

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FOREST OF TEESDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Forest in Teesdale, Durham

Unique reference number: 114100

Headteacher: Mrs C Connolly

Reporting inspector: Mr L Garner  
25507

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2001

Inspection number: 196249

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Forest in Teesdale Barnard Castle Co Durham
Postcode:	DL12 0HA
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Hough
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25507	Mr L Garner	Registered inspector	Foundation stage Special educational needs Equal opportunities Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education	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?
12536	Mrs S Bullerwell	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	Mr R Greenall	Team inspector	English Geography History Religious education	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**

Forest in Teesdale is a very small primary school with 15 pupils compared with the national average of 243! Most pupils come from isolated hill farms or very small settlements in Upper Teesdale. Children travel to school in three school taxis. Most pupils have had experience of nursery education, but those who have had no nursery experience have often led isolated lives and have had very little experience of mixing with other children before coming to school.

The small number of pupils on roll mean that comparisons with national averages have to be treated with caution. One or two pupils coming into school during the year could dramatically affect the statistics. However, the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal, and those identified as having special educational needs, is broadly in line with the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. All pupils speak English as their first language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies year by year. Sometimes it is above and sometimes below that expected for children of this age. Over time, this means pupils' attainment is average.

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

This is an outstanding school. All pupils achieve standards that are above those expected from their previous attainment. Pupils who start school with standards in line, or above, those expected, achieve standards above or well above those expected by the time they leave school. Pupils who start school with standards below those expected often leave school with standards matching the national average. This is because of very good teaching and outstanding leadership. Pupils' excellent attitudes to school and their very good behaviour means that they benefit very well from what the school provides and make very good progress. Despite the funding per pupil being over four times the national average, given the location and the circumstances in which the school operates, the inspection team considers that the school gives good value for money.

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

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher means that all are clear about the first aim of the school, which is to enable all pupils to achieve standards above those expected for their age.
- Pupils are taught very well.
- The excellent relationships evident between all in the school means that pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and behave very well.
- Pupils' personal development is well catered for because the school's provision for social and moral development is first rate.
- The school works very well with other local schools to give pupils experience of working within larger communities.
- Parents have a high regard for the quality of education provided for their children and support the school very well.

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

- The school's provision to give pupils a greater understanding of Britain's multi-cultural society.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work.

*The school has recognised the need to improve presentation and handwriting and improvements have already been made. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

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

The school was last inspected in June 1997. This was a positive report identifying many strengths. All the positive features of the school have been maintained and some are better. It is recognised that it is as difficult to maintain high quality provision as it is to raise standards from a low base, so the judgement of the inspection team is that there has been good improvement.

The three issues for action identified by the last report; improving monitoring of teaching; pupils' comprehension skills and replacing classroom furniture, have all been successfully addressed.

## STANDARDS

No table showing standards compared with the national average or other schools is included in this report because of the very small numbers in each year group. For example, some year groups will have groups of pupils who will achieve results above or well above the national average, other year groups would contain no pupils who could achieve these levels.

However, it is quite clear that throughout the school pupils are achieving well. They make good progress from their own starting points.

Standards in English and mathematics are generally high and this is due partly to the effective way the national literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented. The school has also introduced a system of grouping pupils, which enables them to work at a challenging level, and this has had a positive effect on the progress they make.

Standards in science are generally above the national expectations. Standards in information and communication technology are particularly high. This is partly because of the high number of computers available. Computers are used in many subjects and they are always available for pupils, who therefore spend more time using the computers than pupils in most schools. Outside expertise has been brought in to train staff and work with pupils and again, this has contributed to high standards.

Standards in art are also high and this is largely due to the specialist teaching pupils get for one afternoon a week. Standards in all other subjects meet those expected for pupils' age.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils look forward to coming to school and concentrate very well on the work they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils' behaviour, in class, around the school and in the taxis which bring them to school, is almost always exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. This a real 'family' school. All adults involved in school life relate very well with pupils and each other and pupils respond well to this. All members of the school community are valued.
Attendance	The attendance figures for the last school year were below the national average. However, this is entirely due to a number of families being unable to leave their farms during the recent epidemic. If this period of time is not included figures are above the national average.

These aspects are one of the many strengths of the school, attitudes to the school, personal developments and relationships are outstanding and contribute greatly to the progress pupils make.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The judgement of teaching during the inspection is based on observation of lessons taught by the headteacher and two temporary teachers who were covering for the other full-time teacher. Scrutiny of pupils' work also gave indications of the quality of teaching.

The key to the high quality teaching, and therefore pupils' effective learning, is the way individual needs are identified and addressed. Although teaching groups are small they may include up to four year groups. Pupils normally start lessons in groups but generally move to work that is geared to their own needs. This means that pupils are working at a level that challenges them and enables them to make the best progress from their own starting points. Teachers are addressing the standards of handwriting and presentation of work which are below that expected.

The quality of teaching is particularly effective in the teaching of English and mathematics during the literacy and numeracy sessions. Teachers use time well; none is wasted so pupils gain maximum benefit. The teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. Their activities are carefully planned to give support where it is needed.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. All pupils have equal access to all activities including those provided after school. A good range of out-of-school visits enriches the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The small number of pupils with special educational needs have clear educational plans and, partly because of small teaching groups, get very good support during lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent overall with the provision for moral and social development being outstanding. Very good provision for spiritual development is provided largely based on the family atmosphere. There is very good provision through visits and visitors for the understanding of local culture. Work in art based on the work of, mainly European, artists extend pupils' experiences. The provision to extend pupils' understanding of Britain's multi-cultural society is less well developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. Personal and academic development are closely monitored. The school ethos means that pupils are given very good guidance, often informally.

The school, rightly, considers itself to be a focus for the community as well as an educational establishment. Parents are considered, and consider themselves, to be part of the school community. The school also uses the local community to benefit pupils' education.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher is very clear about the type of school she wants and has the support of all members of the school community.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. The small governing body works effectively, often informally, but they are clear about their duties and what needs doing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance very well, with monitoring of teaching and learning a particular strength.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages resources well. Governors and the headteacher have now planned to spend the previously overlarge reserves for the benefit of pupils. The principles of best value are being included in governors' planning.

Accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the national curriculum except in physical education. Alternate arrangements have been made for this. The school benefits from a very good pupil teacher ratio so that very good support is given to pupils. Resources are good. The new classroom furniture has brightened up the classrooms and computer resources are better than those seen in most schools.

