

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **HIGH SPEN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

High Spen

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108340

Headteacher: Mrs J Fisher

Reporting inspector: Mrs M. Hulme  
OFSTED Inspector Number: 3609

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2000

Inspection number: 198402

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

© Crown copyright 2000

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: infant and junior

School category: community

Age range of pupils: 3-11

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Hugar Road  
High Spen  
Rowlands Gill  
Tyne and Wear  
Postcode: NE39 2BQ

Telephone number: 01207 542373

Fax number: 01207 544871

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Sylvia Bullerwell

Date of previous inspection: November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Margaret Hulme	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it?
		History	How well are pupils taught?.
			How well is the school led and managed?.
			What should the school do to improve further?.
Stuart Vincent	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?
Jim Barley	Team inspector	mathematics	The school's results and achievements
		geography	
		music	
		equal opportunities	
John Taylor	Team inspector	information technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		science	
		physical education	
Judith Whitehead	Team inspector	special educational needs	
		art and design and technology	
		religious education	
		areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	

The inspection contractor was:

Lincolnshire Education Associates  
The Innovation Centre  
Europarc  
GRIMSBY  
North East Lincolnshire  
DN37 DN37 9TT

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6 - 9</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10 - 13</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13 - 15</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>15 - 16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16 - 17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>17 - 18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>18 - 20</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>21 - 24</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>25 - 37</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is a smaller than average sized primary school for children aged from three to eleven. There are 162 pupils on roll. In addition there are 34 nursery children whose attendance is part-time. There are 36 pupils on the special educational needs register which represents a higher proportion than the national average and currently there is only one pupil who has a statement of special educational need. There are 22 per cent of children eligible for free school meals; this is higher than the national average. Information available indicates that when children enter the reception class their overall attainment is broadly what is expected for children of this age. There are no pupils from minority ethnic groups or those whose first language is not English.

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

This school is no longer one with serious weaknesses. It is now a good school where the energy and enthusiasm of the new headteacher are leading new developments that are changing its status, seeking continual improvement and refusing to tolerate complacency. The pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well. The good quality of teaching is ensuring that standards are as good as they can be and there is appropriate support for those who need it. The effective teamwork that includes staff and governors provides the right educational direction for the school that results in a range of very good learning opportunities. The school now provides good value for money.

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

- Standards are higher in all classes in information technology and religious education. They are higher in science, history and music at Year 2.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good and in 41 per cent of lessons it was very good.
- The headteacher provides very strong leadership, gives a firm steer to the work of the school and is effectively supported by staff and governors.
- Children have positive attitudes towards learning and school life and behaviour is good
- The school is very good at developing pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness, moral understanding, and social responsibility
- The school takes very good care of its children.

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

- Pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests
- The quality of provision in the nursery. It needs to be at the same high level as that of the other class for children under five
- The contribution parents make to their pupils' learning by having a greater awareness of what their children can achieve

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

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

The headteacher had been in post just a few weeks when the school was last inspected in November 1997. This resulted in a further monitoring by OFSTED in 1998. At that time and since, good improvements have been made. The school has tackled many initiatives extremely well and it is now a much better school. The quality of teaching has improved, particularly at Key Stage 1, where it is now very good. The work is being co-ordinated well. Standards have been raised in information technology and religious education at both key stages and in history and music at Key Stage 1. Training for teachers has generally resulted in their being more confident. However, the school is aware that the quality of teaching in the nursery is not at the same high level as that of the other class for children under five. The promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development is now very good. Management work has been well directed and good progress made in improving the management of the school. Revised job descriptions are now in place, all subjects have leadership and schemes of work provide good guidance for staff. Subject leaders have well-focused action plans that include the monitoring of teaching. Planning is monitored well and appraisal is in place. The school is well placed to carry out the further development it has planned.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	D	B	E	D
mathematics	C	D	E	E
science	C	E	E	D

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

The school was rather disappointed by the pupils' performance in the National Curriculum test results of last year, particularly in English, that had been showing a steady improvement. The school is doing all it can to raise standards and there are now signs that it is happening but new initiatives, such as the use of test analysis to identify weaknesses, have only been in place for two years. Standards in lessons during the inspection were at an acceptable level and did not relate to the decline in test results. There is a drive to improve the already good home-school liaison by having sessions to make parents more aware of their children's performance and that some children need to make greater efforts and become more responsible for their own learning. Trends over the last four years indicate that girls are not making as good progress as boys. The school is well aware of this difference and monitoring the situation carefully. The school's targets are very appropriate but challenging. In consultation with the Local Education Authority they have agreed a percentage slightly higher than teacher assessments indicate they may reach and teachers are working hard to achieve it. Standards have improved in all other subjects, particularly in those that were unsatisfactory at the last inspection. What has been achieved is good and there are no longer any serious concerns but more work is needed to improve pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests. Overall, children are making good progress. Those with special needs make at least satisfactory progress. This improves to the same rate as that of other children when they are supported by additional adults.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall good. Enthusiastic pupils work diligently and try to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Mainly good. No exclusions in the last year. Very few instances of unacceptable behaviour and when this occasionally happens it is dealt with very effectively
Personal development and relationships	The very good relationships between teachers and pupils motivates most children to work hard and do their best. Pupils show good co-operation, take care of equipment and willingly take responsibility for tasks allocated by teachers
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most arrive punctually

The very good relationships between teachers and children has resulted in the good attitudes that pupils have towards their work. This is a strength and forms the foundation for good learning. The good behaviour is a key factor in the sustained work and good efforts. Children come willingly to school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	Very good	good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good with 98 per cent of lessons observed being satisfactory or better. Just one lesson was unsatisfactory. There is a high proportion of very good teaching and 11 per cent of lessons were excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection when only 87 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, only nine per cent were very good and 13 per cent was unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good. English teaching is very good at Key Stage 1 and at Key Stage 2 the majority of lessons are good with 29 per cent being very good. Mathematics teaching is very good at Key Stage 1: at Key Stage 2 half the lessons were good and the rest were very good. The implementation of national strategies for literacy and numeracy has had a positive effect on the teaching of these subjects. Teachers show good technical knowledge that is resulting in children's acquiring the essential skills they need. The school gives priority to all children's having equal access to all learning opportunities in lessons and this is good. Teachers take care to plan work in lessons that is appropriate for each stage of learning. The teaching shows many strengths and few weaknesses. Particular strengths in teaching include good subject knowledge, very good teaching of basic skills, very effective planning with clear objectives for learning, good management and discipline, good use of support staff, good use of time and effective use of resources. Weaknesses relate to the teaching in the nursery, where the planning is limited and there is ineffective use of teacher time. The good teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning: which shows itself in their good efforts as they understand tasks, the good acquisition of skills and knowledge, the consistently good efforts to persevere and complete work and their ability to work independently. Even at the reception stage children are developing an evaluation of their own learning and this is well established by Years 5 and 6.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. The quality and range of learning opportunities are now very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The work designed especially for them, together with the additional adult support, enables them to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The concerns expressed about spiritual and cultural development have been remedied. The new policy provides guidance for staff, whose planning includes all four aspects in lessons. The very good staff role models and clear codes of behaviour help children develop a mature understanding of their moral and social responsibilities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The welfare of the children is of paramount importance to the school. Staff show a caring attitude and the school does all it can to keep children from harm.

Parents and carers hold very positive views about what the school achieves for their children and the way in which they are involved. However, if they are to help in raising standards they must have the same expectations of their children as the school does. All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements. The curriculum is enhanced by the range of extra-curricular activities including visits and visitors to the school. The attention given to the care of its pupils is a strength. The concern which adults show for pupils is based on the very good relationships that exist between them.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The very good ethos created by the headteacher and supported by the school community effectively supports learning. Very good teamwork. The right tasks identified for the future.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses results in very effective fulfilment. Good level of expertise and well organised.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a very good view of its work and its analysis is successful in helping staff understand what works well and why.
The strategic use of resources	Very good, resulting in improved standards, an attractive learning environment and very good quality of education.

