	98 (96)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	21	21
	Girls	9	13	17
	Total	23	34	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	52 (46)	83 (77)	86 (54)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	196
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	20

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	377,807
Total expenditure	362,132
Expenditure per pupil	1,749
Balance brought forward from previous year	33,446
Balance carried forward to next year	49,121

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	200
Number of questionnaires returned	64

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	36	9	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	45	5	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	47	5	3	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	41	19	8	0
The teaching is good.	56	33	5	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	41	6	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	30	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	30	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	48	44	5	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	66	25	5	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	41	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	45	8	0	0

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

ENGLISH

Strengths:

- Standards in the national tests for 2001 were in line with national averages and above those seen in similar schools.
- The subject is well managed.
- There are good assessment procedures in place.

Areas for development:

- Standards in writing, in particular spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
- The guided reading and writing activities in the literacy hour.

58. In comparison with schools with pupils from a similar background the school achieves well. The results of the last national tests show standards in English were above those seen in similar schools. Achievement in English this year is below national expectations by the age of eleven. At the time of the last report standards were reported to be close to the national average. Since the last inspection standards in the national curriculum tests fell sharply in 1999 to well below the national average. However, standards rose to meet the national average in the 2001 national tests. The present Year 6 pupils are slightly below this standard because of the number of special educational needs pupils in the year group. This upward trend indicates steady improvement over time and shows the school has broadly kept in line with the national trend of improvement.
59. Pupils' attainment in speaking, listening and reading are in line with national expectations. Standards in writing are below. The most able pupils in the school do reach standards in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils across the school make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the subject. The school effectively organises and targets specific groups of pupils by ability (setting) within English lessons and for special additional support. Pupils with special educational needs, and this includes those pupils identified as the most able pupils in the school, make good progress.
60. Pupils make particularly good progress in listening and their attainment in this aspect of the subject is much better than in speaking. This is because most pupils who enter the school do not come from an enriched literacy background and many have not yet acquired a sufficiently wide vocabulary in which to express themselves fully. This not only impacts on pupils' attainment in speaking but also on the standards pupils reach in writing. Pupils across the school are eager to answer questions and most pupils express their opinions and viewpoints clearly. Opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills are variable across the school. Pupils speaking skills are most effectively promoted when teachers in good lessons use skilful questioning that challenges pupils to justify and extend their answers. For example, this was particularly well done in a Year 6 geography lesson where pupils had to work collaboratively in groups in order to analyse and present field data about a contrasting locality to the rest of the class. Throughout the school pupils listen attentively and with sustained concentration and interest in many different situations and this supports their learning well in different subjects.

61. By the age of eleven, standards in reading are in line with the national average. Teachers effectively promote reading and provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to read for pleasure and for information, through various reading activities such as guided reading and silent reading sessions. However, learning objectives for guided reading activities are sometimes too general and not always sufficiently structured in order to develop specific reading skills appropriate to different ability groups. This can result in pupils sometimes reading texts that are either too difficult or are insufficiently challenging for them and this can restrict the rate of progress pupils make. Inspection findings indicate that average attaining pupils in Year 3 are slightly below average in attainment for their age and are not yet fully secure in their knowledge and understanding of phonics in order to decode and read unfamiliar words. However, because teachers promote reading effectively both in Year 3 and across the school pupils make steady progress as they move through the school. Pupils in all year groups develop good attitudes to reading and almost all pupils are enthusiastic readers. Across the school pupils read a range of texts and soon show clear preferences about what they like to read. By the age of eleven pupils are fluent and confident readers. Teachers effectively promote research skills in subjects such as history and most pupils understand how to skim and scan and use an index.
62. By the age of eleven pupils' attainment in writing is weaker than in other aspects of the subject and attainment is below average. Throughout the school pupils' spelling is poor and pupils do not use and apply punctuation rules consistently well when writing independently. The teaching of handwriting is inconsistent and by the age of eleven many pupils demonstrate poor handwriting and presentational skills. The school is aware of the weakness in writing and has identified this aspect of the subject as priority for development. Although teachers provide pupils with appropriate planned opportunities to write in different styles and purposes across the curriculum there are overall too few occasions when teachers model writing styles and conventions within lessons and within guided writing activities in order to develop further pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. However, when guided writing is used effectively by teachers to develop key skills, pupils do then make particularly good progress, as demonstrated in a Year 6 extended writing lesson that developed well pupils' understanding in order to organise and draft a piece of persuasive writing for a school brochure in an appropriate style. Although some good examples of poetic and descriptive writing were seen during the inspection, most pupils use a limited vocabulary when writing and this restricts their ability to use well-chosen words effectively in order to make their writing more interesting. However, higher attaining pupils do achieve well and attain standards in line with national expectations.
63. Although some good and very good teaching was observed during the inspection the overall quality of teaching in English is satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and this enables them to effectively use and promote specific subject terminology and give clear explanations. When teaching is good teachers question pupils skilfully in order to extend thinking and develop their knowledge and understanding of texts further. Board work is used effectively to reinforce learning and demonstrate skills. Plenaries are well structured and are used effectively to consolidate learning. Across the school support staff are used very effectively to support pupils' learning. They give pupils good levels of guidance within group work and they contribute significantly to the good progress that pupils with special educational needs make in the subject. When there are shortcomings in teaching, guided reading and writing are not always sufficiently structured in order to develop key literacy skills. In these lessons teachers do not target a specific focus group during independent work time in the literacy hour in order to develop specific key literacy skills. Not all teachers model cursive handwriting well enough when writing on