The leadership is particularly effective because of the confidence teachers, support staff, governors, parents and pupils have in the way the headteacher is managing the school.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents like everything about the school!</li> <li>• They are happy with the standards their children achieve, the way they are taught and how the school is managed.</li> <li>• They feel their children develop as people as well as pupils.</li> <li>• Their children greatly enjoy coming to school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most unusually, no comments were made at the parents' meeting or in the questionnaires on areas for improvement.</li> </ul>

Inspectors fully agree with parents' positive comments.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. This is a very small school with 15 pupils on roll and year groups with between one and four pupils. This means that comparisons with other schools' attainment results are meaningless and will not be used often in this report. Instead the report will concentrate on identifying pupils' achievement; that is, the standards they reach compared with their standards when they started school.
2. It is clear from inspection evidence that pupils in this school are achieving very well across the full range of subjects.
3. Looking at inspection evidence, but avoiding naming year groups as this could often identify individual pupils, pupils are learning well and making good progress. Pupils who have benefited from nursery education or enter school with skills above those seen in most pupils, leave school achieving standards above or well above the national average. Other pupils who enter school with below average social or learning skills benefit from the school's well planned programmes of study and excellent ethos. They often achieve standards close to the national average.
4. Just as attainment on leaving school varies considerably from year to year, attainment on entry to school is as varied. Looking at the records for all the pupils in school, on average, they enter school with average standards but leave school with above average attainment. They make good progress.
5. Pupils' achieve good standards in English and mathematics. This is partly because the school has effectively implemented the national literacy and numeracy strategies and adapted them well to match the needs of individual pupils. The school has also introduced a daily half-hour lesson in which pupils work on basic skills such as reading and handwriting. This helps pupils to achieve high reading standards and is helping to improve their standards in handwriting which is below those which are expected.
6. Standards in science are generally above national expectations. Science is often linked to other subjects such as geography and the local environment is used well to improve pupils' skills. Standards in information and communication technology are particularly high. This is partly because of the way the expertise available locally has been well used to train staff and extend pupils' skills but also because of the very good ratio of computers to pupils. Pupils use computers in most subjects and one is always available for them. Standards in art are also high. Pupils improve their skills and understanding by looking at a wide range of art produced by European artists. The art teacher, who comes into school for half a day a week, brings a subject expertise which accounts for the high standards.

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

7. Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are excellent. Pupils' behaviour is very good and their attendance at school is good. This area of the school's work is a strength of its overall provision, making an important contribution to

the standards pupils' achieve, and supporting the school's aim of helping all pupils to reach their full potential.

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent. Pupils are very keen to come to school and are happy to be with their friends and teachers. They show very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their time in school taking full advantage of the opportunities available to them. They show high levels of interest and involvement with all activities, in and out of lessons. They concentrate very well in lessons, listening carefully to their teachers and each other, when working individually and as a group.
9. Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are polite, sensible and friendly children who instinctively follow the school rules they have agreed with staff. Pupils with behaviour difficulties are well supported by staff and respond well to consistent expectations of good behaviour. At lunchtime, all pupils within school play happily together and all are included in team games, such as playing 'rugby rounders' with the midday supervisory assistant. They get ready to leave school and queue without fussing for their taxi. No bullying or oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection.
10. Pupils' personal development is excellent and is reflected in, and strengthened by, the excellent relationships that exist between everyone within school. This is a result of all pupils being included in all aspects of school life. For example, after school clubs are whole school activities, where pupils from reception to Year 6 benefited greatly from working together with 'Aunty Anne', the school cook, learning the importance of hygiene and safety in the kitchen while making shortbread biscuits. All pupils are involved in daily routines such as getting resources ready for lessons or getting the classroom ready for lunch. Pupils show very good levels of respect for the opinions and feelings of others, such as was seen when boys and girls of mixed ages worked as a group to discuss how they feel and how they react differently in the same situation. Pupils show improving maturity as they become older and readily accept more responsibility such as answering the telephone at lunchtimes. This boosts their self-esteem and confidence and also sets a good example to younger pupils. Pupils show initiative and independence with their learning by planning and organising their group work. For example, the three Year 6 pupils jointly worked out how to make a slide show to explain friction to younger pupils, using a microscope and computer.
11. Pupils' attendance is good overall. Although it was below the national average for last year this was due to the school closing for three days because of the foot and mouth epidemic. Most pupils are from farming families and as a protective measure they kept their children at home for a further week. This accounted for nearly five per cent of the authorised absence for the whole year. Without this crisis attendance was above the national average. Pupils arrive punctually at school, in three taxis, and lessons start promptly.

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

12. The quality of teaching seen in lessons is very good. This is an improvement on the good teaching seen in the last inspection. Sixteen lessons were seen during the inspection. This is a smaller number than seen in most inspections because this is a very small school with usually just two teaching groups. The quality of teaching was good or better in all the lessons seen, and very good or better in over half the lessons seen.

13. However, the very good statistics become even more impressive when the circumstances of the school during inspection are considered. Only one permanent teacher was in school. Two part-time temporary teachers were filling in for the other permanent teacher who was ill. They 'filled in' very well! The headteacher has established an effective system to manage the quality of teaching. She leads by example but teachers coming into school are clear that their teaching should meet the needs of each pupil in their groups.
14. The school meets its pupils' needs very well. A teaching group might have up to four year groups in it. Teachers plan carefully and skillfully ensure that a group introduction soon moves to activities in which pupils are often working individually at their own level. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support by the teacher or teaching assistant and make good progress. In the same way very able pupils are challenged to achieve standards well above those usually seen for their age.
15. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally very good. In these lessons all pupils are given work that challenges them but enables them to succeed, so they make good progress.
16. In most lessons teachers have good knowledge of their subject and present work imaginatively so pupils' interest is captured and sustained. Teachers help pupils to see the purpose of the work they are doing, the links between what has been taught before and what will be taught in the future. Very good questioning deepens and refines pupils' knowledge. The excellent relationships in school and the pupils' attitudes to their work contributes strongly to the progress pupils make.
17. Pupils are encouraged, from the time they enter school, to take some responsibility for their own learning. They develop these skills as they move up the school and become independent learners by the time they reach upper Key Stage 2. They use reference books and the Internet independently to obtain information which they use to expand their work. This development of pupils' independent learning is a key element in the way teachers can effectively teach groups with a wide age range. They know that while they concentrate on one year group other groups are able to plan and complete their own tasks.
18. Teaching assistants and some parent helpers support learning in the classroom. They do this very well, partly because they are given clear guidance about what they are to do, but also they know and relate to individual pupils well.