There are sufficient, suitably qualified teachers with a range of expertise and experience who are now better deployed than they were at the last inspection. The accommodation, though elderly is well cared for and much has been done to enhance its surroundings and interior to make it a stimulating and interesting place for children to learn. Learning resources were judged as variable at the last inspection. They have been improved and presently they are adequate

The headteacher is a very effective and strong leader and very well supported by the staff and governing body. There is very good delegation and contribution of most staff with responsibilities. Governors take a keen interest in the school's performance, show interest in how this is perceived locally, make good use of assessment analysis and target spending to improve standards.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The good progress made by children;</li> <li>• The school expects every child to work hard and do their best;</li> <li>• Behaviour is good;</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed;</li> <li>• Teaching is good;</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem;</li> <li>• Their children are becoming mature and responsible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>• The right amount of work to do at home</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views of the school. The range of activities outside lessons includes visits to places of interest and visitors to the school and is similar to that of other primary schools. Consideration is being given to any activities that might be suitable for the younger pupils. Appropriate work is provided for children to do at home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, just over two years ago, the school has undergone several major changes and the results of those changes are just beginning to impact upon the standards in the school. Consequently, on the evidence from lesson observations and from a detailed scrutiny of written work, standards are better than those indicated by the National Curriculum test results for 1999. There are clear indications that standards are improving, particularly in mathematics, but that improvement is not yet manifesting itself, to any great extent, in test results. Another factor affecting pupils' performance is that many classes have a higher than average percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs; for example, the present Year 2 class has 36 per cent of such pupils.
2. When children enter the school, their attainment is broadly what might be expected for their age. Children make satisfactory progress at nursery and then good progress from the reception year. The majority of children have laid a foundation for the National Curriculum and are achieving standards that are expected for their age.
3. The National Curriculum tests for seven year olds in 1999 show that in a year group of 20 children there were 16 who reached Level 2 and above (80 per cent) in reading which was just below the national average by two per cent. There were 17 children who reached Level 2 and above in mathematics (85 per cent) which again was just two per cent below the national average. Although these results are below average, when compared with all other schools, the 2 per cent is equivalent to less than half a pupil in percentage terms. In writing there were 17 children who reached Level 2 and above (85 per cent) and this result was in line with the national average. When pupil performance is analysed it is evident that there was a larger than average percentage of pupils who only achieved a low Level 2C in reading and this brought the average points score down to well below average. In writing and mathematics there were about a quarter of the class at Level 2C, which was considerably lower than that in reading. Children's performance in writing shows 60 per cent at the higher Level 2B and above and of these the percentage reaching the even higher Level 3 was well above average. In mathematics, the percentage reaching Level 2B or above and Level 3 was close to the national average.
4. The school provided evidence showing a higher percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals than was thought to be the case and this moved them into the next category for comparison with schools of a similar context. Consequently, when compared with similar schools, the reading and mathematics results are average, and the writing results are above average.
5. There are no national tests for Year 2 children in science but the results of teacher assessments undertaken in 1999 show that standards are below average when compared to all schools and this is unchanged when compared with schools of a similar context. However, this year the work seen in lessons was better than expected for children of this age and standards are higher. Children are particularly good at observing and comparing objects.

6. Trends over the last four years for Year 2 children indicate that the performance of boys was close to the national average in reading and writing but above average for mathematics. The performance of girls was above average for reading, close to the average for writing and well above average for mathematics. Children appear to be making better progress in numeracy than literacy and the school is now carefully monitoring the situation.
7. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for English, the percentage of eleven-year-old pupils reaching Level 4 or above (72 per cent) was close to the national average but very few reached the higher Level 5 and the 28 per cent below Level 4 were all children with special educational needs. In mathematics the percentage reaching Level 4 (56 per cent) was close to the average but the total lack of any results at the higher Level 5 and the 44 per cent below Level 4 meant that overall the school results were well below average. There was a similar picture in science where the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 (72 per cent) was well above the national average of 51 per cent. However, only eight per cent of pupils reached the higher Level 5 and this brought the results overall to close to the national average.
8. A comparison has been made of the school's performance with national benchmarks using average national curriculum points. This shows that when compared to schools of a similar context, pupils' performance is below average for English and science and well below average for mathematics.
9. Trends over time indicate that the boys' performance in all three subjects was close to the national average, although the girls' performance was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. The school is particularly concerned about the performance of girls and is monitoring the situation carefully in all classes.
10. Children with special educational needs are identified early and their work is well matched to their stage of learning and closely linked to the targets set in their individual education plans. Although the standards they reach are below national averages in English, mathematics and science, they achieve well in most lessons and make at least satisfactory progress. They do better when they have additional adult support and at such times progress is at the same rate as other children. They make best progress in personal and social development.
11. Through very detailed and careful analysis of pupils' performance in a range of tests the school is able to predict reasonably accurately the progress that each pupil will make and consequently can also make predictions about the performance of a particular year group. This enables the school to agree challenging but realistic targets for the future with the Local Education Authority. For example, the school is predicting that it will only achieve a modest 57 per cent for the present Year 4 class but has agreed a target of 59 per cent with the Local Education Authority, indicating that it believes it will give added value to that year group.
12. Standards in all other subjects are at least in line with national expectations and this represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when several subjects were judged to be unsatisfactory.
13. In information technology standards have improved. The standards achieved by seven-year-olds are above average. For example, pupils by the age of eight have learned how to use e-mail and have shared information about their school and lives

with pupils in another town. The eleven-year-olds, who have not had the benefit of the vastly improved resources, reach satisfactory standards and the school is aware that more time needs to be given to the elements of control and modelling.

14. In religious education standards have now improved and are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for both seven and eleven-year-olds. Pupils have a particularly good understanding of religious belief and practice in both Christianity and other major world faiths.
15. In the subjects of art and design and technology the satisfactory standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Particular strengths in art are observational drawing, and three-dimensional work has developed well. In design and technology, children are skilled at making models from a range of materials.
16. It was not possible to see any lessons of history at Key Stage 1 or geography at Key Stage 2 but evidence around the school and in pupils' books indicate that standards are at least in line with expectations. Some particularly good work was done in geography on rivers during a field trip when pupils were able to study rivers at first-hand. In history, pupils are developing historical skills, which make them think and they are learning to distinguish between different sources of evidence and the validity of that evidence.
17. It was possible to see only one lesson of music in Key Stage 1 but there are clear indications that standards have improved and are no longer unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 2 performance in music featured well. Of particular note is the work done in preparing pupils for the local carnival, which involved them in learning local dances and folk songs.
18. Owing to timetable constraints and poor weather no lessons in physical education were seen during the inspection. However, it is allocated appropriate time and there was evidence from photographs, teachers' planning and talking to children that this subject is enjoyed immensely. The comprehensive swimming programme results in satisfactory standards, with the majority of pupils able to swim 25 metres by the time they leave school.

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

19. The previous inspection report was generally positive about the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. This inspection finds that pupils now have good attitudes to their work as well as to the additional activities and visits which make up the whole curriculum. During lessons and in discussions they enjoy explaining about their work and are confident in asking questions and expressing opinions. They listen carefully to instructions from adults and are keen to please their teachers. Pupils are evidently enthusiastic about school and their parents confirm this. They come willingly to school and for some time the levels of attendance and absence have been in line with the national average. The most recent attendance figures, just published, show a slight improvement.
20. Overall, behaviour is good. The majority of pupils behave very well in the classroom, around the school and in the playground. They are courteous and show respect to adults and their surroundings. There are very few instances of unacceptable behaviour or bullying and when this occasionally happens it is dealt with very

effectively. There have been no recent exclusions. Adults in the school provide very good role models and relationships at all levels are very good.

21. Pupils' personal development is very good. The nursery gives a high priority to social skills and when children enter the reception class they are familiar with routines, generally relate well to one another and are ready for more structured learning. Children learn to share, take their turn and, as they progress through the school, they are increasingly able to work co-operatively with one another. They become used to working in pairs and groups and, as their confidence grows, they enjoy showing their work in front of the class. Many opportunities are provided in lessons for pupils to think about their behaviour, the consequences of what they do and how to understand and control their emotions. They respond very well. Pupils also enjoy being given tasks and responsibilities and, although this happens, the school knows that they need to provide more opportunities. Older pupils are increasingly involved in taking responsibility for their homework and thinking about their own personal targets for development. At Year 6, each child has targets for improvement and can look back to earlier targets and reflect on the progress made in their social development and attitudes to work. By the time they leave the school, they are suitably prepared for secondary education.