the board or on a flipchart in order to promote good handwriting skills for pupils to follow.

64. The subject is effectively co-ordinated. Priorities for development in the subject are appropriate and based on a careful analysis of both national and school tests results. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop and implement effective assessments in the subject and the procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and attainment are good. These assessments are effectively used by teachers to inform how they will group pupils for English and to set both school and group targets in the subject. The setting of individual personal writing targets for pupils to achieve is impacting well on making pupils more aware of their own learning and what they need to do in order to improve, and this initiative is effective in beginning to raise standards in writing. Although the teaching and learning has been effectively monitored by the headteacher in the past there is insufficient opportunity for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the subject in order to support further developments in the subject. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. However, the number of guided reading books needs extending to allow all pupils within a group to have their own book to read.

MATHEMATICS

Strengths:

- Standards are much higher than they were and pupils are achieving well.
- Teaching is good overall, and in Year 6 it is very good.
- The very good relationships between teachers and pupils are a firm foundation for good learning and attitudes in lessons.
- Provision is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils.
- These strengths stem from effective leadership and management over time.

Areas for development:

- More rigorous monitoring of the subject, particularly to bring the quality of teaching up to that of the best.
- Better opportunities for pupils to use and develop their mathematical skills to support learning in other subjects.
- Consistency in the quality of marking.

65. Pupils now in Year 6 attain the standards expected for their age. This is better than is typical for similar schools, and significantly better than the situation reported by the last inspection. At that time, and again in 1999, standards were well below the national average. Good initiatives taken by the school, together with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, have brought very good improvements, both in educational provision and in standards. The weaknesses identified in the previous report have been tackled effectively. The school's results in national tests in 2001 showed standards well above the average for all schools. In relation to similar schools, these results placed Bowburn in the top five per cent. This exceeded the school's target. These results are unlikely to be equaled this year because of the greater number and severity of special educational needs in the current Year 6. Nonetheless, pupils continue to achieve well in relation to their capacity, and a good proportion of pupils is again likely to gain the higher than expected level. After some years of varying results, girls and boys now do equally well. Pupils who have special educational needs receive very good support and make good progress. Improved performance comes from improved provision. Better assessment procedures and better use of the information they yield has led to better planning. Areas of weak skills

have been identified and strengthened. As a result, the quality of teaching and support enable all groups of pupils, including those who are most able and those who have special educational needs, to make the best progress they can. This is made easier and more effective by an arrangement which allows pupils of similar attainment to work together. It is also made more effective by the much better quality of teaching, by very good teamwork between teachers and support staff, particularly in Year 6, by improved homework arrangements and by special 'challenge' programmes designed to accelerate the progress of the more able and talented mathematicians in Years 3 and 4. The effectiveness of these developments stems from good leadership and management of the subject in recent years. A strong basis is laid for sustained achievement.

66. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 work systematically within the National Numeracy Strategy to build on pupils' good earlier learning and maintain good overall progress so that, by age eleven, about a third attain standards typically expected of pupils two or more years older. Pupils develop a good understanding of shape. For example, pupils in Year 3 accurately described the properties of various two-dimensional shapes and recognised, often very quickly, any lines of symmetry in each shape. Later, a 'challenge group' of the most able pupils took this understanding to a much higher level by accurately drawing, without using a mirror, reflected images of complex patterns on the other side of a line of symmetry. On the other hand, many pupils continue to find difficulty in calculating area, and also in measuring volume, weight and time. In data-handling too, there are strengths and weaknesses. As they move through the school, most develop secure skills and understanding in collecting and organising statistical information, and in representing it in pictograms, bar graphs or pie charts. Even in Year 6, however, many pupils cannot fully and accurately interpret information presented in this way. All pupils achieve well in numeracy. The clear lines of progression of the National Numeracy Strategy enable pupils to develop a secure understanding of the number system and to use it well in most situations. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 5 quickly organised into series a random set of numbers with two decimal places. Higher attainers in Year 6 equally quickly organised a random set of fractions, percentages and decimal numbers, and went on to convert fractions such, as $1\frac{1}{7}$, into decimals and percentages. The school has strengthened this area of number work recently, having detected a weakness by analysing test data. Inevitably some remaining weaknesses are found in the work of average and lower attaining pupils. In Year 5, these pupils often overlook the value of a decimal place. For example, they write $6.47-6.45=0.2$; whilst in Year 6 the accuracy of similar calculations break down when carried out at speed. Lower attaining pupils also find persistent difficulty in problem solving. Work in books showed examples of pupils in the lower school needlessly copying worded problems rather than tackling the mathematical difficulties they posed. However, strengths heavily outweigh weaknesses and the high quality of learning support, especially in the upper school, effectively reinforces the confidence and understanding of average and lower attainers.
67. Improving work in ICT is beginning to make a clear contribution to pupils' learning in mathematics. For example, in a good lesson on spreadsheets, pupils in Year 6 used a formula to calculate the cost of a breakfast for their year group and changed quantities to keep the total sum within budget targets. Other subjects also make a contribution. Very good geography lessons in Year 6 involved pupils who collated and presented the data they had gathered when carrying out a survey in Durham. Here too, the pupils showed better skills in collating and presenting data than in interpreting it. However, the inspection found no other clear examples of work in other subjects

making a planned contribution to pupils' competence in numeracy. The strategy needs to be extended across the curriculum in order to provide better opportunities for planned interaction between pupils' numeracy skills and their learning in other subjects.

68. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The more marked variations in teaching quality seen in Years 3, 4 and 5 probably owed much to the presence of temporary teachers whose many strengths could not include a full working knowledge of their pupils or their colleagues or the systems of the school. In Year 6, where this factor did not disrupt the established team, teaching was very good.
69. Throughout the school, the National Numeracy Strategy is well established and all teachers plan and teach consistently to its framework and three-part lesson structure. Planning is always good, and includes assessment opportunities and graded work for groups of differing attainments. All lessons seen had clear and shared objectives, and good structures for developing and reinforcing relevant learning. All teachers insist that pupils use correct mathematical language and show or explain their working. Questions such as, 'How did you work that out?' are on every teacher's lips. As a result, pupils know where they are going and what is expected of them. They focus on acquiring specific new learning, apply relevant effort and take pride in their growing command of special words.
70. Several common strengths distinguish the very good teaching. Firstly, pupils are challenged at their precise known level of individual competence. Not only are group tasks accurately matched but also the questions put to pupils during the 'mental session'. As a result, pupils are stretched but not confounded, and they learn with assurance and speed. Secondly, these lessons have a lucid clarity of procedure and language. Every new step is explained, linked, demonstrated, checked and reinforced in terms that pupils understand. Thirdly, teachers work interactively and with energy and pace. Consequently, pupils are engaged, carried along and kept productively busy. Fourthly, during group activity, the teachers encourage independent skills and positive attitudes whilst seizing small opportunities to intervene and move learning forward even further. Finally, they maintain the impetus of learning through homework tasks and constructive marking.
71. These features are also present in satisfactory lessons, but they operate at a lower level. A lower pace and quality of learning result. Various weaknesses were noted in these lessons. The final phase of the lesson is often rushed and short and recalls work done rather than reviewing new learning. Teachers seldom ask pupils, 'What's easier now that was hard at first?' or 'What's still hard, and why?' Similarly, teachers sometimes fail to check pupils' understanding as the lesson proceeds, or to prompt them to check their own results by an inverse method. In some lessons, long periods of explanation or demonstration slow the pace and risk not carrying pupils along. Sometimes teachers talk too much and too stridently, denying pupils an extended voice in the process of their own learning. In a few lessons, teachers missed opportunities to correct faulty working in group activities. Across the school, there is inconsistency in the quality of feedback and marking, so that pupils lack clear guidance for their learning. For example, one teacher's written comments constantly refer to effort, whilst another's recognises new gains and points out what the next step could be.

SCIENCE

Strengths:

- Standards in the national tests last year were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools.
- Pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations.
- Good emphasis is placed on practical investigations.
- The subject is taught well.

Areas for development:

- The way some work is presented.
- The match of work for some lower ability pupils.