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

19. All pupils benefit equally from the very good quality and range of learning opportunities that the school provides. The school has more than maintained the 'high quality curriculum' that was praised in the previous inspection report. Particular strengths are:
  - excellent arrangements guarantee equal access to the full curriculum for all pupils, including those with special needs;
  - outstanding provisions for pupils' personal, moral, social and health education are the keynote of the school's work;
  - excellent links with the community and with other schools make a significant contribution to pupils' learning;

- very effective strategies for developing pupils' skills in numeracy, literacy and spoken English establish securely the key skills for successful learning in all subjects.
20. The curriculum fully satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum and of Durham's Agreed Syllabus for religious education. It is very well planned to ensure that pupils experience a broad, rich and varied range of experiences that are matched to their particular needs and aptitudes. It is well balanced and places strong emphasis on English and mathematics, whilst giving proper time and attention to all the other subjects and linking them well. Current provision for the one pupil in reception is satisfactory because he is able to benefit fully from working alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2.
21. Since the last inspection, the school has made significant changes to the curriculum. It has adopted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and adapted them imaginatively to its exceptional circumstances. For example, in addition to providing daily lessons in literacy and numeracy, it devotes half an hour every morning to rotating activities which focus on very specific skills in literacy in a way which throws the emphasis on independent work. In all other subjects, except religious education, the school uses nationally approved guidance. Here again, the school's need to teach up to four year groups as one class has obliged it to reconstruct these guidelines imaginatively. Very coherent long-term plans now ensure that pupils follow clear lines of progression in all subjects as they move through the school, whilst the quality of short-term planning maintains good breadth, balance and relevance. Across the curriculum, pupils have very good opportunities to learn through speaking and listening, reading, working with number, and the skilful use of information and communication technology. The planned use of these opportunities effectively develops key learning skills, and is a significant strength in promoting pupils' independence and their awareness of their own learning. However, in subjects such as history, geography and religious education, the school does not set up similar opportunities for pupils to learn through writing, independently and at length, in the styles typical of each subject.
22. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities. To achieve this, it has to overcome the limiting effects of pupils' travel arrangements and the absence of facilities for indoor or outdoor games and sports. A rearrangement of the taxi service on Tuesdays enables the school to organise an after-school club. Pupils plan and evaluate the programme of activities. All pupils attend and all staff contribute. For example, during the inspection pupils worked with the school cook to make shortbread biscuits, and with a teacher to craft flowers and butterflies from wire and coloured film. All pupils were fully involved, enthusiastic to learn and very helpful to each other. The school also makes very effective use of visitors and out-of-school visits to enrich the curriculum and counter the isolation of life in the dale. Work in science, geography and English exploits fully the special advantages of the school's immediate environment. For example, led by a professional poet, pupils have written excellent poetry for a published anthology of 'Wild Words for Wild Places', which celebrates the beauty of the dale. They work with other writers, and with a variety of experts in flora and fauna. For instance, pupils were being prepared for a visit to the Teesmouth Nature Reserve to observe wading birds. A well-planned programme of residential visits to places such as London, Whitby and Seaham combines study with experiences of contrasting places and ways of life.

23. All these experiences contribute to the school's excellent provision for personal, social and health education. Work in this area is at the heart of the school and carries its main aims and values. It gives central importance to 'circle' time', when pupils sit together to share their personal thoughts and feelings and negotiate understandings. The process grants pupils a voice in areas such as school rules, and strongly promotes their moral and social development. In one circle time, for example, pupils aired their experiences, views and feelings about gender roles and issues. They showed great maturity and sensitivity in discussing their feelings as boys and girls in different situations. All pupils share the school's inclusive culture and ensure that no-one is left out or interrupted. Great weight is given to health education and the school looks forward to achieving a national Healthy School Standard Award for its planned work on all aspects of health. Contributions from the school nurse, the cook and parents focus on healthy eating. A broader focus on healthy lifestyles highlights elements in several subjects. It covers sex education and develops awareness of the dangers of drugs. It also includes presentations by the local police and developing work with the Healthy Living Centre in the village hall at Newbiggin.
24. In these and other ways, links with the local community make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. The school provides a focal point for its isolated community, and is proud of the fact that various trips, meals and assemblies become whole community outings and events. For example, as a result of its work with the village hall, the school has become an occasional base for local computer classes. This has led to the school's involvement in a project to secure laptops for the community. Pupils will use these not only to advance their own learning but also to teach parents and grandparents their skills. In this way a network could be developed to strengthen community links.
25. Excellent links with other schools overcome the disadvantages of small size and isolation. Constructive arrangements with a larger school 'down the dale' enable pupils to have a full programme of physical education. The school is invited to attend theatre productions and events at the larger school. In this way, pupils extend their relationships and settle more easily into the secondary school. Membership of clusters of small schools in both Weardale and Teesdale leads to joint ventures. Excursions, such as the week-long field study in Whitby, are planned together, as are 'special days'. For example, three such days for able pupils have been planned for this year. Cluster meetings also help the school to keep abreast of national and county-wide developments, and to share resources and ideas.
26. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent overall, and better than when the school was last inspected. This provision, particularly its social and moral aspects, is at the heart of what the school stands for and achieves. It promotes a climate for learning in which pupils become mature and responsible, and grow in confidence and self-reliance as well as in mutual awareness and support.
27. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Daily assemblies centre on effective acts of collective worship in which pupils sing hymns expressively; listen to stories, such as the judgement of Solomon, with rapt attention, and reflect thoughtfully on meanings. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on non-material things. For example, they enjoy sharing inner hopes and 'mind stories' in mini-circle times. 'I'm going to take that dream home with me and think it again!' said one pupil. In such ways, the school cultivates aspirations, imagination and self-worth. Learning

experiences are often stimulating and pupils share their excitement, as when they found that they could make the buggies they had constructed move and flash with the motors and lights they had fitted. The beauty of the natural world around the school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to study, wonder at and appreciate the landscape, its river and living things, for example through the poems they write and through investigations in geography and science. In these ways, the school consistently focuses and promotes important inner values and beliefs.

28. The excellent provision for moral development establishes an entirely positive framework for conduct. Pupils negotiate and review the rules by which they agree to conduct themselves in school. Staff provide excellent models of these rules in action. They consistently use praise and an agreed reward system to promote positive attitudes and a clear understanding of what good behaviour entails in practice. The provision works so well because it is built upon full consent and awareness and on everyone taking a mature responsibility for their actions.
29. Provision for social development works in the same way and is also excellent. It is equally fundamental because pupils' wider social experiences depend so exclusively on the school. The small numbers oblige pupils to interact, and to respect each other and develop systems of relationship and support. The small numbers also mean that each pupil has more opportunities to contribute and few opportunities to opt out. Excellent links with other schools and the community provide opportunities for pupils to participate in team efforts such as drama productions; to extend their circle of acquaintance and to learn what it means to serve the community. Well-planned programmes of trips, residential visits and e-mail links promote understanding of social life outside the dale. All pupils form a sort of council which negotiates agreements, for example on the programme of activities for their after-school club. Older pupils take an increasing range of responsibilities, for instance by serving at meal times or by helping younger pupils with their work. They offer such help intuitively and effectively because work in lessons over time has provided constant opportunity to learn to co-operate and to support each other. Pupils who find constructive social conduct difficult are gradually drawn into this culture because of the consistency with which it cares.
30. The school provides good opportunities for pupils from a relatively isolated community to learn about and to celebrate both their own cultural traditions and those of others. The school does much to promote an appreciation of what is special locally and regionally. For example, pupils work with the local nature conservancy and imitate artists, such as Andy Goldsworthy, who work with natural materials in natural environments. Excursions and residential visits extend this appreciation regionally, so that pupils learn at first hand of the history and the social and economic life of places such as Whitby and Seaham. Studies in history, geography and religious education help pupils to understand that other peoples have cultures, languages, faiths and ways of life that are very different from their own. However, attention to these wider horizons is much less effective and needs strengthening if pupils are to be prepared for life in the culturally diverse society that exists in urban settings beyond the dale. The school is not inclusive enough in this aspect, although a sound policy undertakes to develop 'a view of the world which is not Euro centric'!