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

22. There has been a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. At that time the overall teaching was satisfactory, with a quarter of unsatisfactory lessons at Key Stage 1 and a tenth of unsatisfactory lessons at Key Stage 2. Those problems no longer exist. There is now more teaching judged to be very good or excellent, a higher percentage that is satisfactory or better and less unsatisfactory or worse.
23. The criticisms made of teaching at Year 1 and 2 have been remedied with permanent staff who have a consistent approach. This teaching is consistently very good. Most of the excellent lessons were at this stage.
24. The teaching of children under five is good at the reception stage and satisfactory with some shortcomings at the nursery stage. At the last inspection few comments were made in the report about the teaching of children under five except that there were few opportunities for liaison and that reception children needed a wider range of activities. The situation relating to liaison between both classes has not developed but the reception children have a wide range of activities that encompass those for the specified areas of learning and those for the early stages of the National Curriculum.
25. The teaching at Key Stage 2 received few criticisms in the last report but ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching now. In over 50 per cent of lessons it was good and in 36 per cent was very good. The rest was satisfactory.
26. The good teaching is having a very positive impact on children's learning. In almost every lesson observed there were very good relationships between the teacher and the children. This resulted in good attitudes to work and pupils who were willing to make the efforts to learn. This was particularly well used in mathematics lessons that often began with a speedy mental session. In one class the excellent relationships

were exploited well by the teacher to extend the level of challenge. The children responded very enthusiastically and were quite undaunted by the need to make greater intellectual efforts. This effort was maintained throughout the lesson, even when children were working in an unfocused group and not directly supervised. By the end of the lesson children had made good gains in the knowledge and understanding of degrees of turn, right angles and quarter and half turns. This meant they were now able to programme a robotic toy and make it move along a pre-determined path.

27. Those weaknesses that exist in teaching mainly relate to that in the nursery, where although the teaching is, overall, just satisfactory, planning is unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory use is often made of teacher time through exercising general supervision rather than direct teaching of skills. There is an over reliance on the use of basic activities with no planning for teacher involvement or intervention or even assessment through observation. The outdoor area is used for recreational playtime rather than extending children's physical development. At certain times during the session, children are denied access to some very well resourced activities such as the home corner, listening activity and writing table, resulting in lost opportunities to develop literacy skills. In one lesson the book area was completely ignored until a visitor went in and opened a book. Only then did children show interest and clearly wanted to look at books but the adults had failed to recognise a need. The planning of sessions needs clear objectives for learning for each activity that will relate directly to the areas of learning.
28. Most teachers show good subject knowledge, as seen in a science lesson on investigating air resistance. The teacher's subject knowledge was used effectively in the way she presented an experiment with paper spinners varying in size, to ascertain the level of air resistance. She successfully used a system of recording results to ensure that evidence was accurately presented and conclusions would be based on correct results. The teacher's competent use of timing using a stop-watch presented a good opportunity to revise the measuring of time with decimals of seconds. Children succeeded in consolidating their understanding of fair testing and acquired new knowledge and skills by recognising that air resistance depends on variable factors.
29. Teachers plan lessons very effectively and most have clear ideas of what they want children to learn. In the best lessons these objectives are shared with children, who then have a good understanding of what they are to achieve by the end of the lesson. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were keen to discuss these: they answered questions and some individuals keenly demonstrated to others in the class the various methods of adding two-digit numbers. Some skilled teaching was used to embrace all stages of learning, using pupils' major and minor successes to inspire them and deepen their knowledge and understanding. The teacher's energy and enthusiasm were contagious and resulted in a very productive session. Again the very good relationships were important, as a particularly good feature was the teacher's ability to make all children feel important and to show appreciation of their efforts. The learning escalated when children applied their chosen method to larger numbers, and, for small group subtractions. This extension presented the teacher with a good opportunity to reinforce place value and mathematical vocabulary. This she seized, resulting in better progress.
30. Very effective use is made of resources, including visitors to the school. In one religious education lesson the pupils had interviewed a deacon from the Methodist

church and were becoming more aware of the varying roles of a deacon and a minister in this denomination of the Christian church. The thorough planning helped children to extend their understanding and ability to reflect on and identify the significant features of the role. The teacher's skilful questioning helped pupils recall information from the interview and they used their own notes to add detail. The very clear guidance that followed enabled these pupils to tackle a very challenging task of taking the role of a journalist and producing a newspaper report about the deacon's visit to High Spen.

31. Some teachers use their own specialist skills exceedingly well to capture interest and raise standards. A visiting teacher of music worked very effectively with younger children, using his voice and the violin to teach scales, express feelings through movement and extend their understanding of rhythm. The violin was used very effectively and imaginatively in a series of games as the teacher absolutely engrossed the children with his ability to make the violin seem to talk to them with its very distinctive voice. The lesson moved at a rapid pace with the teacher constantly challenging them to follow his conducting and playing. By the end of the lesson they have gained new knowledge as they recognised differences in pitch, they understood that some instruments are tuned, they used hand signs for scales and sang unaccompanied. Clapping to a beat and maintaining a steady rhythm as well as changing in line with the conductor's beat presented no problems. Here was clear evidence that standards in music at Key Stage 1 are no longer unsatisfactory.
32. All teachers deploy their support staff very effectively. The latter understand what teachers are trying to achieve and some teachers provide them with written guidance to help them see how to use their support to best advantage. The specialist skills of the assistant providing additional literacy support is particularly beneficial in helping those children who have difficulty in reaching an acceptable test level. The support for children with special needs keeps them engaged in their tasks and challenges them to complete their work. Many would not achieve this in literacy and numeracy sessions without this support, particularly when the teacher is working with a focus group.

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

33. There has been a significant improvement in this aspect since the last inspection. The curriculum and other opportunities for learning provided by the school are now very good. All the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and those of the Gateshead Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education are met. The good provision for pupils with special needs enables them to make at least satisfactory progress with their learning. There are appropriate strategies in place for the daily teaching of literacy and numeracy and the learning in these lessons is applied across the curriculum. There has been considerable improvement in the provision for information technology and it is now providing more diverse learning opportunities. Overall, the provision for children under five is sound but there are some shortcomings in the nursery where there are some unsatisfactory elements.
34. There is good provision for learning outside the school day through homework and extra-curricular activities. These include music groups, athletics, rugby, netball and cross-country activities. Children make visits to places of interest such as Chopwell Wood and St. Patrick's Church and use the outdoor pursuit centres at Hexham and

Ford Castle, which enriches and extends the curriculum. Pupils' experiences are further extended by visiting artists, music, dance and sport specialists and involvement in initiatives such as the BBC art programme.

35. The involvement in the village millennium celebrations through the production 'All around High Spen' is a very good example of the close links with the local community. Very good liaison has also been established with other schools through events such as science-technology days. The use of electronic mail and access to web sites mean that pupils' learning has been extended by contact with others around the world.
36. The curriculum provides equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school is involved in a project of the Local Education Authority to promote health issues: sex education and the misuse of drugs are included as a part of its health education programme.
37. Other elements of pupils' personal education are cultivated through the very good provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This has improved considerably since the last report, when pupils' spiritual and cultural development was judged to be unsatisfactory.
38. Spiritual awareness and self-knowledge are developed in the daily act of worship when pupils are encouraged to explore questions about themselves, their family and friends. They listen to carefully chosen music, reflect on spiritual themes and take part in prayer. Spirituality is also promoted across the curriculum, - for example, when younger pupils express their feeling in response to music by Holst and paintings by Van Gogh and older ones write about God and their wishes for the new millennium.
39. Pupils learn about their own culture through lessons about such topics as 'children working in mines', visits to places such as the parish church, museums, the Roman site at Arbeia, crossing the Tyne on a ferry and visits from artists and sculptors. Pupils are taught to appreciate other cultures such as Hinduism, Islam and Judaism and how their music, dance and lifestyles have become an important part of the cultural diversity of our country.
40. The importance placed upon moral and social education is reflected in the high standard of behaviour, interest, co-operation in lessons and the sensible demeanour pupils display outside the classroom. The school works hard to fulfil its mission of valuing the contribution every pupil makes towards the life of the school. Pupils clearly distinguish right from wrong, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and accept that rules are an essential part of living together. These are very effectively promoted through the High Spen book about expectations and attitudes, residential visits, opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility and concern for others through response to charities such as 'Children in Need' and the Dr. Barnardo appeal.

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

41. The attention given to the care of its pupils is a strength of the school. The concern which adults show for pupils is very apparent and is based upon the very good relationships which exist between them. The school is successful in meeting its Mission Statement in valuing and respecting all members of their community.