72. The good results in the National Curriculum tests and assessments (SATs) last year confirmed the improvement the school has produced in the last three years. Before that attainment was below the national average. The present Year 6 pupils are achieving standards that generally meet the national expectations. This is a notable achievement because a significant number of the pupils in this year group find learning difficult. This improvement has been affected as the school now plans very well to ensure that all areas of the subject curriculum is covered and detailed analysis of test results has identified weaker areas.
73. Areas for development include the presentation of work in pupils' books which is often at a lower standard than the quality of pupils' understanding of what they have done. Another area to check is the match of work given to pupils in the lower sets. Often the work given is the same for the whole group so the lower attaining pupils produce less recorded work. They have often understood the scientific concept that has been taught, but find recording the work in the time available difficult.
74. When teaching is most effective all pupils work at a challenging level, but at a level at which they can achieve success. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were looking at the function of the stems of plants. The teacher had planned an effective session with a good mix of teacher presentation, recorded work and practical demonstration. The worksheets used gave opportunities for all pupils to work at their own level with, again, a good balance between drawing pictures, filling in missing words and free writing. Some pupils knew that an annual plant only lived for a year, all described and illustrated the difference between 'woody' and 'green' stems well. They were very interested when the teacher showed them celery and carnations that had been left in a jar of food dye overnight and had drawn the dye up their stems to the top of the plant. Other successful lessons included similar elements to keep pupils interested and sustain their concentration.
75. Year 6 pupils were looking at the science of sound. Each ability group covered the same topics but the pace of the sessions was skilfully judged by the teachers to match pupils' capabilities. These sessions also showed the very good relationships evident between teachers and pupils. This was, by definition, a noisy session; drums were banged, guitars were strummed and much more. Pupils, although joining in with enthusiasm, didn't take advantage of the opportunities to waste time or be silly. This lesson was also typical of other successful sessions because of the good planning and choice of resources made available. As the groups moved from one activity to another they began to understand about how sound is made. Their first session successfully explored the way sound was often produced when things vibrated, the string of a guitar or the skin of a drum. They followed this up in the next session by

looking at how the pitch of a note could be altered. Pupils discovered, for example, that the longer the length of ruler that was 'twanged', the lower the pitch.

76. Scrutiny of pupils' science books identified two areas in which standards could be raised further. Some of the presentation of work did not do justice to the scientific understanding shown and in some books of lower attaining pupils' work was unfinished or very brief. Sometimes the tasks which pupils are asked to do could be planned better. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson where an interesting investigation on rates of water evaporation from different shaped containers had been measured carefully over a number of days. However, when pupils were asked to record their work in the form of a graph it was recognised that this was a difficult task because the measurements had been made in millimetres rather than millilitres.
77. The subject is managed effectively by two fairly new co-ordinators. They have volunteered for this responsibility and have worked hard to look at planning and the subject policies. They have not yet had an opportunity to look at pupils' work from other classes or observe teaching. Resources are good and well stored.

ART AND DESIGN

Strengths:

- Good progress in modeling and three-dimensional work.

Areas for development:

- Development of observational drawing.

78. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and remain in line with age-related expectations by the age of eleven.
79. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject overall. Strong links are made with design and technology and art and design and teachers effectively provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to engage in design projects and activities. This enables pupils to make particularly good progress in the design aspect of the subject. For example, Year 6 pupils pay close attention to pattern and colour as they produce designs that will inform the painting of their 'SAT' monster models. In Year 3, pupils design patterns for textiles in the style of William Morris and help to design features for the school millennium garden.
80. All pupils have sketchbooks and teachers use these effectively as a resource to develop design projects. They are not, however, used consistently well to support pupils learning in observational drawing. Overall there are too few opportunities for pupils to experience and develop their drawing techniques and skills. For example, pupils' drawings show insufficient attention to detail and techniques to create light and shade in order to enhance their drawings are underdeveloped.
81. Throughout the school pupils have opportunities to work in a range of media such as textiles, clay, chalk, paint, inks and charcoal. Pupils in Year 6 show they can colour-mix paint well in order to create different shades of blue in order to paint in the style of Pablo Picasso's blue period. Although these paintings were of good quality, with the exception of applying paint to models, opportunities overall for pupils to use and explore painting techniques in a wider context is limited. For example, in Year 4, after studying the brush techniques and painting style of Vincent Van Gogh in his paintings, an opportunity was missed by the teacher to consolidate and develop further their painting skills by allowing pupils to use crayons and chalks instead.

82. A good feature of teaching is the way in which teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to work in three dimensions and as a result pupils across the school make good progress in this aspect of the subject. For example, in Year 3 pupils carefully apply clay to a wooden frame in order to create their own sculpture depicting the Angel of the North. Year 5 pupils work in clay to produce good quality work in plaster in order to make plaster-cast star designs that will be made into wood carvings for the millennium school garden and Year 6 pupils successfully model in clay in order to create 'SATs monsters'.
83. Only one lesson in art and design was observed during the inspection, therefore it is not possible to make a judgment on the quality of teaching. However, it is evident from the scrutiny of pupils' artwork around the school, teachers' planning and discussion with both pupils and teachers that a good feature of teaching is the effective use the school makes of a range of visiting artists and visits to local places of interest, such as the Angel of the North, in order to inform and develop pupils' learning in the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Strengths:

- The school has continued to teach design and technology despite the time constraints.