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

31. The school takes very good care of all the pupils. The health, safety and general welfare of pupils is an important priority of all staff. The headteacher has responsibility for child protection matters and regularly updates her training and keeps staff fully aware of procedures. Appropriate systems are in place, including parental agreements for Internet access. Two members of staff have received training in first aid. A governor, experienced in health and safety, carries out risk assessment and regularly monitors all aspects within school. The school takes very good care of pupils' social, emotional and personal well being. Parents appreciated this particularly during the foot and mouth outbreak when sensitive support was given to children worrying about their family's situation at home.
32. The school has very good procedures for promoting attendance and good behaviour, and for deterring and dealing with bullying if it should occur. Procedures for supporting pupils' personal development are excellent. Staff successfully motivate most pupils to attain high standards of behaviour, attitudes and effort at all times. Star charts and certificates are used to recognise pupils' consistent achievements in this area. Personal development is effectively monitored alongside the programme of personal, social and health education. The small number of children in school means staff know pupils and their families very well and the guidance they provide for individuals is very effective in meeting their needs. For example, farm and water safety are particularly well catered for in this rural community and older pupils have the opportunity to become 'rural rangers' after learning how to care for the countryside and the dangers within it.

## **ASSESSMENT**

33. The school has very good systems for gaining accurate information about what each pupil knows, understands and can do, particularly in the 'core subjects' of English, mathematics and science. It uses this information very effectively to monitor and support each pupil's academic progress, and to tailor the curriculum to suit each pupil's needs and aptitudes. In addition to the compulsory national tests for seven- and eleven-year-olds, the school now uses the optional national curriculum annual tests for Years 3, 4 and 5 to give an overview of progress through the school. Analysis of the results reveals areas of individual strength and weakness, on the basis of which the school sets targets for each pupil in each core subject. Targets are also set in information and communication technology. Standard formal tests for reading give periodic snapshots of progress in this area. Teachers monitor progress in writing by assessing a piece of each pupil's extended writing every term. These assessments are carried out formally by the full team of teachers so as to ensure consistency and to agree revised targets to improve standards. Attainment in mental mathematics, spelling and punctuation is assessed continuously as part of the national strategies for numeracy and literacy. Teachers often note assessment information for each other on their shared planning sheets. In other subjects, teachers follow the national guidance so that assessment is an integral part of planning and teaching. Teachers also mark pupils' work well; the quality of marking has improved significantly during the past year. Written comments now give clear analytic feedback on what each pupil has achieved and can go on to achieve next. These comments further inform targets. Pupils are encouraged to share their targets and to assess their own progress towards them. The school celebrates each achieved target and helps pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

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

34. Parents have excellent views regarding the work of the school, and say this is a very good school. Through the questionnaires and discussions with over 90 per cent of parents, who attended the parents' meeting, all parents gave wholehearted support for the staff, the school and every area of its work. They were especially pleased with the family atmosphere within school, where all children are valued equally. They say their children have very good attitudes and behaviour and they achieve high standards in their work. Parents are happy with the very effective partnership that exists between home and school giving them open access to information, staff and support for their children. Inspectors confirm parents' positive views.
35. The quality of information provided for parents is very good, overall. The school brochure and regular newsletters keep them well informed about events taking place in and out of school. The small number of pupils in school means individual contact by telephone is possible, when necessary. There is a good parental partnership policy and guidelines for helping in school are in place. Parents have the opportunity to talk informally about the school at the friends of the school meeting during the autumn and spring terms. They receive a written report about their child's progress in the summer term and have the opportunity to discuss this at a formal meeting. Parents were very happy with the written reports provided and said they had improved since the last inspection. Inspection findings show the quality of written reports is good. There is good analysis of pupil's strengths in mathematics and English, but the comments about other subjects of the curriculum are mainly about what has been covered in class and pupils' attitudes towards the subject rather than the standards of pupil's work or whether the progress they have made is what might be expected. There are no individual targets for improvement included, although parents were aware of targets their children were working towards in lessons.
36. Parents' contribution to the work of the school is very good. All parents support their children with homework. They help on visits and attend whole school trips with other members of the community, such as the planned trip to the cinema to see 'Harry Potter'. This enables the school to plan a variety of experiences for pupils by filling the bus to make them cost effective. Pupils also benefit from this contact with the wider community. Although most parents are not able to help within school because of the home commitments of farming families, they are keen to be involved in the special occasions of the school calendar when they can celebrate the achievements of all the children. For example. the Christmas production, Easter assembly and the end of year 'school leavers' assembly which are all well attended. The school is a focus for community life in this isolated area and the community plays an important part in school life. Parents quickly get to know the families of new arrivals and make them feel welcome, which helps pupils to settle into their new surroundings very quickly. The Friends of Forest association with the help of the community successfully raises funds to finance pupils' trips such as a whole school visit to the Dome in London. At the moment they are applying for grants and raising funds towards a three-year improvement programme to upgrade the playground facilities for pupils. A parent ran an auction to raise money towards the cost of the school computers. All of the contributions by parents and the wider community have a positive impact on the work of the school and are greatly appreciated by staff.

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



37. The excellence of the leadership and management of the headteacher is the key to the success this school enjoys. She is at the heart of the school maintaining the excellent relationships and attitudes. She leads by example involving all in the life of the school community. The emphasis on meeting the needs of each pupil is the most important focus of her work, and in this she is highly successful.
38. The headteacher usually shares management responsibility with the second full-time member of staff and they have been responsible for writing clear, useful subject policies and schemes of work. In the absence of the second teacher, two part-time temporary teachers are in post but have each willingly taken responsibility for co-ordinating the management of aspects of school life.
39. The headteacher has introduced the monitoring of teaching for all teachers and support staff. Open feedback and discussion has led to a 'way' of teaching in the school with great emphasis on mutual respect and the needs of the individual. This means there is a consistent approach towards pupils from all in the school, and pupils respond well. Pupils are involved in their own learning and targets and, again, respond well.
40. The governing body supports the school well. This is a small group who are largely involved in farming. This means that they are not able to get into the school often during the school day, but are very diligent in attending meetings and school events. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities and duties. The chair of governors leads the group well and recognises the way in which the governing body might develop in the future. Governors are quite clear of the school strengths that they are intent on maintaining. They fulfil their statutory requirements.
41. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well. Pupils' progress in their learning is monitored effectively and regular reviews are conducted involving all relevant parties.
42. The school development plan is a clear and useful document which generally reflects the school's aims and ethos.
43. The school works with the local education authority's staff to produce a budget plan which is then discussed by the governors. The headteacher and governors have thought carefully about the way the money should be used. They have ensured that resources are available to support teaching. They have 'brightened' the school interior by internal decoration and the provision of bright new desks and chairs. Until recently the school was carrying forward reserves that were too large for the school budget. However, discussion has ensured that the budget for the coming year will use most of this reserve while keeping a reasonable contingency fund for emergencies. Day-to-day financial management is efficiently managed by the headteacher and school clerk.
44. The leadership uses the principles of best value well, if sometimes informally, when they compare their school or order materials. Funding per pupil is more than four times the national average. However, the circumstances in which the school operates means that this level of funding is needed to enable the school to provide an education service in this isolated area. In view of the progress pupils make and the quality of education, the school gives good value for money.
45. The school has a good pupil-teacher ratio because of the small number of pupils. Pupils are taught in small groups and therefore receive much support from teaching

and support staff. This is one of the reasons they make such good progress. However, this also means that the two permanent full-time teachers have to share responsibility for co-ordinating all the subjects and the management responsibilities in school.