42. Health and safety procedures have been reviewed recently and all matters are dealt with very effectively. The responsibilities are defined clearly and the arrangements for first aid and welfare are very thorough. Procedures for child protection have also been reviewed recently and all staff are aware of the need for vigilance.
43. The behaviour policy is very effective; the rules are simple and well understood and pupils have contributed to their development, each class agreeing its own rules at the beginning of each year. Pupils enjoy the rewards of merits and certificates and understand the sanctions if behaviour standards slip. When this occasionally happens the staff manage the situation very well. Regular attendance and punctuality is well promoted and in the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents confirmed that their children enjoyed coming to school.
44. The procedures for the monitoring of pupils' achievements and their progress have improved greatly since the last inspection and are now very good. The gathering of information about pupils' achievements begins in the nursery, followed by baseline assessments on entry into the reception class. Thereafter, a comprehensive range of information is built up comprising statutory test results, teacher's assessments from the marking of pupils' work, and supplementary test results in mathematics, English and science. Assessments in other subjects are developing. Recording is done to a standard format to allow whole-school analysis. All pupils have a portfolio of work samples, built up during their time in school and this gives visible evidence of standards and progress. Information about pupils' personal and social development is also recorded in their individual files, along with their previous annual reports and correspondence with parents. Attendance is monitored weekly, with the involvement of the education welfare officer.
45. All of this information is used very well to help individuals, or groups of pupils, with the overall objective of raising standards. It is analysed very carefully and the consequent ability of the teachers to target pupils is very good. They are able to ensure that work is matched to ability and with sufficient challenge; they can agree targets with individual pupils; internal support staff can be directed more effectively; outside specialists can be used where necessary.
46. Pupils with special educational needs have appropriate work linked to targets in their individual education plans. Records provide detail of children's progress and are available for review meetings and further target setting.

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

47. Parents and carers hold very positive views about what the school achieves for their children and the way in which they are involved. Through the questionnaires and at the parents' meeting they have confirmed that they are pleased with standards and progress achieved; they feel that teaching is good; the school is approachable if they need to discuss problems; they feel the school promotes the right values and encourages their children to work hard.
48. Parents now receive a very good range of information about the school and their children's progress. As children join the nursery and the reception class, parents and children are involved in a thorough induction process to ensure that they understand the workings and organisation of the school. There is a good range of explanatory literature. Most information about the work of the school is conveyed to parents in weekly

newsletters. These include items of general news, sporting successes, social events and important dates. In addition, there is a newsletter from each year group dealing with matters specific to them and giving a considerable amount of information about forthcoming topics and studies, so that parents can prepare themselves to give help. There are many opportunities for parents to attend assemblies and there are additional meetings to explain important developments, such as the numeracy strategy and aspects of the curriculum. The pupils' annual reports are of a good standard and describe what pupils can do successfully, their strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Targets are shared with parents at the twice-yearly parent consultation evenings and, as they grow older, the pupils themselves are increasingly involved in saying what these targets should be. Parents of children with special educational needs are well informed about progress and contribute to periodic reviews. Teachers make themselves available for informal contact at the start and end of the day and parents say they feel able to approach the school with problems.

49. The school has very strong links with parents and these are productive in many ways. Parents give wholehearted support to the school. They attend the twice-yearly consultation process; they have responded well to the school's own questionnaires about the education provided; they support school events and productions very well; there is an active Parent Teacher and Friends Association which organises social events and the funds raised go directly for the benefit of pupils. This contribution is satisfactory; however, the school recognises that for parents to have an even greater impact, particularly in raising standards, they must have the same expectations of their children, as the school does. The school is committed to ensuring that parents understand that what has been achieved so far can still be improved upon, with their continued help.

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

50. One of the main reasons for the successful improvements achieved by this school is the dynamic and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and the effective support provided by the key staff and subject leaders. The headteacher has a very clear view of the type of education the school should provide, which results in a firm steer to the school's work. Through her personal example, in lessons, assemblies and just by being around the school, the headteacher successfully promotes the development of very good relationships and encourages as wide a range as possible of learning opportunities. The success of the Mission Statement and school's aims in promoting a caring community where children are encouraged to develop their personal, social and academic skills is very evident every day. The whole school team is committed to these aims and it influences the children, who are well behaved and generally have a positive attitude about school life.
51. Responsibility for the daily work of the school and the management of the curriculum is now delegated to teachers who have had a steep learning curve in the last two years. However, they have responded well by attending appropriate training, producing schemes of work, monitoring the teaching and learning, regularly scrutinising work and analysing daily assessments and those related to national tests. They have made significant contributions to planning throughout the school to ensure that children learn skills and acquire knowledge systematically. However, planning to meet the needs of nursery children is unsatisfactory. Currently it lacks the development that will ensure that the curriculum for children under five is well structured with activities that promote practical activity and purposeful play. The headteacher knows how to delegate effectively and although helping colleagues lets

them get on with the tasks for which they are responsible. Although the headteacher makes some time available for staff to carry out their responsibilities, she expects high quality input in return. If weakness is identified she expects it to be remedied. The weakness in the provision for children under five is recognised and plans are already being made to improve it.

52. Governors contribute substantially to the effectiveness of the school. They have good levels of expertise and are well organised and very thorough in their approach. They are open to new ideas and are willing to adapt quickly. They were quick to see how the new information technology suite would extend children's learning and that the skills learned together could be used independently in the classroom or by individual pupils using the facilities when the suite is free. They are proud that every child has an e-mail address and knows how to use it and they appreciate the gains made by the younger children who have had the benefit of improved resources longer than the older children. They have trust in the headteacher. They expect accountability and get it. The headteacher has a positive view of the governors, who are active, questioning and supportive. Most governors are able to make regular visits to the school and some very industriously support the school in a wide range of activities. Reports of what individual governors do in school are discussed at full meetings of the governing body, resulting in everyone being fully informed about the life of the school. This has been particularly helpful in their involvement in monitoring the teaching and learning. Such opportunities were used effectively to form a view about how well the National Literacy Strategy had been implemented and what further support was required by teachers. Their work related to monitoring and evaluation has informed their judgement about the progress of the inspection action plan. They were able to compare their judgements with those of the OFSTED monitoring that followed the last inspection and were pleased to find no disagreements.
53. The headteacher recognises the importance of consultation with parents who she seeks as effective partners with the staff and governors in the education of their children. Governors work hard to do their best for parents and try to respond quickly to suggestions or concerns. Although the parents have very good views of the school and give it considerable support they are unable to have a great impact on standards. This is because many do not have the same expectations as the school of what their children can achieve. The headteacher recognises that more must be done to help parents understand that what has been achieved so far can be better with their very valuable involvement.
54. The headteacher and governing body have a good oversight of financial planning and therefore can plan strategically ahead. They grasp opportunities to bid for additional funds but admit that the headteacher is usually ahead of them. Money is spent wisely according to identified priorities. Specific grants, especially those provided for special educational needs are used effectively. By monitoring the budget, the headteacher and governors ensure that funds are used well.
55. There are sufficient, suitably qualified teachers with a range of expertise and experience who are now better deployed than they were at the last inspection and who are extremely well supported by a few additional adults and specialist teachers. Particularly effective use is made of the skills and expertise provided for additional literacy support, special educational needs and music. The plan to unite the reception class and nursery as an early years unit is very good and will allow the wider use of the specialist skills of the reception teacher. However, careful thought

needs to be given to the co-ordination of this unit given the unsatisfactory elements currently identified in the nursery.

56. The accommodation, though elderly, is well cared for and much has been done to enhance its surroundings and interior to make it a stimulating and interesting place for children to learn. Despite the difficulties of some classrooms lacking a water supply, a playing field some distance away and improvements needed to some play areas, the staff work hard to ensure that their teaching and children's achievements are not badly affected.
57. Learning resources were judged as being variable at the last inspection. They have been improved and presently they are adequate. In some subjects such as mathematics they are good. Resources for religious education and information technology were judged to be poor but they are now satisfactory and good respectively. The school is well aware of the subjects where additional equipment would be beneficial, such as the range of reading books for use by Key Stage 1, and is trying to make improvements.