Areas for development:

- Recording what has been done and its quality.

84. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection and there was little first-hand evidence of examples of pupils' work. However, evidence from displays, notes in pupils' sketchbooks and additional information about the range of activities in previous years mean that the subject generally meets the expectations of the National Curriculum.
85. In both lessons seen teaching was good so pupils made good progress in their development of skills and understanding. Evidence was seen of the planning, making and evaluating aspects of the subject. In a Year 4 lesson pupils were looking at torches to identify the important elements in them. They are provided with good design sheets in which they will identify the function, purpose and style of the torch. They produce a labelled drawing of the product they hope to make and identify the materials they will need. Some pupils go on to look at the order of the stages of construction. Some carefully drawn, well-labelled designs are produced.
86. In a Year 6 lesson pupils are linking design and evaluation skills with modelling skills in art. They produce imaginative labelled designs for their 'SATs monster'. They use the designs to model the creature and then paint their design to guide them when they paint their model. They will look at their finished model, compare it with their original design and evaluate any differences.
87. All year groups show evidence of the work they have done in their sketchbooks. Year 3 have worked on models of the Angel of the North, Year 4 have looked at chair designs and Year 6 have produced a menu for a week's school meals.
88. Much work in the recent past in this subject has been linked to projects linked to 'Artists in Residence'. These include fabric banners in the hall, a large-scale model of Bowburn village, fabric printing with an African theme and, perhaps most strikingly, the carved furniture in the millennium garden.

GEOGRAPHY

Strengths:

- The use of fieldwork and the local area.
- Good teaching and learning.
- The quality of relationships between pupils and teachers leads to positive and confident attitudes.
- The moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Areas for development:

- The standard of pupils' recorded work.
- Resources for the newer units of study.

89. Standards are close to those expected nationally at the end of Year 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils show sound understanding and skill in using maps and atlases. They have a good knowledge of the local area as a result of a continuing focus on practical investigation. As was reported by the previous inspection, this is partly at the expense of a study of more distant locations. However, the school's increasingly strong commitment to international understanding and its developing contacts with schools in several European countries and, further afield, in China and the United States, compensate well for a shortcoming in the subject curriculum. Many pupils in Year 4, for example, are eager to say what they have learned through correspondence with pen friends in other parts of Europe. The school's interest in issues of conservation and the environment also contributes well to pupils' geographical understanding and enthusiasm. Taken together, these influences make a significant impact on pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a growing understanding of how people can improve or damage the environment and of how varying geographical factors and locations help to explain different ways of life.
90. In similar lessons within a topic on weather, pupils in both Year 3 classes understood the distinction between weather and climate, and pointed out the chief climatic zones on the world map in their atlases. Higher attaining pupils linked specific countries to particular climatic conditions, saying that Egypt, for instance, would be hot and dry. As each teacher removed items such as sandals and sunglasses from a suitcase, all pupils took great delight in saying what kinds of weather the traveller was expecting. Few, however, could explain their ideas in any detail. Despite some discontinuity in their learning over time, pupils make satisfactory progress, and, by the end of Year 6, they explain accurately how to use co-ordinates and a scale to locate specific places or calculate distances on an Ordnance Survey map. They know about the forces that create mountain ranges and about the characteristic features of mountainous areas. In the two lessons seen in Year 6, pupils showed great interest in the data they had gathered by interviewing people in the centre of Durham. They worked together very well in groups, using talk skilfully to negotiate roles, and to organise and present their data, but few could interpret that data. For example, many presentations gave lists of numbers but fell short of explaining what those numbers meant in terms of people's impressions of Durham and reasons for being there.
91. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Of the four lessons seen overall, two were very good, one good and one satisfactory. In all cases, very good relationships between teachers and pupils generated enthusiasm for learning, and sustained much

purposeful effort. Good joint planning ensures consistency of opportunity and quality of learning for all pupils in the same year group. In the very good lessons in Year 6, excellent planning and resource preparation enabled pupils to support each other in independent groups and to progress rapidly. Pupils succeeded because they used their skills in numeracy and speech to negotiate and perform specific roles within a team effort. Investigations of this kind, over time, have clearly developed practical skills that are stronger than the related geographical understandings.

92. The co-ordinator has been absent for some time, but ongoing developments in the curriculum are improving the quality of provision. The adoption of national guidance is bringing more coherence and balance to what had been something of a patchwork series of topics. These developments bring some new units of study for which the school lacks adequate resources, though equipment is good in established areas. The developments also bring a need for more rigorous monitoring than the subject has experienced for some years. Pupils' workbooks are a concern in this respect. The standard of recorded work is poor. Many units are represented by two or three disconnected entries, and many tasks are completed without due care or left unfinished. Learning through practical enquiry is not recorded at all. This is unsatisfactory. It denies pupils good opportunities to develop their literacy skills through their learning in geography. It also deprives the school of its chief means of monitoring the work of the subject and the quality of pupils' learning over time.