46. The school accommodation is adequate to teach all subjects of the national curriculum except physical education. There is no school hall or sports field. However, the school has an arrangement with their nearest neighbour school and join them for physical education at frequent intervals.
47. The school is well resourced in most curriculum areas. A particular strength is the number of computers the school has acquired recently. This has had a positive affect on standards as pupils are able to use a computer whenever this is necessary.

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

48. To ensure that the school continues to develop and improve, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
  - devise programmes and activities which will give pupils a greater understanding of the multi-cultural nature of British society;
  - continue the work being done to further improve pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	16
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	7	0	0	0	0
Percentage	6	50	44	0	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.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	15
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.2
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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.*

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	14
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	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: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	15

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	127,690
Total expenditure	122,704
Expenditure per pupil	8,180
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,516
Balance carried forward to next year	36,502

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	15
Number of questionnaires returned	6

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	33	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	33	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	67	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	100	0	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	33	0	0	17
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	33	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	50	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	67	33	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	67	33	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	33	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	83	17	0	0	0

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

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

49. This report finds itself in a similar position to the inspectors who wrote about the provision for pupils under five in the last inspection report. Now, as then, there is only one pupil in school in this key stage. This means that we cannot comment on attainment or achievement in this key stage.
50. The very good teaching overall identified in school also benefits pupils in the foundation stage. This is because the needs of all pupils are taken into account when work is planned for them. Staff are aware of the areas of learning and the targets set for pupils in the reception year. The school has made provision which will provide their youngest pupils with the opportunity to learn from carefully structured play activities. In this way pupils can reach the stage where they will be able to tackle the demands of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.
51. The only area of learning which is not fully catered for is that which enables pupils to use large climbing equipment and wheeled vehicles. However, this need has been recognised and plans are in place to provide these facilities in the near future.
52. The co-ordination of this key stage has been taken over by a part-time temporary teacher who shows good understanding of what the school has done and what needs to be further developed to cater for future admissions of four-year-olds.

### **ENGLISH**

53. All pupils achieve well because the overall quality of provision is very good. Particular strengths are:
  - the consistently high quality of teaching;
  - the strong emphasis on independent learning in relation to targets that are closely matched to individual needs and aptitudes;
  - the consistently good opportunities for pupils to listen, discuss and read in order to advance their learning in all subjects;
  - the effectiveness of an additional daily lesson that is well planned to develop specific basic skills in reading and writing;
  - the good use of information and communication technology to support the development of language and study skills.The effectiveness of these provisions could be improved by:
  - raising the standard of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work.
54. Results at the ages of seven and eleven vary greatly from year to year because they are closely linked to the attainments of individual pupils on entry to the school. The attainment of the three pupils now in Year 6 is well above average overall, and very high in spoken language and reading. Across the school, all pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and the rigorous demands placed upon them by the school. With the exception of pupils who have special educational needs, all pupils achieve the standards expected for their age, and almost all do better than this.



Pupils with special educational needs are equally challenged in relation to their capabilities, and very well supported. As a result, they make very good progress.

55. Attainment in speaking and listening is above average in Year 2, and very high in Year 6. High standards in spoken language are a strength of the school. Because numbers are small, pupils have more opportunities and obligations to participate in discussion and to interact with everyone in the school. Teachers use talk well to maintain a good quality and range of opportunity. As a result, learning becomes an articulate activity; excellent interpersonal skills and relationships develop to create a setting in which pupils help each other to achieve well and to negotiate good solutions to all kinds of problems. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are confident and effective storytellers. They use talk well to outline and explain their ideas for the choices they make, for example of colour and design when drawing. After studying a set of instructions for making biscuits, they used talk to work out instructions of their own, for example to open a lock with a key, or for a witch to get through a blocked doorway. By the time they are in Year 6, every task is subject to skilful discussion. Pupils ask thoughtful questions and listen intently to benefit from each other's insights, for instance when trying to clarify the patterns and pitfalls included in a new list of spellings. Their talk shows a mature command of standard English and an ability to suit their use of it effectively to a specific purpose. In one lesson, these pupils were given 12 minutes and no support to work out, prepare and perform a group reading of a short poem, bringing out the qualities and features noted when discussing the poem earlier. They did not waste a moment as they negotiated roles for a three-part reading and evaluated their rehearsals of it. Their accomplished performance expressed the poem's qualities dramatically, and gave an excellent example to younger pupils of what can be achieved by independent effort. It also exemplified the extent to which the strong development of speaking and listening carries the key skills by which pupils learn academically and grow personally and socially.
56. Attainment in reading is similarly above average in Year 2 and very high in Year 6. Early in Year 1, the pupil recognised 'oo' as a long sound, suggested words such as 'food' and 'cook' as examples and distinguishes it from the short sound in 'cuckoo'. The more able pupil in Year 2 accurately reads books that are above the level expected for his age. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils can discuss a poem with critical understanding of the impact of certain words and images. They responded perceptively to an unseen story text. They quickly identified the effect it created and began to pick out specific features that account for this effect. When asked to examine how the author's language influences the reader's view of the character, the pupils understood the question and engaged in a methodical discussion of the language of the text. In discussion, these pupils showed good knowledge of a range of authors and books and could identify the chief merits of writers such as C S Lewis and Dick King-Smith. They use their reading skills independently and effectively to support their learning in history, science and other subjects. They have very good study skills and they apply them well, whether in using books to find out what they want to know, or in searching CD-Rom or the Internet.
57. Attainment in writing is above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. Last year, pupils, then in Year 2, developed a joined style of handwriting, though their presentation was untidy. They used punctuation correctly to mark sentence units, and their spelling errors made logical use of their knowledge of sounds and letters. Their sentences were well formed and showed an increasing ability to express reasoning. For example, one wrote, 'Take these growseris to grandmas because she hasent been abull to go to the shops'. Their short pieces, as when they wrote letters based

on the picture book, 'Dear Zoo', showed a good sense of structure and appropriate style. Pupils now in Years 3 and 4 know how to plan and draft, and their writing is beginning to show an understanding of a range of fiction and non-fiction styles. They apply their reading skills well. For instance, they quickly grasped the manner of newspaper headlines from an example given. They then used their understanding to create effective headlines, such as 'Army can't mend broken egg', for well-known nursery-rhymes. However, they seldom write at length; they make many errors of spelling and grammar, and their handwriting is much better in their practice books than in their workbooks. Pupils now in Year 6 have made good progress over the past year, and their creative work during this time shows considerable flair in handling form and style in poetry and narrative. For example, they have written excellent poems about features of the dale for the published anthology, 'Wild Words for Wild Places', and their stories, such as 'How the sheep got its coat', effectively capture the style of Kipling's 'Just so stories'. They write equally well in a range of factual styles, showing a secure understanding of how to use paragraphs and how to vary sentence structure. They choose words sensitively and use computers well to develop their skills, but they do not make enough use of these skills to extend and express their learning in other subjects. Although the presentation of their work has improved recently, it still does not match the standard of other aspects of their writing..

58. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is good in Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2, where one of the lessons observed was excellent. All teachers use assessment well to match work to different ages and abilities. As a result every pupil is precisely challenged to learn well within a topic and a framework that is shared by others. Staff work well as a team because they know each pupils' needs and targets and share their assessments of progress. This leads to very effective support for each individual. Teamwork is particularly effective within the daily literacy 'carousel' when different groups work side by side to develop different skills and need different degrees of support and independence. Relationships are excellent, and pupils benefit from lively approaches and interesting tasks that strike a good balance between fun and challenge, as when Year 4 relished the difficult task of writing newspaper articles based on nursery rhymes. Teachers plan well to develop specific skills step by step in relation to learning objectives and targets that each pupil understands. The marking of work has improved recently. Pupils now receive comments which identify the gains they have made and the points they need to improve next. In the excellent lesson, the teacher showed a deep understanding of, and interest in, both her subject and her pupils. This enabled her not only to engage her group in a challenging and very productive discussion of a poem, but also to know exactly when to leave them to develop their new learning independently.
59. This expertise is also reflected in the co-ordinator's good leadership and management of English. Strong specialist knowledge enables the co-ordinator to interpret assessment information shrewdly. This leads to a clear vision for the development of the subject and the ability to realise that vision in the unique context of the school. Recent improvements in target setting and in the development of the carousel are already raising standards. Relatively weak aspects, such as handwriting, have been identified and addressed, but more needs to be done to raise standards in writing and use writing skills to improve the quality of learning across the curriculum.

## **MATHEMATICS**

60. All pupils achieve well because the work they do is well planned to meet their individual needs and they are taught very well. Many of the strengths mirror those described in the English paragraph above:

- teaching is of a consistently good quality;
- pupils develop well as independent learners because they are encouraged to identify their targets for improvement;
- pupils use computer technology very well to supplement their mathematical development.

The quality of pupils' written work could be better if the way it was presented was improved.

61. Results at the end of both key stages vary greatly because of the small year groups but pupils' individual achievement when compared to their attainment on entry is good. Most pupils are achieving standards which are above, and in some year groups well above the expectations for their age. Pupils who find learning difficult also make good progress because of the very good support they are given.

62. The pupils are taught mathematics in two groups which reflect their attainment level. So the groups are not limited to one key stage, both mathematics groups during the numeracy session contain pupils from five year groups. This means that the more able younger pupils are given the opportunity to learn with the older pupils, and the older pupils, who need to go over work again, work with the younger pupils. This complex organisation is very well managed by the teachers who ensure that all pupils tackle work that is challenging enough to enable them to make good progress.

63. All pupils are confident in working with numbers. The youngest pupil can double one to make two, a Year 1 pupil comments that if four biscuits had been taken from the plate there must be 16 left, because there had been 20 there to begin with. Pupils from Years 2 and 3 count accurately in tens and hundreds and some of this group identify the place value of digits in numbers up to a thousand and identify pairs of numbers which will add up to 1000. Pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 2 round up numbers to the nearest 1000 and decimal fractions to the nearest one. They know that dividing by 10 or 100 relies on a knowledge of place value. These pupils recognise that multiplication and division are inverse operations so that if 1200 divided by 6 is 200 then 200 multiplied by 6 will be 1200.

64. Pupils also develop a good knowledge of the other aspects of mathematics. A Year 2 pupil identifies the name of a two-dimensional shape and names the number of sides. 'This is a hexagon and has six sides'. He accurately puts in the lines of symmetry in these shapes. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are also beginning to identify and describe three-dimensional shapes, such as a cube and sphere. Year 4 pupils produce charts on their computer to show the favourite type of egg for their class, they like scrambled! They show that a 'Mars Bar' is the favourite sweet. They work with weights such as grammes. and kilogrammes. when weighing classroom articles. They confidently fold sheets of paper to show fractions such as one quarter or five sixths. They are beginning to understand about 'mixed numbers' such as two and three quarters. The teacher demonstrated this concept very well by cutting up apples which the children then ate at playtime! Year 6 pupils extend the use of graphs to demonstrate the frequency of letters on the page of their reading books. They put their mathematical

knowledge to good use as they solve complex word problems and accurately work out in their head how much change there would be if £6.79 was taken from £10.

65. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons because they are taught in a way which interests them. As in other subjects, pupils' ability to work independently means they gain the greatest benefit from their lessons.
66. The school has implemented the national numeracy strategy very well. It has adapted the strategy to match the demands of small classes with many year groups so that each pupil is working at a level which matches his or her achievement. The subject is well managed and resourced.

## **SCIENCE**

67. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection, one for each key stage. The scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed the high achievement seen in these lessons. Strengths are:
  - high quality teaching;
  - careful planning so that all work at a challenging level;
  - pupils' ability to work independently;
  - the good use of information technology to support learning.
68. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are studying forces and how wheeled vehicles move, stop and turn. The teacher devises an interesting practical session for the four pupils in this group. They go into the playground with their two-wheeled scooter and take turns to steer it around a track. They learn that the scooter will move when they push their foot against the ground backwards. It stops when they put their foot down against the ground and to change direction they need to turn the steering handle. Pupils in the three year groups manipulate the scooter with various degrees of skill, but all contribute to the lesson. As in many lessons seen at this school careful planning and organisation means that pupils learn from each other as well as the teacher. Pupils' reading skills are also developed as they read the signs to 'go', 'slow down' and 'stop' held by other pupils on the track.
69. The lesson seen in Key Stage 2 was typical of the way the very good teaching and planning enables pupils with a wide age and ability range to benefit. Pupils are continuing their work looking at various surfaces and how easily, or not, objects can move over them. The pupils begin the session as one group discussing the properties of materials such as carpet, wood, sandpaper etc. and predicting which will be easiest to move over. Skilful questioning by the teacher encourages all to contribute and think carefully about the materials. As usual, all listen carefully to each answer or prediction and discuss the task sensibly. Pupils then move into groups depending on age so they can develop the work at their own level. Younger pupils use hand lenses to examine the surfaces more closely. All groups begin to think about how they can test their predictions by setting up a fair test. The teacher's good subject knowledge ensures the groups are given help when needed.
70. The Year 6 group use their computer skills well as they use a microscope linked to the computer to prepare a slide show presentation showing the magnified surface of each material on the screen. They present their show very effectively to the rest of the

group at the end of the lesson. This not only develops the groups scientific skills but also their speaking and listening skills. Groups have now designed a test for their predictions. They discuss their tests and agree on one version which they decide will be the fairest. They recognise that to compare accurately, only one aspect of the test should change each time. They use a force meter accurately to measure their results and find that sandpaper is the surface which creates most friction.