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

58. The school has worked hard to ensure the school is no longer one with serious weaknesses but realises that further development is needed. It should now:
  - **Continue the work to improve pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests;**
  - **Improve the quality of nursery provision to bring it to the same high level as that of the other class for children under five;**
  - **Extend the contribution parents can make to their children's learning by providing them with a greater awareness of what their children can achieve**

#### **OTHER ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

59. When compiling the action plan the school should give consideration to some minor aspects that are listed below:
  - Find ways of making more time for assessing reading at Key Stage 1
  - Plan more opportunities for developing control technology and the use of sound in information technology at Key Stage 2
  - Consider ways of extending opportunities for extra-curricular activities to include the younger pupils

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11	30	43	13	2	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	146
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	36

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	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	11	9	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	9
	Girls	7	8	8
	Total	16	17	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80	85	85
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	7	8	7
	Total	15	16	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75	80	75
	National	82	86	87

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	13	12	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	8	11
	Girls	9	6	9
	Total	18	14	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72	56	80
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	6	9
	Girls	8	6	6
	Total	16	12	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64	48	60
	National	68	69	75

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	129
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)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	24.3

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

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	35.5

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.5
--------------------------------	-----

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	99/00
----------------	-------

	£
Total income	325114
Total expenditure	318532
Expenditure per pupil	1863
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3518
Balance carried forward to next year	3064

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	88

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	54	9	4	3
My child is making good progress in school.	28	69	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	57	3	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	52	20	2	6
The teaching is good.	44	49	4	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	50	11	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	28	6	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	59	14	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	49	45	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	60	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	39	28	11	6

## **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**

60. Children enter the school at the age of three and attend the nursery class on a part-time basis until they are four, when they move into the reception class and attend school full-time. In both classes all children under five experience a curriculum that lays the foundation for the National Curriculum that begins at Year 1. The school expects both classes to provide a range of opportunities that closely relate to the areas of learning for children under five and which enable them to achieve the knowledge, skills and understanding they need for the statutory curriculum. Teachers assess children when they enter school to find out what they can do and this shows that their skills in language, literacy and numeracy are what is expected for their age but they need more support with social skills. The nursery gives priority to the development of children's personal and social skills and they are ready for more structure to their learning at the reception stage.
61. By the end of the reception year the majority of children are achieving satisfactory standards in all the areas of learning. They have laid a good foundation for the National Curriculum and have already started work on the early stages of literacy and numeracy, following the routines recommended by both national strategies.
62. Children make satisfactory progress in language and literacy at the nursery stage. Teaching is sound with some weaknesses that need attention. The current organisation in the nursery offers children a range of activities that provide first-hand experiences to explore and experiment with materials in the writing corner. They confidently make marks as they explore story writing and some try to write their name. The importance of writing is emphasised with labels and captions around the room. There are many opportunities for communication and reading, with a book corner, role play in the home corner and puppet theatre, a listening centre with tape recorder and use of a computer. However, not enough time is made for adults to involve themselves in the play, make appropriate interventions, emphasise talk and extend and develop learning. During one teacher-led activity, when children were discussing how to choose clothes to suit the weather, the teacher talked most of the time, leaving few opportunities for children to respond. Only very simple responses were expected and opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening skills were lost. Children enjoy books and share them enthusiastically when given the opportunity. However, little interest was shown in the book corner until an adult began to look at books and this drew children's attention; they wanted to hear stories, look at books and know what print meant.
63. Children in the reception class are making good progress in speaking and listening. The quality of teaching is good. Sessions are well-planned so that the teacher makes good use of her time to focus children's learning, stimulate their interest and give them good quality first-hand learning experiences which develops their use of language across the curriculum. Good interaction between children and staff focuses the children's thinking, giving them planned opportunities to express ideas, develop their vocabulary and extend their understanding. In one lesson, children made up and wrote menus while playing in the café. They talked confidently about the pictures in '*Handa's Surprise*' and through careful prompting explored the pictures, extending their understanding of the story and expressing ideas about what was happening. They joined in reading the text very enthusiastically. They recognised most initial

letter sounds and confidently identified the last sound in a word as they looked at it. Inspired by the book, they wrote simple sentences about the fruit they like, using words they had learned. Some still need support.

64. Children make satisfactory progress in the nursery in developing their mathematical understanding and teaching is satisfactory. Children are given opportunities to sort and match objects and learn about shape through their play. They are introduced to positional words such as *on*, *in front* and *behind* through focused teaching using a range of small play equipment. Children play with dry and wet sand and learn to fill and empty a range of containers. When children move to the reception class teaching is good and children's good progress results from well-planned challenging activities provided by the teacher and these systematically develop children's understanding. The teacher uses her knowledge well to use counting games that enable children to count confidently in tens to 100 backwards and forwards. The introduction of a number line helps children to recognise numerals and put numbers in the right order. to at least ten and sometimes to 15. The teacher finds ways to help children understand what they have learned. They respond enthusiastically, show good concentration and sustain interest in the activities resulting in effective learning. Staff make good use of planned and spontaneous talk with children, asking questions, making comments and extending their learning by making them think. In one numeracy session, children were sorting 1p, 2p and 5p coins and extended their own learning by finding the numeral which matched the coin. This was then shared in the plenary session with all the children.
65. A good range of experiences helps children to make sense of the world around them and to appreciate their part in it. The teaching of this area of learning is satisfactory in nursery and good at reception stage. Teachers encourage children to take part in activities that extend their knowledge and understanding as they use construction materials effectively to build models and use the computer to gain good control of the mouse to move objects on the screen. Outdoor play is used by nursery children to learn how to follow traffic rules and recognise basic safety rules when riding wheeled toys. In the reception class children have good learning opportunities to explore the world about them. The teacher uses her good knowledge effectively to plan experiences for children which makes links across different subjects of the curriculum. For example, the teacher uses the story book '*Handa's Surprise*' to discuss tropical fruits, make children more aware of other cultures, and use fruit from the story for children to create observational drawings. In an imaginary play situation, they discuss and make menus, offer choices to the customers in the café and enjoy using real coins. This use of real coins is extended to learning how to take-away in a numeracy session.
66. Physical skills are developing well and teaching is satisfactory in the nursery. The children are confident in their movements in and around the school. Many opportunities are provided for children to cut and fold paper, to build with construction kits, to explore materials including sand and water and to manipulate puzzles. Children gain confidence in using a range of writing and drawing tools. They enjoy outside play activities and successfully follow the road marked on the hard play area when riding wheeled toys. The reception children join with the Year 1 pupils in their class and take part in physical education sessions in the hall and outdoors.
67. Teachers provide a range of activities for children's creative development. This gives them opportunities to begin to learn the appropriate techniques for music making, painting, collage, printing, story making, imaginative play and drawing from direct

observation. The teachers' good knowledge is used well to plan carefully and the wider range of experiences for creative play is much more effectively developed at the reception stage. The planning in the nursery needs to be improved to the same high level of provision as that observed in the reception class. Children in the nursery explore paint through making prints and patterns using string, shapes, bubbles, and tyres. Children only use ready-mixed paint and would benefit from exploring paint and colour through mixing it themselves. Children in the reception class make particularly good progress when using pastels. In their observational drawings of fruit they have acquired the technique of blending pastels to obtain the right effect. They explore pattern-making using a range of materials and are becoming skilled at creating a range of shades of colour.

68. Overall, the teaching is good. Although the teaching at reception is good and sometimes very good, it remains no more than just satisfactory at the nursery. The main weaknesses relate to planning and ineffective use of teaching time. The activities must plan for the involvement and intervention of adults and ensure that the children make gains in knowledge and skills for each of the areas of learning. Even at this young stage, it is not sufficient to provide activities that merely keep children busy. Planning needs to include precise learning objectives that allow adults to assess progress through observation and use this information when planning the next lesson. Sometimes, the use of teaching time is unsatisfactory and is spent in supervision rather than in the direct teaching of skills. There is a tendency to use the outdoor area only for recreational playtime. The planning for use of this area needs improving to ensure that it promotes children's physical development.
69. Teachers take time to make both classes for children under five inviting and interesting places for children to learn. Emphasis is given to literacy and numeracy in the displays and work areas. The displays are particularly exciting in the reception class and ensure that children are interested, concentrate hard and enjoy learning.
70. The leadership of the curriculum for the under-fives is sound but the early years co-ordinator is not yet involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning and liaison between the nursery and reception class has not developed. Plans for the new early years unit that will bring the reception class closer to that of the nursery with a shared outdoor area still has to resolve several aspects.