HISTORY

Strengths:

- Good quality of teaching.

Areas for development:

- There are long periods through the year when history is not taught.

93. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and remain in line with age-related expectations by the age of eleven.
94. Across the school pupils gain a sound knowledge and understanding of important events and people in history through the study of a range of appropriately planned units of work. Through the study of different periods in history pupils throughout the school develop a sound sense of chronology and recognise how things change overtime. For example, in Year 6 pupils effectively use secondary sources such as books and pictures to research and find out how different aspects of peoples' lives, such as fashion and politics, have changed through the decades since the 1950s.
95. Across the school pupils develop a good understanding of how key events in history affects the lives of different people. For example, Year 4 pupils understand how and why World War Two started and know that the result of the Blitz on London meant that children had to be evacuated from the city to rural areas for reasons of safety. In Year 5 pupils can explain why the Aztecs chose to settle where they did in order to build the ancient Aztec city of Tenochtitlan.
96. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and this enables them to give clear explanations, which supports well pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned and have clear learning objectives and teachers use board work effectively to develop and consolidate pupils' learning. Resources, which include a range of artefacts, photographs, historical documents

and visits to historical places of interest, are used well by teachers to support pupils' learning.

97. A good feature of teaching is the well-planned links teachers make with other subjects. For example, in a Year 4 lesson about Ancient Egypt pupils geographical skills were effectively developed and reinforced as they used atlases and maps to study features of the River Nile, and in Year 6 pupils' English skills were effectively promoted as they researched information about life since the 1950s and then produce a summary of their findings.
98. Curriculum planning in the subject is satisfactory. All aspects of the subject are effectively planned for and covered. However, the way in which history is timetabled in blocks of time means that pupils' progress is restricted overall because of the long gap in time before the subject is again taught and revisited over a period of a year. The school has already identified this weakness in planning and has immediate plans in order to address this.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Strengths:

- The recently installed computer suite which is already having an impact on pupils' learning.

Areas for development:

- Completion of teachers' training in ICT.
- Planning to ensure that all year groups cover all aspects of the subject identified in the National Curriculum document.

99. Standards in this subject are below those expected and those seen in most schools. This is because the school came into the National Programme for ICT support later than other schools. The computer suite has only been working effectively for a short time and not all teachers have completed their training. However, it is clear that the suite is already making an impact on pupils' learning and teachers' confidence in teaching the subject. The suite allows all pupils in a class to have had 'hands on' experience and learn skills which will benefit them when they use classroom computers in other subjects.
100. In some lessons pupils are reaching appropriate standards for their age. In a Year 3 lesson most pupils are having their first experience of sending an e-mail. The class teacher and learning support assistant give helpful advice to pupils. They have a secure knowledge of the process. The work in the suite encourages pupils to work well together, and they do. They generally share the computer well, taking turns to operate the mouse and the keyboard. Pupils know that e-mailing is a quick way to send a message to someone. They are sending e-mails to pupils at another school which benefits their knowledge of other communities outside their own. Most pupils at this age are able to manipulate the mouse effectively to click on appropriate icons. Other pupils are not able to put in their addresses without help, but all are making satisfactory progress.
101. The newly appointed subject co-ordinator has a very good subject knowledge and this shows in a lesson where her Year 4 class input information into a database. She gives clear instructions so that most pupils are able to arrive at the correct program. Pupils enter some information about their classmates by clicking on one word in a list to identify, for example, eye colour. Other information is typed in accurately. Pupils are

beginning to learn how to display the information in a variety of ways, for example, a chart or block graph. They are making good progress in their understanding.

102. Some classes have too many pupils for all to use the suite at once. When this happens half the class normally stay in the classroom while the other half use the suite. However, the classroom work seen was useful and relevant to the computer session to come. Good planning means that the classroom sessions give pupils much information to use later. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson which was developing pupils' knowledge of spreadsheets to include a formula. In this aspect of the subject most pupils were working at the expected level. They understand the function of a 'cell' in a spreadsheet and use formulae such as $A9=\text{sum}[A3:A7]$ to begin to calculate the cost of a breakfast provided by the school before the National Curriculum tests and assessments (SATs). They are beginning to understand how to use the formula to bring the cost of the breakfast to a target price. Again the teacher has good subject knowledge and the good relationships between pupils and teachers means that there is a purposeful but relaxed atmosphere in the suite.
103. The early stage of development in the subject means that much of what the pupils do is at an appropriate level, but it is what the pupils don't do which is where development is needed. The most obvious gap in provision is in the aspect of the subject where pupils need to program a moving toy or a screen 'turtle' to move in a pre-determined way. Most year groups have no or little experience of this and a Year 6 group asked to demonstrate this found the task difficult and some couldn't do it at all. This situation is recognised by the school. The lack of an effective assessment system in ICT is hindering progress; a system has been recently introduced and will, when established, identify areas which need to be developed.
104. Two co-ordinators manage the subject. They have identified the way they will share the responsibilities. One co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and has a clear view of what needs to be done. This, with the development of the computer suite, means that standards in the subject have the opportunity to improve significantly in the near future.