71. Scrutiny of pupils' work show that other areas of the science curriculum have been covered in the same thorough way. The very good teaching and planning ensures that pupils make good progress because, although they are often working on the same topic, they are doing so at their own level. The subject is well co-ordinated.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

72. Evidence of standards in art was obtained from displays in school and very well presented collections of past work from pupils in both key stages. From this evidence pupils achieve standards above those expected for their age in both key stages and cover a wide range of work.
73. Pupils in Key Stage 1 used a wide range of materials when they co-operate to produce a giant pattern using paint, charcoal, crayon, felt pens, paints and pastels! Each material is used effectively so that details are in felt pen and the wider background in paint. They have looked at a Picasso portrait and then cut up photographs of themselves to make 'funny mosaic faces'. They have worked with strips of paper, weaving them carefully together. This work developed to first attempts at embroidery using 'big' needles! They have looked at the natural sculptures of artist Andy Goldsworthy, and made sculptures from twigs. The Jungle Paintings of Rousseau has given them the confidence to use paint confidently to make tree paintings of their own.
74. Pupils in Key Stage 2 develop these skills well. The range of work they attempt utilises these skills successfully. They use pencils to draw sensitive pictures based on photographs of two friends standing together. They produce good 'photo-montage' portraits in the style of the one David Hockney produced of his mother, cutting up and arranging in a new way photographs of themselves. They print, use stencils, and arrange and stick materials on a background, effectively and with skill. Using a circular card loom wonderfully bright woven patterns are produced.
75. The quality of the work produced by all pupils is largely due to the teaching they receive from a specialist art teacher who comes into school for half a day a week. There is a good range of good quality resources and the enjoyment of the pupils shines through their finished work.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

76. Pupils tackle design and technology tasks each half term and then normally take their work home so there was limited evidence available. However, the evidence on display and the lesson observed in Key Stage 2 show standards above those expected for their age.
77. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have made careful designs for a vehicle to transport goods. They label the parts carefully suggesting what each part should be made of. They work from these designs and construct their vehicle well using cardboard boxes and wooden wheels. They cut out the shapes accurately and finish off their work by

painting the wagon. They evaluate what they have done by comparing their design with the finished model and noting things that had changed.

78. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are also working on vehicles. They have constructed well-made chassis in wood, cutting the wood accurately and using card triangles to strengthen joints. They fit wheels to their model. The different age groups now work to power and control their models in different ways. Younger pupils fit battery driven motors and experiment to fit them in the correct place to drive the wheels. Most of them succeed. Year 6 pupils go further and add computer 'chips' to their designs so that they can program the vehicle to move in a pre-determined way. They are beginning to succeed in this.
79. Pupils enjoy these practical activities greatly and imaginative teaching ensures that pupils are challenged to produce interesting models which will broaden their knowledge of designing and making.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

80. On the evidence of discussion with pupils, examination of their recorded work over time and observation of one lesson, pupils make good progress and exceed the standards expected by the ages of seven and eleven. Standards are similar to those reported by the previous inspection. They have particularly good skills in practical field study and in working with maps. These skills stem from the school's very good use of the immediate environment and of pupils' everyday living experience of it. Good links with subjects such as science, English, mathematics, information and communication technology and physical education support these mapping and enquiry skills. For example, orienteering activity in physical education directly supports work in geography. Learning is made interesting and progressive by a well-planned whole school programme based on national guidance, and by a series of well-organised visits. Pupils find their work in geography relevant, enjoyable and challenging. However, an issue that needs attention is that their recorded work does not reflect the quality of their learning. Good tasks are often left unfinished, and presentation is untidy and careless. This is unsatisfactory.
81. No overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning can be made on the basis of one lesson. However, this lesson was very good. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learned very effectively because they were strongly challenged and engaged by well-planned tasks that used good resources in a brisk and interesting way. Pupils, each with a passport, took Koala Bear to Australia with the aid of a large, bright floor map. Good use of pupils' skills with a computer generated map, and of e-mail messages exchanged with their partner school in Australia, helped pupils to learn about the distances, routes and changes involved. The pupil in Year 1 could point to Great Britain on the map and recognise that the distance would require travel by aeroplane. The Year 2 pupil could say that, when it is day in England, it is night in Australia. The lesson built well on previous work in which pupils have developed simple mapping skills to track the holiday travels of Barney Bear, and learned about contrasting places such as the island of Struay and the Mexican village of Tocuara.
82. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 develop these basic understandings and skills well. The oldest pupils have a good grasp of the water cycle and what it means. They have used the Internet to find out about patterns of rainfall and why some areas are frequently flooded. From the study of their own locality, they learn about the relations between

water and the landscape. They know the main features of rivers, their sources, tributaries, watersheds, meanders and falls. A similar project on coastal features has also proved productive. Here too, the teacher's planning of a practical enquiry extended the learning significantly through a variety of activities centred upon a residential visit to Seaham. Pupils in all four years work together on the same projects. Careful planning ensures that, whilst all pupils are challenged to work independently at their own best level and pace, all benefit from each other's learning. This contributes significantly to the good progress and full integration of pupils who have special educational needs.

83. In the long-term absence of the co-ordinator, the subject is well led by the headteacher. This ensures that all developments that have a direct impact on pupils and their learning are effectively managed. This includes assessment and the planning and evaluation of the changed curriculum, but not the updating of policy and related documentation.