## **ENGLISH**

71. Standards in English lessons are satisfactory at both key stages. These standards are not reflected in the National Curriculum test results for 1999. At that time, standards in the national tests were well below average in reading at Key Stage 1 although they were well above in writing. At Key Stage 2 they were below average. This decline was not reflected in the lessons observed during the inspection, where standards were in line with national expectations. For example, at Year 2, good work was seen in reading a non-fiction text about penguins and reading long words by partitioning into smaller words. In Year 6, good work was seen in pupils' organising their writing appropriately for purpose, using more complex sentences and making them more grammatically correct.
72. Staff are working hard to address any weaknesses in English and are successfully using the National Literacy Strategy to provide a better structure for the teaching of reading. However, the literacy sessions concentrate on the direct teaching of skills

and there is less time to assess reading, which was a regular part of listening to reading sessions prior to literacy hour. Reading assessments are now seen as requiring more attention, particularly in such classes as the current Year 2 which has 36 per cent of children on the special needs register. Inspection findings confirm the schools' own analysis that shows improvements in spelling and better use of grammar and punctuation. The school's determination to raise standards has resulted in supporting those children having difficulty in reaching the acceptable levels by using booster classes. A well-trained teacher's assistant is providing additional literacy support, particularly for those children who have just managed to achieve Level 2 in the Year 2 tests. Good provision is made for supporting pupils with special educational needs in class and by withdrawing groups from time to time. The Learning Support teacher carefully plans work in small steps and this enables children to make good progress.

73. Standards are about the same as they were at the last inspection and again, when the OFSTED monitoring took place, one year later in 1998. However, in the last two years some aspects have improved. The range of writing opportunities has been extended for Years 1 and 2. Activities used to develop children's speaking and listening skills, in Years 3 to 6, now include opportunities for exploring ways of asking questions and having sufficient time to comment on the opinions of others in discussion. Although many children are articulate and express their ideas well, there are those who lack a wide range of vocabulary and are frustrated in their attempts to take part in such activities as discussing the work of an author. Pupils' handwriting was judged as satisfactory at the last inspection with the best progress made at Year 3. This is now happening earlier. Children are developing a cursive style at Year 2 that is very legible and well presented. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented since the last inspection and is now well established in the school. The development of information technology has resulted in children in all classes using their word-processing skills very effectively to support writing activities. The subject provides good support for children's personal development. In Year 2, examples of writing about thoughts and feelings inspired by music are displayed alongside factual writing about the culture in St Lucia. At Year 6, some poems written by pupils to express their thoughts about images of God are ranged alongside extensive writing about the characters from the book *Goodnight Mr Tom* that deals with the morality surrounding evacuation during World War II. Such activities promote spiritual and moral development very effectively.
74. Overall, the quality of teaching in English is good. At Years 1 and 2 it is very good. At Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 it is good; 29 per cent of teaching observed was very good. This is an improvement on the previous inspection, particularly at Years 1 and 2. The teaching shows many strengths and this has a positive effect on children's learning.
75. Lessons are well organised and follow closely the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers generally use the shared reading and word work time well. Whole-class presentations involving question and answer sessions are often of a good standard and teachers are skilful in developing the children's vocabulary, paying special attention to the use of technical words in literacy. Children listen carefully and talk confidently about the content of shared reading texts. Work done in shared reading and word work sessions makes a valuable contribution to the reading standards. It is resulting in pupils who can read fluently and accurately and understand what they are reading.

76. Teachers have very good relationships with children, which means that pupils are eager to learn and want to please their teachers. There is motivation for learning and the continuity and pace of the lesson are generally maintained throughout with no distraction through inappropriate behaviour. This worked well in a lesson for younger children who were having difficulty in using their letter sound knowledge to read unfamiliar words. They had to concentrate hard and listen carefully to words in order to pick out letter sounds and found this much more challenging than when they saw the word in print. Better efforts were made this time because they were prepared to concentrate harder and make greater intellectual effort. They were then able to read unknown words by working out combinations of letter sounds.
77. The teachers plan their lessons very well and have good technical skills. They try to make learning to read stimulating and exciting and have succeeded very well in giving most children a love of books and an eagerness to read. Teachers know their children well and ensure that the choice of book for whole-class reading is at the right interest level. In one class of younger children the *Pizza Princess* was greeted with great enthusiasm. Children could readily recall the story, even remembering actual phrases from the book. They identified aspects they liked and used picture cues well to put the story in sequence, even pointing out examples of split digraphs. Before the end of the lesson they were able to use the format of this story to write one of their own. By the time they have progressed to Year 2, there is greater use of non-fiction texts and children are challenged to use their prior knowledge about the organisation of books to find their way around them. As they explored a non-fiction book about penguins they were eager to read *Looking after the Egg* and made good use of their mathematical knowledge to understand what they read about the height and weight of Emperor penguins. The teacher's skill in involving children at all stages of learning, during a whole-class session, was particularly impressive. For example, slower readers were able to read long words such as 'beginning' by breaking it down into smaller ones and higher attainers explained the meaning of such words as 'species' so that the class moved on more quickly. The tasks of both reading and writing helped children quickly acquire new knowledge and skills about the Antarctic and the many species of penguin.
78. Good use is made of plenary sessions. Teachers use these short sessions at the end of lessons to celebrate pupils' effort and success. They are frequently used to review work undertaken in the lesson and to emphasise those aspects that some children have found more difficult. In one class pupils were discussing works by one author and giving reasons for preferences. The use of *Piggybook* by Anthony Browne had been used well by the teacher. By the end of the lesson pupils realised that not only had they a greater awareness of the unusual ways used by this author to make them think but they had reinforced their knowledge and skills for using speech marks in writing. Even the youngest children are beginning to understand how to improve their work when they read it at the end of a lesson and often go straight to their tables to make changes in writing.
79. Displays around the school show examples of writing skills used in other subjects of the curriculum. Non-fiction books are used as a vehicle for the literacy hour. This year good progress has been made in using historical texts in literacy sessions. Whenever possible, teachers plan to link the work undertaken in literacy to other subjects. In one class the teacher was helping pupils research historical facts about the Lambton Worm, a local legend. This became exciting when children were involved in creating a Living Graph to understand how the past can be represented in different ways. This necessitated their using both literacy and numeracy skills. It

illustrated variation in facts and opinion and extended children's understanding of what is fact or opinion. In this context they showed a clear understanding between fact and fiction and could explain it. They were prepared to venture opinions, listen carefully to one another and support their own opinions. Good standards in writing were seen in classes for younger children in such subjects as geography, science and design and technology. There were interesting accounts of tourism in the Caribbean, the life cycle of a frog and instructions for making and designing objects.

80. The co-ordinator monitors standards and progress. Concerns about standards in reading by Year 2 have led to plans to extend the range of reading material for Years 1 and 2. The co-ordinator is investigating the possibility of a reading club and the introduction of reading partners known as 'buddies' which will involve older children reading with younger ones. The monitoring of teaching has correctly identified that it is not a contributory factor in the decline in reading standards experienced in 1999. Work is further enhanced by the use of the attractive, well-resourced library that has been re-organised by the co-ordinator. In some instances the use of visitors, such as artists, have brought stories to life. Work inspired by *James and the Giant Peach* is all around the school and almost every child questioned knew about this book and often had participated in the work.

## **MATHEMATICS**

81. The standards of work seen during the lessons and in the scrutiny of pupils' work are higher than indicated by the National Curriculum test results for 1999. The good work being done by the teachers and the National Numeracy Strategy has not yet affected the Key Stage 2 results but there are clear indications in both key stages of improving standards lower down the school.
82. The majority of work seen is at least up to national expectations in both key stages and a significant proportion is at a higher level. Several strengths are evident in the subject. By the time they are seven most pupils are becoming confident in their recall of number bonds and tables and are learning to apply this to problems. They are particularly skilled in using standard metric measures and in their interpretation of graphs. The more able pupils understand about symmetry and are able to do simple division sums. By the time they are eleven the pupils have made steady gains in their knowledge and understanding of a range of mathematical topics. Of particular note is the ability of Year 6 children to convert imperial measures to metric and vice-versa using a straight-line graph. They readily interpret pie charts and are able to calculate fractional and percentage parts of quantities.
83. Standards are still very similar to those seen on the last inspection, being in line with national averages. However, as the impact of the numeracy initiative together with the policies and strategies put in place by the new headteacher begin to take effect then standards are expected to rise.
84. One of the major improvements since the last inspection is the quality of teaching. In Key Stage 1 it is very good, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory and unsatisfactory in equal measure. In Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching is never less than good and there are as many lessons that are very good. This again is better than the last report, when teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory and sometimes good.