MUSIC

Strengths:

- Good improvement since the last inspection.
105. At the time of the last inspection pupils made unsatisfactory progress over time because teachers lacked sufficient subject knowledge and expertise in the subject. This is no longer the case. Since the last inspection the co-ordinator has worked hard to implement a new scheme of work for non-specialist teachers and curriculum planning ensures all aspects of the subject are covered. This, together with improved resource provision and the ongoing guidance available to teachers by the co-ordinator, has effectively increased teachers' subject knowledge and expertise. These features have impacted positively on raising pupils' attainment in the subject and standards are now in line with age-related expectations. At the time of the last inspection standards were reported to be below age-related expectations.
 106. Pupils' attainment in singing has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with age-related expectations. Standards were reported to be below age-related expectations at the time of the last inspection. Pupils across the school sing with enjoyment and enthusiasm. They are able to sing in tune and show good attention to rhythm, pitch and phrasing. For example, in Year 3 pupils make some good progress

in recognising repeated patterns in songs and show they understand the term 'ostinato'. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities in lessons for pupils to play a range of percussion instruments and to compose, perform and combine different musical elements, particularly while singing.

107. Pupils make some good progress in listening and appraising different types of music and teachers effectively encourage them to interpret and express how the music makes them feel and they use this discipline well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of different musical terms and styles. For example, in Year 5 pupils listened carefully to two very different pieces of music in order to recognise and appreciate their composition by recognising various features within them, such as tempo, timbre and rhythm.
108. Teachers effectively encourage pupils to appraise and appreciate music from different periods in time and from different cultures. For example, in the same Year 5 lesson described above, the teacher had effectively used a calypso style song and extracts from Holst's Planet Suite in order for pupils to experience and compare different types of music.
109. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate music are also well promoted in assemblies and in other subjects across the curriculum. For example, in a Year 4 religious education lesson, the teacher played religious music in order to develop a sense of spirituality when discussing features of church buildings.
110. The overall quality of teaching in the small number of lessons observed during the inspection was good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and this enables them to promote proper musical terms effectively to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons have clear learning objectives and resources are used well to support learning.
111. Good use is made of peripatetic teachers to enable more able pupils of stringed and brass instruments to achieve well. These particular pupils, although in a minority, make good progress and they are able to discuss and read notation well in order to play their chosen specialist instruments. For example, two pupils who play the cello show a good understanding of notation and can identify and discuss with some confidence proper musical terms such as quavers, octaves and bars.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Strengths:

- The range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities.
- The quality of outdoor and indoor accommodation and equipment.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils.

Areas for development:

- Involvement of pupils in evaluating their performance.
- Higher expectations of all pupils' concentration on practising and improving their skills.

112. Standards are in line with those expected of pupils aged eleven. The previous inspection reported the same overall judgement, but satisfactory improvements since then have enhanced the range and quality of equipment, developed subject guidance and the balance of attention to the different elements of the subject, and extended the range of sporting activities and events provided outside the taught curriculum. These now include a wider range of activities in partnership with the university and other

Durham schools. Pupils have participated successfully in competitive events in football, athletics, rugby, cross-country running, netball and fencing. These extra-curricular activities contribute significantly to all pupils' opportunities to develop their interests, experiences and achievements in sport. Pupils in Year 5 have a full programme of swimming lessons in which they benefit from expert tuition at the local pool. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to engage in the non-statutory outdoor problem-solving and orienteering activities during their residential visit. Video evidence shows that pupils have good opportunities to develop their pleasure and skills in dancing.