## **HISTORY**

84. On the evidence of discussion with pupils and examination of their work on paper and in the one lesson observed, pupils make satisfactory progress in history and achieve the standards expected nationally by the ages of seven and eleven. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn through discussion, research and role-play. The school also makes good use of artefacts and of visits to places of historical importance. As a result, pupils develop a strong interest in the subject and gain much from first-hand experiences. Pupils with special educational needs benefit particularly well from the practical nature of learning activities and they make good progress. Planned links between subjects usefully support learning, and could be developed. For example, recent Year 6 work in English on biography and on Shakespeare relates well to the current topic on Tudor England. However, pupils' recorded work in history does not adequately support or do justice to the quality of their learning. Workbooks are dominated by worksheets. Some of these are of reasonable quality, but they are often badly sequenced and mounted, and show little skill or pride in good presentation. Also, they do not challenge pupils to organise their learning independently, or to think and write consecutively in styles appropriate to the subject. Learning in history does not engage and extend the whole range of pupils' language skills. It does not sufficiently offer them opportunities to represent their learning in personal and permanent ways
85. In the one lesson seen, pupils in Years 1 and 2 engaged very well with the topic of Remembrance Sunday. They showed a good knowledge of the world and could identify, and share relevant understandings of the cenotaph and of public figures, such as the prime minister. 'He's the government', observed one! For their age, pupils make well-informed links between then and now. They knew that Remembrance Sunday is 'a special day to remember a lot of soldiers who died', and could see some connections between old wars and current conflicts. One pupil in Year 2 showed some understanding of the poppy as a symbol, and pupils developed this idea through thoughtful talk as they made poppy wreaths together.
86. Whilst it is not possible to make an overall judgement on teaching and learning, the quality in the lesson seen was good. A very well-ordered series of different methods, activities and resources drew on different skills to maintain strong interest and promote secure learning. The teacher made good use of pupils' excellent attitudes and relationships by prompting them to share their observations, feelings and prior

knowledge. This they did skilfully and effectively in response, sometimes correcting each other's misunderstandings with good humour and sound knowledge. 'That's not a pyramid, it's the cenotaph'. 'He's the queen's husband, but he isn't the king!' A small display of well-selected artefacts from World War Two stimulated pupils' curiosity, and effectively prompted further talk and enquiry.

87. Pupils now in Year 6 have a satisfactory understanding of the Greek civilisation, of its principal figures, buildings, literature and beliefs. They know some of the ways in which this civilisation has affected our own language and culture. They show a keen interest in their current topic on Henry VIII and his wives. This interest is both stimulated and developed by a good collection of relevant history books and a very interesting and attractive display. The planned work clearly challenges the pupils to think about the various dynastic and religious issues that confronted the monarch. It also encourages them to use their excellent reading skills to investigate these issues, and try to see them as they were seen at the time. However, they have too few worthwhile opportunities to use their writing skills to strengthen and extend this learning process.
88. Except for this weakness, the subject is in sound health, and recent developments have been well led by the co-ordinator. She has skilfully adapted the nationally approved scheme of work to the very specific needs of the school and to the requirements of Curriculum 2000. She ensures that pupils have good resources to support their learning. These include a good range of books and artefacts, and very good use of information and communication technology resources. She also makes good use of visits to relevant places of interest, such as the Bowes Museum and the Hancock Museum.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

89. Standards seen in this subject are well above those seen in most schools. This is largely because information and communication technology, and particularly the use of computers, is used in virtually all lessons.
90. The school is very well resourced and computers are available whenever a pupil needs to use one. Teachers' planning builds in computer time in most activities. This means that pupils use computers daily, are confident in what they do and are able to work without direct supervision.
91. All pupils are able to set up computer programs, use the mouse effectively and move items around the screen. Key Stage 1 pupils have written and printed texts linked to their work in poetry. They can use the enter key to put lines of the 'Grand Old Duke of York' onto a new line. They use an art program to produce drawings of the vehicle they have made.
92. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 are working on more sophisticated programs. Year 6 pupils work in a science lesson with a computer microscope. They adjust the microscope so that the surface of the material they are studying is clearly shown on the screen. They save the image and link it with others in the form of a 'slide show'. They add sound effects so that when they present their work to the rest of the class it has both visual and sound aspects. Key Stage 2 pupils also work on databases learning how to put in figures and formula to produce a spreadsheet.
93. The school has made good use of expertise from outside school. Staff have been trained well and older pupils have benefited from specialist teaching. If a new initiative



produces more computers, as the school hopes it will, there will be one computer for each child in school so standards look set to rise even higher.

## **MUSIC**

94. No judgements are made on the standards achieved in music because of the limited observations made during the inspection. One music lesson was seen for the four youngest pupils in school, and in this one lesson standards were in line with expectations, and music activities in assemblies were seen to meet expectations.
95. The youngest pupils were able to move their 'Teddies' in time to 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic'. They listen to recorded pieces of music and suggest which would match the movements of a doll and a football. 'The doll music is calm, the ball music faster'. The pupils were very well taught in this lesson and good resources enabled all to think about the difference of the sounds produced by drums and bells.
96. In assembly for the whole school pupils sing well and in tune when they sing 'Rock Around the Flock' unaccompanied. They play their 'Kazoos' with great enthusiasm, keeping time well. Planning documents suggest that, over the year, pupils cover a good range of musical activities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

97. No judgements are made on the standards achieved in physical education because no observations were made during inspection. However, planning documents and the arrangement to travel to a nearby school to join in physical education activities suggest that pupils are getting a broad range of experiences which are in line with what is expected. Provision for swimming is better than that seen in most schools because all pupils go to the local pool during the year. The vast majority of pupils achieve the required standard of swimming 25 metres by the time they leave school.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

98. Pupils now in Year 2 and Year 6 are on course to achieve the standards expected by the end of the school year. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress in developing their understanding of the systems of belief and practice of the major world faiths. Good progress is evident in pupils' moral awareness, their respect for the feelings and beliefs of others, and their appreciation of the importance of the imagination. All this is clearly reflected in the excellent relationships across the school, in the quality of pupils' discussion of moral issues, and in the poems that they write. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding through talk, through research and through practical experiences such as visits and role-play. However, they have no opportunities to write at length as a way of organising and extending their thoughts and feelings about the themes studied.
99. As no lessons in religious education were timetabled during the brief period of the inspection, and as pupils never record their work in this subject, judgements are based on discussion with pupils, particularly those in Year 6. Pupils have a clear understanding of Christian beliefs, values and traditions. They have studied in some depth festivals such as Christmas and Easter, the life and stories of Jesus, and major figures from the Old Testament and Christian history. They know about the main rituals of Christian worship, and have visited places of worship such as local churches and Durham Cathedral. Pupils explain how they have enhanced their learning by consulting books and the Internet, and by re-enacting celebrations such as

baptism and marriage. They have a sound grasp of the meaning of symbols such as the cross, and of stories such as the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep. They have studied four other world faiths in similar respects but in less depth. They can, for example, explain some of the main similarities and differences between the Bible and other sacred texts, or between Christmas and Diwali, or between Hindu and Christian weddings. The school is a considerable distance from places of worship for other faiths, but pupils eagerly show how the effective use of books, information and communication technology and artefacts makes up for this disadvantage. Attitudes to the subject are very positive, and the oldest pupils recognise that learning in religious education is an important part of their education in personal and social values, and in understanding the world outside their isolated community. Pupils' excellent skills in speaking, listening, reading and using information and communication technology very effectively support their learning in religious education.

100. Currently, the long-term absence of the co-ordinator for religious education hampers progress with planned developments. The school is supplementing the Durham Agreed Syllabus with a new scheme of work based on national guidance. This has resource implications. It also needs careful monitoring and evaluation, although there is clear evidence that planned work enables pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding systematically.