85. Underpinning the very good teaching is the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. This allows the teachers to be challenging in the tasks they set and allows the pupils to feel secure to try even if they get it wrong.
86. All the lessons are well structured according to the National Numeracy Strategy. They begin with a mental session which is taken at a good pace and which pupils enjoy, rising to the increasing challenge that the teachers offer. Occasionally, these sessions are a little too long, particularly when the older pupils are expected to sit on the carpet, which results in restlessness towards the end of the session. The skills developed in these sessions are often then applied to the main activity, which gives a clear purpose to the learning. For instance, the skills learned in a mental session in Year 2 on degrees of turn was successfully applied to programming a robotic toy.
87. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that new learning builds securely on that already known. Work is modified and extended for different ability groups thus ensuring that all pupils are appropriately challenged. This is clearly seen in most lessons, where pupils show very good concentration and effort.
88. The teachers are particularly skilled in their questioning techniques and this enables them to draw out the pupils' knowledge and extend the learning. In a similar way, teachers make very good use of the plenary sessions to both assess the learning and to repeat the main teaching points. Pupils' presentation skills are variable since some teachers pay more attention than others to improving them: a more concerted and cohesive approach would be beneficial.
89. The co-ordinator, whose skills have been recognised by the local education authority, is used as one of the leading mathematics teachers to support the numeracy initiative. She is very aware of what needs to be done to further raise standards in the school and has already made considerable headway. In addition to rewriting the scheme of work and acting as consultant to other staff, she carefully analyses the test results to discover weaknesses and works out how to improve them, identifies those pupils who need additional help and sets both individual and group targets for improvement. There are clear signs of improvement in mathematics and much of this must be credited to the hard work and dedication of the co-ordinator.

## **SCIENCE**

90. By the age of seven pupils are reaching standards that are above the level expected. This is better than the results of the 1999 teachers' assessments for science at Year 2. Pupils at this age are good at observing and comparing objects, for example, the size, shape and variety of seeds in a wide range of fruits. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are similar to the results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests, when the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 was in line with national averages. Very few pupils reach the higher Level 5, which seriously depresses the school's performance when compared with other schools. Eleven-year-olds have a particularly good understanding of how to carry out a fair test when investigating phenomena such as air resistance. However, there is some weakness at this age in scientific knowledge - for example, in using scientific vocabulary to describe differences between properties of materials and correctly defining processes such as boiling and melting.

91. Standards have improved at Year 2 since the last report, when they were judged to be in line with national averages. The lack of challenge in scientific tasks in their lessons, highlighted in the last report, has been successfully remedied. Standards have been maintained at Key Stage 2.
92. The overall quality of teaching is very good. In a lesson with six-year-olds about conditions needed for the growth of plants, good levels of learning were promoted through the excellent quality of questioning and the skill in building upon previous learning. Very good learning was evident in the Year 2 class in a lesson about the ways that plants reproduce. It had balance, continuity and challenge. Pupils responded enthusiastically and made very good progress with observational skills, understanding the difference between fruits and vegetables, and in recording their findings. Good opportunities were provided in a lesson with nine-year-olds to consolidate and extend their learning of fair testing when experimenting. There was good application of numeracy skills when measuring the rate of descent of paper helicopters. The introduction of a variable factor, by shortening the length of the rotors, promoted good learning when pupils were asked to predict the outcomes.
93. The introduction of a new scheme of work has made the continuity and progress in teaching science more secure. It has also provided a very sound method of assessment which teachers use accurately and consistently to ascertain standards and inform planning for future lessons. The school needs to consider building into this regular knowledge based assessment for older pupils. Resources are adequate, although the lack of sinks and a water supply in two classrooms restricts experimental work. The school makes very good use of resources beyond the school, such as Chopwood Forest, science events at the local comprehensive school and the nearby technical college.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

94. Standards for pupils in both art and design and technology are as nationally expected for their age. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Particular strengths are in observational drawing, which is good throughout the school. Three-dimensional work has developed well since the last inspection. The use of the 'artists in residence' scheme has been used very effectively to provide learning opportunities for pupils. Work around the school shows good development of skills in both subjects, particularly in making models from a range of materials. For example, following a visit to Shipley Art Gallery pupils in Year 4 worked with an artist producing 'fantastic' furniture models.
95. Teachers provide children with an interesting range of materials and media for use in their work and pupils make good creative efforts to do such things as paint flowers, accurately mix colours, make sketches of the school using chalk and charcoal drawing and use artefacts, including bones, for drawing. However, painting is generally less well developed and pupils' knowledge and skill in using paint techniques are poor. The school is well aware of this weakness and has already targeted this area for further work in the school development plan. Teachers often plan exciting activities and link them to other subjects, such as when children design and make a working model of a drawbridge showing detailed diagrams from different viewpoints. This leads pupils to work enthusiastically and sustain good levels of concentration. The opportunities for pupils to plan, evaluate and improve their work in design and technology have improved following the implementation of a new

scheme of work. Pupils' planning skills are being systematically developed and they are beginning to evaluate and modify their work. The school successfully links the subjects of art and design and technology and a lively range of three-dimensional work seen in the school showing that pupils respond well. For example, pupils in Year 2 design and make masks and pupils in Year 6 design and make air raid shelters.

96. No lessons were observed at Years 1 and 2 for art or design and technology so no overall judgement can be made about the quality of teaching. However, the scrutiny of work showed that pupils experience a wide range of learning opportunities and there are strong links to other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in geography, children look at brick patterns and make observational drawings of the school building. Children design, plan and make 'Joseph's coat' producing a coat that clearly reflects their design and indicates that they have a good understanding of the processes involved.
97. In the three lessons observed at Key Stage 2 teaching was good. Teachers use a good range of strategies to develop and sustain pupils' learning. Good planning and organisation ensure that all pupils respond well to carefully thought through activities, which effectively involve pupils in learning through first hand experience. In a Year 4 class, the teacher used her good knowledge to skilfully introduce pupils to portrait painting and provided activities that maintained their interest and led to an enthusiastic response as they developed effective sketching skills. Teachers often provide very challenging work that children enjoy. Year 5 pupils responded well to the challenge to make headwear for a Roman soldier and discovered that incorrect measurements meant they had to correct their designs. Teachers make good use of visits to places of interest to enhance these subjects. In a Year 6 class pupils were making good progress in understanding and using gears to make fairground models following a class visit to Metro-land.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

98. As a result of the school's planning cycle it was possible to see only one geography lesson, at Year 2, and therefore no overall judgement will be made about the quality of teaching and learning
99. However, evidence from the work on display around the school and from teachers' planning shows clearly that a full programme of geography is taught and the specific skills of the subject are developed well. Standards appear to be in line with national expectations. Of particular note is the work done on the local area in which pupils draw their own maps and make suggestions on how to improve the area. The study of rivers is also notable. This is done on a field trip so that pupils can see for themselves different aspects of a river's development. Good links are also made with literacy and in the lesson seen in Year 2, the teacher very skilfully used the Katie Morag books to make a comparison with the locality.

## **HISTORY**

100. No lessons were observed in history at Key Stage 1 and only two lessons at Key Stage 2. However, there is sufficient evidence to show that by Year 2 standards in

history are as expected for their age. Year 1 children enjoyed talking about the work they had covered about events in the past, particularly the first men who landed on the moon and Year 2 children excitedly discussed the use of castles and a visit to Warkworth castle in Northumberland. By Year 6, standards are at least at a level with what is expected for their age and sometimes they are better. This is an improvement on the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be unsatisfactory at Key Stage 1 and in line with requirements at Key Stage 2.