113. Only three lessons could be observed during the inspection. All three were planned as outdoor games lessons to take summer advantage of the school's very well equipped outdoor play area. All were of satisfactory quality, despite the fact that changing weather conditions required some last-minute adjustments to use the limited outdoor space. In all three lessons, pupils showed sound, basic understanding and improving techniques in ball control, using different equipment. Pupils in Year 4 threw and caught balls with improving skill at different heights and distances. In Year 5, pupils progressed in fielding a moving ball and in development a clear overarm bowling action. Early in a programme on hockey skills, pupils in Year 5 handled their sticks correctly to control the ball and pass it accurately to partners. Teachers lack strategies for improving pupils' eye-to-hand co-ordination. In all these lessons, the tendency of some pupils to compete rather than co-operate with partners was reflected in their inclination to throw or strike the ball too hard. This cost valuable practice time and slowed progress.
114. Lessons were well planned and kept pupils purposefully busy through a progressive series of varied activities. Teachers gave a clear explanation and demonstration of each new skill point, and organised equipment, time and activity well to provide opportunities for practice. Pupils knew what was expected, and enjoyed the focused activities and the clear, step-by-step development of technique. Pupils with special educational needs were included in every activity and often showed good skills and attitudes. However, pupils who were obliged to observe for a while lacked a clear and focused role. This related to the fact that teachers did not involve pupils in evaluating their performance or that of others, even when they selected good examples of pupils' attainment for the class to observe. This same lack of focus on evaluation led to one or two weak endings to lessons, and to a lack of rigour in managing activity. As a result, some pupils do not concentrate and co-operate well enough to ensure effective practice and progress.
115. Although the co-ordinator was absent, it is clear that the management of the curriculum is satisfactory. Detailed guidance supports clear and effective planning. Teachers and pupils show good awareness of health and safety issues, although some pupils do not have the expected understanding of the effects of exercise on their bodies, or of the importance of good warm-up and cool-down routines. Resources are good and well maintained, but the work of the subject is not monitored well enough to prompt and guide improvements in teaching and learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Strengths:

- The use of visits to Durham Cathedral, local Christian churches and Bede's World.
- The support to spiritual development given by acts of worship in assembly.

Areas for development:

- Pupils' understanding of the meaning behind the factual knowledge that they learn.
 - The standard of pupils' written work, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
116. The attainment of pupils in Year 6 is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, though their knowledge is better than their understanding. Standards and provisions in the subject remain largely as reported by the last inspection. The status of religious education has not improved as the school has concentrated on raising attainment in English, mathematics and science. In discussion, pupils vividly recall their recent learning about St Cuthbert, Durham Cathedral and the story of the early Christian church in the north east. They remember the chief differences and similarities between the Christian, Hindu and Sikh faiths. They recall and compare the typical wedding ceremonies of the religions, but they cannot explain what the differences mean in religious and cultural terms.
117. In Years 3, 4 and 5, pupils develop their knowledge of the holy books and stories, the festivals, places of worship, principal figures and symbols of Hinduism, Sikhism and Christianity. To a lesser extent they also learn to compare the chief features of Islam and Judaism. In the study of Christianity, there is a strong focus on the lives and work of St Cuthbert and other leaders of the early Northumbrian church. Good use of visits to Durham Cathedral and other sites leads to good development in pupils' understanding of their own culture. The often uplifting quality of acts of collective worship and the powerful moral and social themes developed in assemblies make a very significant contribution to the growth of pupils' spiritual, social and moral experience and understanding. These largely compensate for the shortcomings in work in religious education.
118. Of the three lessons observed, two were satisfactory and one was good. Judged on the basis of this limited sample, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The good lesson provided a fine example of how teaching could take learning beyond a knowledge of religious facts. The teacher skilfully and sensitively drew on pupils' personal experiences of the nearby parish church that they had visited the previous week. Whilst the lesson extended pupils' knowledge of the locations and functions of key features of the church, such as the altar, font and pulpit, its main emphasis lay on helping pupils to reflect on how and why some special place in the church had made an impression on them. The approach was gentle, purposeful, evocative and open. The teacher valued and included all responses, and provided good opportunities for pupils to think, talk together, listen and write. As a result, these Year 4 pupils showed their personal feelings seriously and expressively in speech and writing. For example, one pupil began 'I felt sad sitting in the pews because it's a very old place and it made me think of all the people in the past who'd sat there ...'. In contrast, the corresponding lesson with the other Year 4 class lacked this extension into meaning and spirituality. It simply concentrated on reinforcing knowledge gained during the visit, of the key features of the church and their functions. It gave too much time to a routine task which required pupils to label these features on a ground plan of the church. Many pupils found this task undemanding, whilst those with special educational needs found it too hard.
119. The subject co-ordinator was absent during the inspection. It is clear, however, that improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory because the weaknesses identified in the previous report remain. There is no clear understanding of standards across the school because pupils' work and progress are not carefully monitored. There are satisfactory resources to support learning, but little evidence of the use of ICT for research. Visits to Durham Cathedral, local churches, Bede's World and other places of Christian interest promote pupils' appreciation of their local

Christian heritage. However, pupils have few corresponding opportunities to meet representation of other faiths or to visit other than Christian places of worship.