101. Apart from raising standards the other improvements made since the last inspection include the appointment of a co-ordinator to manage the subject. There is now a wide range of advice and support for colleagues, improved resources, better teacher knowledge and assessments during lessons. There are also more opportunities to support the promotion of children's personal development and a scheme of work that provides good guidance for staff.
102. No judgement can be made about the quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 but in the two lessons seen at Key stage 2 the teaching was good in one lesson and very good in the other. In both lessons the planning was clear with good explanations of learning objectives shared with pupils. Although group work was modified for the different stages of learning in both classes it was better when tasks involved children in using historical skills of enquiry, rather than relying solely on literacy activities such as completing sentences or writing a letter.
103. In both lessons the teachers showed good subject knowledge and used it effectively to introduce the topic, ask relevant questions, probe understanding and comment on progress. In one lesson, this was used well to help pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding about the Roman period by discussing the life of a Roman soldier and the organisation of the Roman army. However, limited use of sources restricted the progress they might have made. The use of books, pictures and newspapers were helpful but the class lacked access to artefacts and a computer where CD-ROM or Internet would have provided additional sources of information. In both lessons the very good relationships that teachers have with children provided strong motivation for them to persevere with tasks and complete their work. They work at a good rate and apply themselves well. Behaviour was good and children co-operated well in the tasks they undertook.
104. Teachers deploy other adults well and this was very apparent in one lesson where the knowledgeable helper was able to work with a group of slower learners and, in infecting them with her enthusiasm, made them eager to tackle the task and progress at the same rate as the others.
105. The headteacher co-ordinates this subject and brings both inspiration and enthusiasm to it. She is well able to monitor standards and progress. This year she has introduced the idea of using historical texts in literacy lessons, which is proving a successful initiative. Further development is already planned for making more time to develop historical enquiry skills.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

106. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection, when they were judged to be below expectations by the end of Key Stage 1, and well below by the end of Key Stage 2. Seven and eight-year-old pupils are now reaching levels that are

better than expected for their age. Standards reached by older pupils are as expected. Improvement has been particularly good amongst younger pupils in their confidence in using the mouse to access programs to help their learning in literacy, by, for example, sorting words with similar sounds into sets and using e-mail to exchange information about their lifestyles with pupils at a distant school. Older pupils show sound skills in word-processing, they use a range of different fonts and such programs as *clip art* to enhance and enrich their work in literacy. The variation in the levels of achievement of younger and older children is mainly due to the fact that there were inadequate resources when older pupils were moving through the school and this has only been remedied in the last two years.

107. Achievement has improved since the establishment of an information technology suite and the growth in teachers' confidence and skill. The overall quality of teaching is good and the subject is now being used extensively across the curriculum. In a literacy lesson with six-year-olds, a program of increasing difficulty was used to extend and consolidate learning of sounds and spelling. It was well planned and the task well integrated to complement the learning from the big book story. There were very good levels of teaching and learning in a lesson when Year 3 pupils were using electronic mail; the use of pupils' correct and incorrect methods as a focus for discussion and questioning was particularly good. Some very good features included a link with a distant school, the use of individual passwords, the teaching of how to move mail to a 'word' program, the checking of spelling and then returning to e-mail and sending the message.
108. Information technology figures prominently in displays around the school. Christmas cards have been made and there are posters illustrating events, providing information and welcoming visitors. It is used extensively in literacy to word-process stories, poems and factual accounts. In numeracy, control technology is used effectively by younger pupils when programming a floor robot to move at variable distances and differing directions. Older pupils use it to develop more understanding of large numbers by accessing a web site for finding out about the population of countries.
109. There is a good scheme of work in place and assessment is used effectively to support progress in learning. Resources have improved considerably since the establishment of the information technology suite. However, there are still shortages for teaching control technology, the use of sound and work on spreadsheets. The school is considering the location of a CD-ROM in the library to provide an additional source of access to information technology. The well-qualified and enthusiastic teacher who co-ordinates the teaching of the subject has made a positive contribution to the improved standards.

## **MUSIC**

110. It was possible to observe only one lesson of music at Key Stage 1 and therefore no overall judgement is made with regard to the overall quality of teaching and learning. This was a lesson of the highest quality and there are strong indications that standards have improved since the previous inspection. In Key Stage 2 standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and by the time pupils are eleven most reach a level appropriate for their age. Pupils sing particularly well and are developing a good understanding of musical terms and notation.

111. The school uses a visiting teacher to assist with this subject who is both skilled and experienced. In the one lesson seen at Year 1 the teaching was excellent, totally absorbing the children in new knowledge, skills and understanding solely by using the teacher's voice and the violin. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is very good and again the school makes very effective use of specialist teachers who bring a wealth of musical knowledge and expertise to the teaching. They are able to motivate and sustain the interest of pupils by the challenging and enjoyable tasks they set. For example, one specialist teacher managed to get pupils singing solo tunes using a pentatonic scale without their experiencing any embarrassment or silliness. In another lesson, two visiting specialists managed to get the whole school singing some traditional folk songs with great enthusiasm and showing great control of pitch and dynamics.
112. Music plays an important part in school life and makes a major contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils. In assemblies appropriate music is chosen to support the theme, including hymns and popular songs. Pupils sing with expression reflecting the mood. Pupils are busy preparing for a local carnival, which involves a performance involving the community about the local area. They have opportunities to learn about the music used for traditional country-dances and they memorise the words of traditional songs. In addition to this there are two recorder clubs.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

113. Owing to timetable constraints and the poor weather no physical education lessons were seen during the inspection. However, the subject is allocated an appropriate amount of teaching time and planning documents show that it is an important part of the curriculum.
114. Resources are adequate, although the teaching of gymnastics other than floor activities is hampered by the shortage of suitable equipment and the distant location of the school field restricts the teaching of major games. The school has compensated for the latter by its involvement in the Top Sports and Play projects that enable skills to be taught in games suitable for playgrounds and small halls. The teaching of games' skills in football, basketball and dance has also been enriched by visiting specialists. Pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular sports activities including athletics, netball, cross country and rugby and compete successfully against other schools in a number of them.
115. The teaching of folk and modern dance by visiting specialists for the coming production of 'All Around High Spen' is a good feature of the current programme for physical education and pupils show a good sense of rhythm, co-ordination and agility when practising. There is a comprehensive swimming programme and most pupils are able to swim 25 metres unaided by the time they leave the school. Good provision for orienteering and other outdoor pursuits is made on residential visits to places such as Hexham and Ford Castle.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

116. Standards in religious education have improved since the last inspection. They now meet the requirements of the Gateshead Agreed Syllabus for pupils aged seven and eleven. The school has made good use of a new scheme of work and this has made

a significant contribution to the improved standards. There is now a better balance between those aspects relating to the personal and social elements of religion and those concerned with knowledge and understanding, such as faith and belief. For example, in Year 5, children explore the Hindu tradition of Morning Prayer through the morning mantra: 'Gayatri', by writing their own response to greeting the new day.

117. Pupils have a particularly good understanding of religious belief and practice both in Christianity and in other major world faiths. Pupils make particularly good progress in understanding the way religious belief and attitudes affect their and others' actions. For example, following an interview with the local Methodist deacon, Year 6 pupils were very perceptive in their discussion with the teacher, demonstrating a good knowledge of the subject and a thoughtful response to the complexities of the deacon's role: they discussed, in some depth, all aspects of his job, recognising the qualities needed and one pupil commented that, "he didn't just like people, he said he loved them".
118. No religious education lessons were observed during the week of the inspection in Years 1 and 2 so no overall judgements can be made about the quality of teaching and learning. However, scrutiny of pupils' work over the year shows that teachers have provided a range of opportunities that enable pupils to make good progress in their studies of aspects of Christianity and the Jewish faith. Teachers have used their knowledge well to carefully plan a sequence of lessons for children to explore the theme of 'special occasions' in their own lives, through birthdays and special food. They have extended this exploration to a consideration of why Israel is special to the Jewish people. Teachers make particularly good links to other subjects, notably literacy, in writing the Christian story of the resurrection as a newspaper account. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, said they enjoyed the subject and showed pride in their work, which was well presented. This indicates a significant improvement from the previous inspection where teaching was found to be unsatisfactory.
119. Teaching has also improved at Key Stage 2 and the majority of teaching is now good. Teachers now have a secure knowledge of religious education and plan challenging tasks for all pupils. They share the objectives for learning with pupils so that they know what they are to learn by the end of the lesson. Teachers make effective use of resources and visits to places of interest. In a Year 3 class pupils visited the St Bede Centre in their study of the work of St Cuthbert. They produced leaflets depicting the story of Christianity from Cuthbert to the building of Durham Cathedral. In Year 4, pupils visited the Newcastle mosque. This extended their understanding of the mosque as a special place. They can name the five Pillars of Islam and explain the traditions linked with worship in the mosque. They used this knowledge when designing a brochure for visitors to the mosque. Teachers make effective links between the pupils' own experience and their developing knowledge of religious faiths and people. There is very good use of discussion and through using well planned, challenging questions teachers focus pupils' learning on systematically building on what the pupils already know. This enables children to reflect on what they learn, express opinions and show respect for other beliefs as well as other people's ideas. Teaching makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development through the sensitive use of opportunities that enable pupils to gain confidence in expressing ideas and feelings. They have a developing awareness of other cultures and traditions and show respect for different points of view.